

## **Today, we begin a series on the Parables of Jesus.**

Taking inspiration from Kenneth E. Bailey's book 'Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes', we hope to bring more insight & context to some of the most well know parables.

We start with the parable of the two builders from Luke 6:46-49

*Jesus says 'whoever hears my words and puts them into practice.... They are like a man building a house, who laid the foundation on the rock.'*

Let me tell you a bit about how they built houses in Jesus' day...You see building was very difficult in those days – they didn't have diggers or concrete or pneumatic drills. They just had spades and a lot of hard work and perseverance. The ground in Israel was mostly sandy soil, with hard rock, under the surface.

Now, nobody wants to build houses in the winter – it's cold and wet and miserable. But in the summer the ground is really, really hard – it says in Leviticus 28 that the ground is as hard as bronze... we might say it was 'rock-solid' but it was not rock...it was just compacted sand. So, if you were wise, you'd build your house in the summer and you would work really hard and dig down, dig and dig and dig...through the hard, compacted sand to reach the rock underneath in order to build you house that was really secure.

Because in the winter, the rains came – you didn't get much rain in the summer, but in the winter, when the rainy season came, it would rain and rain – and the solid sand crumbles and is washed away.

You could completely understand why some people would build their houses on sand in the summer; it may have seemed a really sensible idea – the ground was solid, as hard as rock, and you didn't have to do all that digging.... And the rains didn't always come in winter. But when they did these houses with no proper foundation would come tumbling down...

This parable is found in both Luke and Matthew. Matthew focuses on the wise and the foolish builders...but here, in Luke the focus is on the foundation. Clearly the story is not really about building houses? It's a parable, a story with a deeper, underlying meaning. A story that teaches us something important about how we are to live today.

Just to add a bit more context, to this short, and well known, parable. At the time Jesus was speaking – the people who were listening, would have understood, about how to build houses, and the importance of foundations.

They would also have immediately remembered a similar story from the Old Testament, from the book of Isaiah – chapter 28:14-17, that we have had read.

Where the prophet talked about God laying a foundation stone, a precious corner stone and it says this... He who believes in it will not be shaken. How can you believe in a stone? Well of course it's an allegory.

The foundation stone was built in Zion – another name for Jerusalem, but not just in Jerusalem but in the temple in Jerusalem, but not just in the temple but, at the centre, of what was called, the 'Holy of Holies', And in the Old Testament, the Holy of Holies was where God's presence was. The foundation stone is where God resides.

And the readers would also have remembered Paul's teaching on the true foundation in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11

*By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder... <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

So, our parable is all about the foundation on which to build our **lives**

And Jesus is whom we are to build our lives on.

Jesus is our firm foundation

But we have to work hard, to dig deep, to persevere, and not take the easy way – so that, when the storm of life come – and come they will, we can stand firm)

So how do we do that? What does the parable say?

*<sup>47</sup> everyone who comes to me, and hears my words, and puts them into practice... is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.*

We need to **come** to Jesus, to hear his word **and** put them into **practice**. This parable is not just a nice children's story, it's a call to action. At our 10.30 service we're going to break into groups as I encourage everyone to work out **how** we can put various teachings of Jesus into action.

For us here, may I encourage you to read your bibles, to come to Jesus, to listen to what Jesus is saying to you and to spend some time reflecting on how to respond and then put his words into action. Spend time in his word, dig deep into what he is saying and don't just skim over it.

Let Jesus be the foundation on whom we are built

We are now the living temple as it says in 1 Corinthians 3.

We are now the living stones as it says in 1 Peter 2

And as we consider what Jesus has asked of us, as we put his words into action – we remember that.... Flood come – difficulties happen in life, but if we build our lives on what Jesus asks of us and do, then then we can stand firm whatever life throws at us. Amen.