



JUNE 6/7/2015

2 PENTECOST

PASTOR SCOTT FULLER

I Samuel 2:1-10; Matthew 7:21-29

***On Solid Rock***

*Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Two men...

Two men in 12<sup>th</sup> c. England...

Two men in 12<sup>th</sup> c. England have a vision...

Two men in 12<sup>th</sup> c. England each have a vision of building a cathedral..

The author, Ken Follett, in his amazing novel The Pillars of the Earth, introduces us to these two competitors – one a lowly **priest** of a small town parish and the other an exalted **bishop** with aspirations to be so much more.

**Both** men are convinced about the correctness of **their** plan to construct a ...a grand cathedral, a house of worship, a church that will cause believers to kneel in awe of God's almighty power, so extraordinarily displayed... in our **terribly** ordinary world.

**One** of the men is **closer** to the **angels**, a child of the light...while the **other** is firmly rooted in the **soil** of **sin**, and has **no** qualms about exercising his **worldly** might in the effort to destroy the dreams of his contender ...

Those of you with construction experience – what's the meaning behind the phrase from our Gospel lesson: ***he built his house on rock?***

- Solid foundation – concrete vs. wood (floors stable or warped)

And **if** that's **true** for a house – it is infinitely **more** so for a cathedral. So a vital piece in the chess match between these would-be basilica builders was: **who had control of the local quarry**. Without that **abundant** supply of solid rock, their dreams would disappear like the mists of the morning.

Carolyn and I bought a house when we moved to Anchorage, Alaska. **After** doing so, we came to learn that it was built on a bed of clay – the whole

subdivision was. It was the **cheapest** house in the **nicest** neighborhood we could **afford** – and it turned out great for us.

However, we learned that a **foundation** of clay-filled soil is *not good* for people who live in an **earthquake** zone... That kind of ground is going to shift and settle with any tremor or disturbance – in short, it will never hold fast when challenged by a jolt from below.

I'll always remember sitting at our dining room table one day...when an earthquake hit. Now, I was born and raised in Montana, which is much like Minnesota, where, when a crisis strikes, you don't want to be the first person to hit the panic button, right?

So I sat there ...while the whole house moved back and forth, back and forth...all while the tall spruce tree in our front yard appeared to be standing stock still... I was just about get out of my chair and move underneath a door frame – that's where they tell you go during an earthquake – when, as quickly as it hit, it stopped.

Now, with all that movement, I was convinced that I'd find waves of dirt built up against our house. But...this was clay – there was absolutely nothing to show for all that earth-shaking movement. Such is the character of that unsteady soil – to shift, and give way to any tremor that threatens.

And that, I believe, is a **perfect** symbol of what Jesus is talking about in our passage for today. In a **spiritual** sense, if the soil of our **hearts** is full of shifting clay or sand, it becomes the **perfect arena** for the powers of **evil** to cause **all kinds** of consternation and pain.

But before we get to that dark topic, let's pause for a moment, open our hymnals to hymn #512, and we'll sing and pray that song, **Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil**...

*Lord, let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your word.*

*Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is understood.*

*When my heart is hard, break the stone away.*

*When my heart is cold, warm it with the day.*

*When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.  
Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.  
(Handt Hanson, text and music 1985 Prince of Peace Publishing)*

Unfortunately, it is true about life is that an unholy trinity is at work in all that we think, do and say – Martin Luther names the three dark powers as *the devil, the world and our sinful selves*. Any one individually – or any in combination – is always at work trying to **cause** us pain, **lead** us astray or **use** us to bring suffering to others. And here’s the kicker – at times, those things can happen even when we’re sure that we’re doing what God wants us to do.

Where do we go for help? Well, let’s turn to our bible passage and see if we can find something that can give us some strength. **Turn to Matthew 7, starting with v. 21.**

At first glance, it doesn’t look very promising, does it? Says Jesus:

<sup>21</sup> *“Not everyone who says to me,  
‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven,  
but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.*

<sup>22</sup> *On that day many will say to me,  
‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name,  
and cast out demons in your name,  
and do many deeds of power in your name?’*

<sup>23</sup> *Then I will declare to them,  
‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’*

So...it almost sounds like he’s saying that we’re not going to be saved, by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ – right? **Is that true?**

### **If not, then what’s his point?**

I think it **might** have something to do with the end of the first sentence where Jesus says, *but the only one who will be saved is the who does the will of my Father in heaven.*

So maybe, if we figure out what **that** is, what the **will** of our **Father** in **heaven** is, then we've got a chance at getting it right! Now, you'd think that the things listed there are all part of *the will of our Father in heaven*:

- prophesying in Jesus' name
- casting out demons in Jesus' name
- and doing many deeds of power in Jesus' name...right?

**So what are those people missing – what are *we* missing?**

**What would *you* say is the will of our Father in heaven?** In short, **what does God want us to do in life?**

I always go back to what Jesus says in response to the question he was asked: *Which commandment is the greatest?* Says the Lord,

***You shall love the Lord your God  
with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*** <sup>38</sup> ***This is the greatest and first commandment.***

<sup>39</sup> ***And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'***  
(Matthew 22:37, 39)

So **my** take-away here is that these folks who were prophesying, and casting out demons, and doing deeds of great power in the name of Jesus...failed only in this one thing: **they must not have loved God with all their heart, soul and mind – and did not love their neighbor as themselves.**

That **has** to be the essential ingredient of the soil in our hearts, right? With love of God and love of neighbor as the **rock** upon which the house of our hearts is built, then through **stormy times** – or quiet, through events that **shake** us to the **core** of our **lives** – or those that **fill** us with peace and joy, our house of faith will stand firm, and **Christ will use** us to be a blessing to others.

Let's sing hymn #512 again, **Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil...**

*Lord, let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your word.  
Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is  
understood.*

*When my heart is hard, break the stone away.  
 When my heart is cold, warm it with the day.  
 When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.  
 Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.  
 (Handt Hanson, text and music 1985 Prince of Peace Publishing)*

I think that Jesus has it **exactly right** – that there is **no foundation** more **firm**, **no base** more **blessed**, **no structure** more **secure** for our hearts than one that is founded on **love for God and love for our neighbor**.

I'm not sure if Ken Follett had this in mind when he wrote that great novel Pillars of the Earth...but it kind of seems so. And I don't think I'll ruin the story for you if I tell you that, in the end, the people with **hate** in their hearts get **punished** while those whose hearts are filled with **love** are **blessed**.

The priest who truly loves God is able to persevere and bless the people around him, while the self-serving bishop gets exactly what he deserves.

So let's embrace Jesus' call to do the will of our Father in heaven – loving God with all our heart, soul and mind – and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Now, one more time, turn to hymn #512 and we'll sing **Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil**...Amen.

*Lord, let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your word.  
 Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is  
 understood.  
 When my heart is hard, break the stone away.  
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