

Provoked by the Parables at Brentwood Presbyterian

The Two House Builders

October 30, 2011

**Psalm 43 and Luke 6:47-49
(Hymns – 65, 685, 400, 476)**

Foundations are important.
The foundations of foundations are equally important.

We've been fiddling and fussing with the foundation
of the platform at the front of the church here
for the past couple of weeks.
Don Hill, who preceded me here at Brentwood
as Transitional Minister
has been our chief rebuilding supervisor and tradesperson.

When we took the two risers out last week,
we discovered that the foundations under them
were not as solid as we had thought.
Before we proceed with the laying of a new subfloor,
we had to make the foundation under that floor stronger.
The old foundations weren't exactly sand,
but they weren't rock solid either.

Another image related to foundations
came into my mind this week.
Our friends, Gill and John Steel
(Gill was my wife Jill's business partner for 25 years
and remains one of her best friends)
have a house in Mexico
that was in the path of the recent Hurricane Rina.
When another hurricane, Wilma, hit their region in 2005,
more than 60% of the sand in parts was washed and blown away.
By the time Rina hit on the east coast of the Yucatan peninsula,
around Playa del Carmen and Cancun,
it had become a tropical storm –
still high winds and dangerous,
but not a hurricane.
As far as we know, Gill and John's place came through the storm
without serious damage.

It's foundations held in the midst of the storm.

This morning's short but powerful parable
about the builders and the foundations they chose
really draws our attention to the quality of the foundations
upon which we build our lives.

We used the three-legged stool image with the children this morning.
A two-legged stool just doesn't do it -
unless, perhaps, you're with Cirque de Soleil.

A two-sided foundation wouldn't do it for this building either.
Take out the foundation for that wall and that wall,
and we'd be more than a bit tipsy.

Add to those factors the firmness and trustworthiness of the ground
upon which we have built this sanctuary,
and you begin to see how important firm foundations upon firm foundations are.

So, what about the foundations of our lives?
How firm and trustworthy are they?
How attentive are we,
how careful are we,
to ensuring that they remain strong in the face of the storms
we face day by day?
That's really what this parable is about.

There are three forms of rock upon which our lives are built
from the perspective of the Christian practice of life.
Paul summarizes them as well as anyone writing in the Scriptures
when he reminds that stormy community of Christians at Corinth
what really abides.

*... these three remain: faith, hope, and love;
and the greatest of these is love.
(1 Cor 13:13)*

These three are so intricately interconnected
that it is impossible to truly practise one without practising the others.

If you have genuinely accepted the gift of faith
offered by the Holy Spirit in the depths of your soul,
then you will have hope.

If you have the hope that comes from the redemption God achieved
in the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ,
then you will love.

All of those things are available to us here and now
because of what God did in Jesus Christ
and because God has chosen to continue to build his kingdom
through the work of the Holy Spirit.

But we do have to choose these foundations for our lives.
In this parable, Jesus poses that challenge to his listeners,
then and now.

It's not good enough just to say, "Lord, Lord:
how wonderful is your name and are your deeds in all the earth."
Words alone are sand.
They drift around and away.
On their own, they are a facade of false faith.

But words with deeds,
words with obedience,
are the solid foundation
for faith, hope, and love.

Here's the vision in brief:
faith in a power, a life-generating force, that blesses the world;
hope that anything that gets in the way of this happening will be overcome; and
love as the way to live with one another to bring this vision to full realization.

No foundations other than faith, hope, and love,
all tied into one another and interconnected for mutual support and strength,
will suffice for facing the storms and floods of life in our contemporary world.

They originate in the steadfast and trustworthy grace of God in Jesus Christ.
They are made available to us freely and abundantly
through the stirring work of the Holy Spirit.

But we have to choose to build our lives on these foundations.
We have to choose to build our lives on this vision:
faith in a power, a life-generating force, that blesses the world;
hope that anything that gets in the way of this happening will be overcome; and
love as the way to live with one another to bring this vision to full realization.

By God's grace in Jesus Christ,
we can.