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Riverside Covenant Church
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Luke 6:47-49 – Foundations, Not Decorations

This past week, I received a call from someone from my hometown that I have not talked with for 10 years or so and he said that he was on a committee in my home town that had as their goal the rejuvenation and improvement of the education system in my hometown. He said they were profiling some “stars” that had gone through the education system in my Mt. Sterling and were now successful out in the world. Now before you get too excited about me being some sort of star, remember that the pool of folks to choose from is not exactly large. There were only 54 in my graduating class and I am partly a success because I clear across the world from Illinois to Indiana.

Anyways, his question for me revolved around **how my education in the Brown County school system prepared me to do what I was doing today**. And to be honest, at first, I thought not much. I remember when I went to college at Illinois and taking classes my freshman year not feeling that I was nearly as well prepared as my Chicago suburban friends who went to fancy high schools. One friend went to a high school with heated sidewalks. I was lucky if my school lunch was heated.

One of my first memories in college was talking with a guy on my dorm room floor and him telling me that he already had a semester’s worth of college credit because **he had taken AP courses at his high school**. I didn’t even know what AP credit was. I actually asked him if he was a journalism major or something because I thought he was talking about some specialized Associated Press classes that prepared him to be a better writer.

Needless to say **when I initially thought about my education in Mt. Sterling**, I wasn’t sure that I could give a ringing endorsement. I was saying to myself, well I took English in high school and I took Math in high school and I took Spanish in high school, but when I took them in college they were a lot tougher. But I was missing the point. The question was not whether I learned everything I needed to know in Brown County, but whether it was beneficial in getting me where I am at. And I couldn’t help but answer, “yes” to this question. Though it was not a perfect education and certainly not the quality that Dana, for instance, got in the Chicago suburbs or what students get in the school districts get here . . . My Freshman English class was ridiculous. We had spelling tests on words like, “horse” and “little.” Though my education was not as good as it could have been . . . it was a start. And I learned the basics. I received a

firm foundation, a stable foundation upon which all the other education that I gained could be adequately based. Without that foundation, without the start, I could not have gone anywhere . . .

Foundations are essential. They aren't glamorous. I have never once heard someone look at a house and say, "now that is a nice foundation . . . that foundation is beautiful." But if that foundation was not there . . . neither would the house be. Foundations are essential.

I know that the passage that is printed for you is Luke 6:47-49, but I want you to grab your Bibles and look at **verse 46** too. This verse sets up our first parable. The parable is a further illustration of this point that Jesus is trying to make.

Verse 46 says, **"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"**

The Greek word for "Lord" is kurios (koo(u)rios). It comes from kuros (koo(u)ros), which means supremacy. Thus we see in this word, "Lord," one who is supreme in authority. Some translations say, "master." Jesus' point is why do you call me your master or the supreme authority if you don't do what I say. It is a good question. It is a convicting question. Jesus' point is that you can call him whatever you want, but your actions will demonstrate what you really believe.

Jesus is telling us that our world needs, what our church needs . . . is not more Christian decorations, t-shirts, fish on the back of cars, or Christian talk . . . what our world needs is more Christian action . . . people that do.

One of the biggest obstacles to active faith in our church is when **we believe that we have faith yet we are not at all concerned with how our lives align with the demands of that faith.** This might sound harsh, but I believe it is true. Jesus Christ is not Lord of your life if you are not trying to do what he says. Let me say that again. Jesus Christ is not Lord of your life if you are not trying to do what he teaches.

I am not speaking of perfection here. I am speaking of the spiritual journey of trying to be more and more like Christ. If you do not care about becoming more like Jesus Christ, then you are not a follower of Jesus Christ.

One of the questions that I was asked for the article in my hometown newspaper was **what principles have guided me through life thus far**. I named several things, but one of them was that I seek to find people that I admire, learn from them, then to do what they do. It is really quite simple. I find masters of various things, I watch them, and then I get better and better at doing what they do.

In law school, especially during the first two years, for each class your grade comes from one final exam at the end of the semester that is worth 100% of your grade. There are no assignments throughout the semester, just this final exam which lasts several hours at the end of the semester. It is pretty stressful because you don't really know how you are doing, whether you are getting the concepts, until the end and by that time it is too late. So **what many students do is form study groups** to discuss the material each week and to bang ideas off of each other. Well, I waited 3 weeks into my first semester and I found 4 students that I believed seemed to "get it" during class discussions and I approached them and they became my study group. And as I proceeded through the semesters I watched what they did and I did those things too. When they found concepts important that I had neglected, I studied them. When they devoted themselves to specific ideas because they figured they would be on the exam, I did too.

What made that work was not that I thought that I understood everything when I heard them talk about how they had studied . . . what made that work was that **I took what I learned from those study groups and I went home and I did what they had been doing**. I could have talked about how smart they were, and how good their methods were until I was blue in the face . . . but until I started doing them . . . my belief was hollow, it would have had no effect.

Said another way. Unless you act. **Unless you do the hard work . . . your words mean nothing**.

If you really believe something you will try to do it. You may not always succeed, but you will try.

When I was in college I took a class called "**Feminist Political Theory**." I still remember the professor's name, Samantha Frost. The class began with 20 students, 16 women and 4 guys. After 2 weeks the other 3 guys dropped the class, but I have never been much of a quitter . . . so I stuck it out and it was an adventure. I got a D on my first paper and then I got another D. I had never really struggled that badly in a class before and I went to talk with the professor and she asked if I really cared about the subject matter. And I said, well, I want a good grade . . . I want to do well. And I will never forget what she told

me. She said, “you won’t do well in my class if you just want to get a good grade . . . you have to care about the material. I can tell you are writing for a grade, but I need you to write as if you care what you are writing about.” For a couple days I complained about gender bias and feminists and how she was out to get the guy in the class, but when the emotions floated away I realized she was right. She had called my bluff. I was faking it to make it. So I started to care. I began to process what I was reading and I began to reflect on it and I began to write not in a vain search to please the professor, but to articulate what I thought. And I did not get an “A” in the class, but my words were no longer hollow. I began to examine and wrestle with issues I had never approached before.

In our passage this morning, Jesus is telling us that **we must examine our words**. We must examine our lives and ask whether they are hollow. Do we really believe what we say? Do our actions demonstrate our faith or reveal that we don’t have much of one?

We toss Christian words around a lot. We say that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. There is that word, “Lord” again. We say “Jesus is our master . . . he is the supreme authority in our lives.” When you make a decisions, do your turn to your master? Do you really let Jesus make the calls in your life? Do the words, “Jesus is my Lord and Savior” mean anything or are they simply the pass code to get into heaven? In this parable that Jesus is sharing with us . . . he says quite plainly . . . those words are not enough . . . true confessions of faith are made real by our deeds.

Jesus uses the example of two men building houses. The first man finds a sight for his house and digs really deep so that the foundation of the home rests upon rock. The second man does not take the time for a foundation at all and just builds his house on the ground. After the houses are built a storm comes. The house built without a foundation collapses and is completely destroyed. But the house that was built upon a firm foundation in rock could not be shaken because it was well built.

We are going to talk about parables as we go through the parables in Luke that are confusing and the message is really difficult to understand. This is not one of them. Even someone like me that knows virtually nothing of home construction knows that a foundation is pretty important. I know when a tornado comes that I would rather be in a house with a basement than a mobile home. The deeper the anchor, the better chance the house has at enduring the storm.

But it is not just depth that is important . . . it is finding something firm to be rooted into. Anyone that has driven down the roller coaster that is Lindberg Road knows this. The supports for that road go plenty deep . . . but there is not much rock under there . . . going deep in stuff that is not very strong is not very helpful.

So we have some lessons Jesus is helping us to understand here.

First, find the rock. Second, spend the time to go deep into it.

In John 14:6, Jesus says, **“I am the way and the truth and the life.”**

Isaiah 26:4, says, **“Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.”**

Psalm 95:1-3, **“Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods.”**

Psalm 62: 1-8, **“Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken. How long will you assault me? Would all of you throw me down— this leaning wall, this tottering fence? Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place; they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse. Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.”**

God is our Rock. Jesus is our Rock. No matter what other foundation you think you can build upon, it will fail. If not on earth, it will definitely fail in the final judgment at your death or the end of the world, whichever comes first. Unless the foundation of your life is built on God, your life will collapse and be destroyed.

It does not do any good simply to know what the rock is though, **you have to dig deep into it.** You can find the firmest earth on the planet, but you can't just build on top of it, you have to dig down into it.

Many of us know that Jesus is the rock, but **we have not spent much time digging deep into Him.**

Knowing this, how do we make God our foundation and dig deep into it so that we know we are secure. Well as we have talked about, Jesus compares the man building his house on the rock to faithful people who not only hear what he says and teaches, but take the vital step of doing what he says.

I am glad you are here this morning and I hope you come back next week and every week after that, but if you believe that being here on Sunday morning and staying awake during my sermons is what it means to be a Christian, then you are mistaken. Being here might be a start, but it is just that . . . it is absolutely not the end. Attending our Sunday service is not what it means to be a Christian. We must seek more opportunities to be exposed to the Rock and we must daily seek to do what it is that we are learning and encountering. In fact, to truly learn something is to do it.

Do you want to hear something scary? Did you know that the moral, spiritual and relational foundations of people's lives are determined primarily by the age of 13. 13! Parents, you have a vital role to play in the faith development of your kids. What foundation are you giving them? Riverside has invested a great deal of resources, both human and financial in our children's program. Dad and the teachers spend hours preparing biblical lesson designed to help your children grow spiritually. But to be honest, probably less than half of our parents take advantage of our Discovery Hour.

Just to clarify again, too. There is a difference between what we do during Children's Church, where the kids are right now and what happens during Discovery Hour at 9AM on Sundays. Right now the kids are doing faith-based things, but they are rotating between faith-based music, crafts, games and movies each week. During the Discovery Hour at 9AM though, this is our intentional teaching time. Each age group studies a key biblical theme and learns how to live it out every day. For instance, this morning the **3-5 years olds** studied Jesus' ascension into heaven and learned that Jesus is always with us so we can trust him even though we can't see him. And the **K-3rd graders** learned that we must not covet the things others have, but must work to prevent those temptations so that we won't fall into the sin of envy or stealing. And the **4th and 5th graders** learned about becoming more equipped to share the Gospel with other kids. They learned about spiritual battles and how they must be armed with God's Word to be effective. And the same types of things were taught to the **Junior High and High School students.** They have been looking at Jesus and asking how their lives can be so radically different that others wonder what they have that they are missing.

Now if you are sitting down with your kids each week and teaching them these things . . . thank you . . . to be honest you might not need to have your kids here at 9AM. But statistics tell us most of you don't do that. We want to help you develop a spiritual foundation for your children, but we need you to make it a priority. I realize that 10:15AM sounds better than 9AM. I realize that you are tired and there is lots of busyness in your lives, but I believe you must make the spiritual lives of your children a priority. Some of asked me why we don't just have the Discovery Hour teaching for the kids during the service. The primary reason is that this intentional teaching is best done when the same teacher at least teaches the month long units or the whole semester, if not the year. And so we would have adult teachers who could never participate in the Sunday Worship service if they were at the same time.

The task does not end with getting your kids to Discovery Hour, though. That is a start. You must regularly talk with them about your faith and their faith. Let them in on how you process decisions. Help them walk through decision making-processes that include prayer, biblical guidance, and discernment. We are actually working on ways to help you do this. As a start, Dar puts the topics for Discovery Hour in the Riverside Waterline each month. Ask them what they are learning. Share with them what you are learning.

My point is simply this. **Foundations are vital.** And they are especially vital for your kids at this time in their lives. If they wake up and tell you they don't want to go to school, you make them get up and go because you believe it is important. If they don't want to go to sports practice, you tell them they have to go because it is important to keep their commitment to their team. They see and learn from your priorities. When they tell you they don't want to get up and come to church on Sunday . . . why do we give in? **Where does the spiritual foundation of our children's lives rank in our priorities?**

I had a parent tell me at a former church that they don't pressure their kids to go to Sunday School because they want to let them make the decision themselves. And so I asked her what she does when he kid wakes up and doesn't want to go to school. She said she made her go. And I asked her what she does when her kid didn't want to brush her teeth and she said she made her brush her teeth. And I asked her what she does when her child is not polite and doesn't say please and thank you and she again said she made her. And then I asked her why those things were more important than learning about Jesus Christ and the creator of the universe.

What are we building our lives upon? **What is our foundation?**

I have used your children as an example, but **the same principle applies to us adults.** We have adult Discovery Hour too. It is a chance for you to spend 1 hour in biblical discussion with others. We have Men's and Women's Bible studies, we have small groups that study the Bible and walk through life together . . . where are you investing your time. Again, let me emphasize, if you can honestly say that you are studying the Bible on your own, or you are involved in other opportunities in our community to regularly pray and develop your faith . . . that is great, keep doing it . . . But for those of you who are not . . . it is time to start building your foundation. **It is time to make your profession of faith active in your life.** All of us must ask, what does our daily prayer life look like, how often are we reading the word, when are we sharing our faith, do we know our neighbors . . . how our beliefs made evident in the material we are using for our foundation.

It is not going to be easy. It is hard work digging deep into rock. But the deeper you go, both for you and your family . . . the more steady you will be. I am not saying everything will instantly turn into blue skies and warm breezes . . . but when the storms of life come, when the world floods you . . . you, your kids, will have a firm foundation in Jesus Christ. And that Rock is eternal.

Jesus doesn't want us simply to decorate our life with Christianity . . . Jesus wants a life built . . . founded upon our faith.

References consulted:

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