

TO STAND ON OUR ROCK JESUS CHRIST

Through September I pondered over our final young people's service for this year. It stirred in my heart as I reflected on the events of this past year, tragedies, deaths and the chaos that happens in our world. We had just witnessed the murder of Charlie Kirk, and we are seeing our family of faith persecuted all over the world, from Nigeria to Somalia, and many more nations. I sat in that space with God, which led me here this morning with our message. How fitting that the word that came in that space was this - **To Stand on our Rock Jesus Christ**. Our solid foundation in a broken world. We'll look at what this means, keeping in mind the readings from this morning.

The wise and foolish builder **Matthew 7:24-27**, from the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus is preaching to a large crowd. We start off with the Beatitudes (the blessings). The parable is spoken at the end of the sermon, after all His teachings. He uses this parable to show the distinction between those who listen and follow His teachings as opposed to those who hear His words, but do not listen nor follow. The "house" represents our lives, and the rock is Jesus, Jesus being the firm and solid foundation. The "rains and the winds" is what we face in this world, both internally (within) and externally (outside). If our house is built on anything but Jesus, then our house is on sand, representing unstable ground. Unable to withstand the violence of the rains and the wind, the house on sand crumbles and crashes.

The Good Shepherd, **John 10:7-18**. Here Jesus is speaking among a crowd, His disciples and the pharisees. Here, His speaking to those who have willing ears, and to those who don't. His speaking to those who are open to receive Him, as opposed to those who are not.

This highlights a separation, between the sheep and those who are not of the flock, who's hearts are hardened and who's ears are deaf to the truths of the Gospel. These are the people who refuse to hear. Before our passage, **verse 6** says Jesus used this figure of speech, but the pharisees did not understand what He was telling them. Their hearts were hardened to the point where they were merely listening to rebuttal Jesus, they weren't seeking to understand because they had their own agendas, as we see through the gospels.

Where Jesus calls Himself the good shepherd, He is speaking to the intimate relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. What do sheep do? They follow their shepherds without hesitation. Jesus says that He knows His sheep and His sheep are to know Him and ultimately, there will be one flock and one shepherd. Where the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, Jesus is our protector against the thief and all evil. We see Jesus lay His life down for His sheep and as Jesus explains, He has the authority from the Father to take it up again, we see this in His resurrection.

Our two readings show how we are meant to Follow Christ: to Hear His words and to trust and obey

Here, we will focus on knowing who we are in Christ and building that strong foundation. This will tie in on us building our lives on our rock and following Jesus as our good shepherd.

What does it mean to stand on our rock Jesus Christ?

It means our lives are to be solely built on Jesus. To repent and accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. To confess our sins to God and to seek His forgiveness (**Psalm 51:1-6**). We are to give our hearts to God, for Him to render in us a new one, clean and pure (**Psalm 51:10**). To turn away from our old ways, reject old behaviours, and be transformed and renewed in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul writes “therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away; behold, the new has come”. Paul goes on to say as Christ reconciled us to Him, He has given us the ministry of reconciliation, entrusting us to testify to this, that we were once separated from God but now, through Christ, we are reconciled to God (**2 Corinthians 5:18-21**). We are called to turn from our old ways and start living new in Christ.

Coming to repentance is a heart-wrenching cry to God, we are recognising our sin as evil and immoral, even down to the bad habits we dance with. In Greek, the word repentance is translated as “metanoia”, meaning to change one’s mind. In Hebrew, we have “teshuvah”, meaning to “return”. Our minds and our inner-being is to be changed, we return to God, we come back to the core of who we are, to who God has created us and intended for us to be (**Psalm 139:13-16**). To have a repentant heart is merely more than saying “sorry” for our sins, it’s to seek a complete change to be transformed in the grace of God. To receive the Holy Spirit, the Helper, into our lives, to provide understanding and to be our guide until the end of the age (**John 14:26**)

John the Baptist makes a call to repentance in **Matthew 3:8** Bear fruit in keeping with repentance and in **Matthew 4:17** Jesus says “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. To bear fruit in keeping with repentance means our outward actions should be an extension of our inward faith, there should be a visible change in who we are, a transformed life that our fruits attest to (**Matthew 7:15-20**).

We come to Jesus in repentance to be at utmost surrender with Him, because the mind governed by flesh is death but the mind in the Spirit is life and peace (**Romans 8:6-11**). The “flesh” Paul talks about in this context is the innate human nature that is in alignment with things not of God, it revels in sin and carnal desires whereas the Spirit is from God, this is the Spirit that dwells within.

Surrendering completely was where I would fall. We’re called to surrender 100%, even just hiding 1% means you’re not in surrender with God. To surrender is to strip yourself bare completely. But I withheld. My mouth would praise my Lord, my brain was learning the scriptures, but my heart was far from Him. Because I would hide away in my doubt and shame. Rather than surrendering it to Christ and exposing the darkness that I was living in so it could be cleansed, I hid it away because I was ashamed. I was ashamed to show the dirt and the filth in me. Rather than coming to my Father in complete surrender, I was keeping parts of myself shackled in a cage and I wasn’t relinquishing that control.

And that’s what the enemy will use. The devil will manipulate your shame, turn it into disbelief and whisper lies to keep you bounded. The enemy will aim to keep you imprisoned in the confines of your mind, to keep you from reaching that point in Christ where He solely becomes your foundation. Jesus tells us to remain in Him, as He remains in us because apart from Him, we can do nothing (**John 15:4-5**). We need to put our whole trust in Him, to give it all to our Saviour, because only He can make the darkness run.

God in His unending mercy found me and saved me. He reached into the depths of my soul and plucked me out from the depths of hell. When we enter the gate, which is Jesus, we are saved (**John 10: 9**). When I opened my whole heart, He restored me, the cell that my mind was in opened. I am an imperfect person, only made perfect in the blood of Christ.

Paul writes in **Ephesians 1:7** “in Him we have redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace”. Jesus freed us from our chains when He

died on the cross for us. We are redeemed in Christ through His blood, all past, present and future sins, washed clean in God's grace. We no longer walk in the dark, but we become children of the light (**Ephesians 5: 1-20**). No longer condemned nor separated, but free in the riches of God's grace. And that's what it means to stand on our rock, Jesus Christ, to live a life of full surrender, He is to become our full foundation. Now the call is to follow Him.

What does it look like to stand on our rock?

As the young people say, when we "stand" we are on ten toes. However you like to say it, this is what we are to look like. We are to be "ten toes" on our Lord Jesus. Our mission is to know Christ and to make Him known. We cannot do either, unless we know the word of God. In **Matthew 7:24**: Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock". Here we will look at the importance of the word in shaping who we are in Christ.

With the parable of the builder, Jesus emphasises the importance of us hearing His words and following, He speaks to the significance of us obeying Him. When we do, our house has its foundations on the rock. Where we can't be shaken nor moved, its foundation is on solid ground. In John Jesus emphasises the importance of being able to hear Him, in **verse 16** He says, "they too will listen to My voice". If we are not in the Word, then we cannot 1. Know His words and 2. Hear Him, if we cannot do either then we cannot follow.

The truths of God are written in scriptures. If we are not in the Word, then we're opening ourselves up to outside influence, to worldly noises. In **2 Timothy**, Paul writes scripture is God breathed, he notes the importance of the word for us to be equipped (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). Without His word, we live in spiritual blindness and our heart posture, meaning our inner workings, are without the guidance of God. Essentially, we become spiritually dead, as our inner workings become guided by temporal things of this world, instead of the eternal.

In **Romans 12:2** Paul writes, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will". We are meant to step into this space with God, to come into the word to begin to transform and renew our minds in the Holy Spirit, to be fully transformed and refined. Where Paul writes to not conform, he is appealing to the Roman Church who was the recipient of this letter, and to the church of this age, to not fall in line with the world. God's word is timeless, and it transcends through all ages (**Isaiah 40:8**)

To "not conform to the pattern of this world", Paul means to not be controlled by its behaviours, culture and "truths".

The world has its "truths". When we go against that "truth", we are going against the flow of what society deems as "correct". This can cause temptations to lead us to try and "blend-in", leading to us compromising our faith to "fit in". This causes an identity shift when our identity is meant to be rooted in Christ, because the more in the word you are, the more you'll realise that the world tells us to turn in one direction, but Jesus gives us a whole new way. In a world which is divided and cause of confusion, to stand in alignment with God is unity and stability. We cannot be illiterate with the scriptures, because we cannot afford to be compromised. We cannot be one foot with Jesus and one foot with the world (**Revelation 3:15-16**). Following Jesus isn't a life of compromise it is a life of surrender, of obedience over disobedience.

We need to have ears that can listen, eyes to perceive and hearts willing to accept. Our hearts need to be hearts of flesh to receive the word of God (**Ezekiel 36:26-29**). Flesh in this context is softened hearts.

If we choose not to, then we walk a dangerous line where outward we are clean but on the inside is nothing but greed and selfishness (**Mark 12:38-40**). Jesus says that if we are ashamed of Him and His words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His Father's Glory (**Mark 8:38**). In **Luke 6:46** Jesus says "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? In Luke's gospel, Jesus says this before He speaks the wise and foolish builder parable.

The importance of knowing God's word and following is echoed through the Bible and we see time and again, the cost of disobedience over obedience; from the fall of man (**Genesis**) to the 40 years of wandering in the dessert (**Exodus- Deuteronomy**), to the fall of King Saul (**1 Samuel**) to the Assyrian and Babylonian exile (**2 Kings, 2 Chronicles**) and so forth. The word needs to bleed into our hearts (**Deuteronomy 6:6, Jeremiah 31:33**). Without it, our house will be built on nothing but sand and emptiness.

When we read the words of our Father, our identity changes. When we sit with His truths, our heart posture shifts. Rather than conforming to the behavioural patterns of this world, we become a reflection of our Father. That is the grace of God.

We are sinners but by the grace of God we are made clean. We need to recognise who we are without Christ; we were sinners destined for death and who we are now in Christ, God's children destined for eternal life. (**Romans 8:1-17**). We need to make every intention, to stay connected in the word, to let God mould us in His identity.

Paul notes the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (**Romans 6:23**). We are given two choices and shown the consequences of our actions should we choose either path. Choosing to live in sin is death, this is deliberate sin (**Hebrews 10:26**), but following our Lord, the gift is eternal life. The key word is "wages", a wage is what we earn for our work. In this case, death is what we would earn if we fall in with sin or, we accept the free gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus.

The grace of God isn't the freedom to sin, to be used as insurance, so we can live as we want but still reap the rewards of eternity. That is living in a world of depravity and sin of our choosing. Because Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us, so that we can be made the righteousness of God (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). In His mercy Jesus took what we deserved, the penalty for our sins and death. In His grace, He gave us what we didn't deserve, what we could never earn. He gave us forgiveness for our transgressions, His love, and eternal life in His resurrection. We are redeemed and free, our God calls us by name, and we are His (**Isaiah 43:1**).

And that is our confidence in our Lord Jesus. And that is what it looks like to stand on our rock, knowing who we are in Christ, His children redeemed and free.

Now, how can we remain firm on our rock?

Strengthen your roots and remain anchored in the Word. In Hebrews, we are told to mature in the faith and in this way, it's to move on from "milk" into solid foods (**Hebrews 5:12-14**). This is a journey we are taking, and we are to grow and persevere until the end (**Philippians 3:12-14**). One of my favourite verses is in **2 Timothy 4:7**, 2 Timothy is known as Paul's last letter before he was executed and here, he says "I have fought the good fight, I have

finished the race, I have kept the faith". When we reach our end, can we say the same? We need to be doers of the word not hearers only (**James 1:22-25**). The word of God is to be our daily bread.

Number 2. Having a prayer life is critical, it is our communication point with our God, and it is a two-way point. Pray consistently, pray without ceasing, seek God faithfully and boldly (**Jeremiah 29:13**). Paul says, "do not be anxious about anything but instead, pray about everything" (**Philippians 4:6-7**). Sit with God and learn to be still in His presence. Come to God, in repentance and surrender daily, with praises and petitions, with your wonder, and watch Him work. By having a prayer life alongside your Bible life, you'll be strengthened in knowing Jesus and who you are in Jesus. This will in turn, allow you to be on guard daily against the schemes of the enemy and the chaos that surrounds us, as **Proverbs 4:23** says: above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. And who is the best guard, but Jesus Himself?

Number 3. Our family of faith. We are called to be a community, to be the church. To our young ones, our elders have paved the way; it is up to us to take the torch. When I say that we are the church, I don't just mean within our four walls, I mean that every heart in this room, is the church as we are all members of the body of Christ. We are not confined nor restricted to a building. We are called to be bold to spread the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sow the seeds and watch as God plants and grows. We are merely messengers of the King, let us be His vessel.

Being a follower of Christ doesn't mean that we are exempt from hardship and yes, our world is broken. My encouragement to you is this, Jesus says "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (**John 16:33**). We already know how it all ends, we know who's won. Spoiler alert if you don't, Jesus wins. We have a hope that is solid in Jesus and a peace that transcends all human understanding. If you are looking for solace and peace, look no further, Jesus is where your peace is found. It's where my peace was found. Jesus doesn't promise an easy life but what He does promise us is this "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (**John 14:27**). And that is how we remain firm on our rock.

WRAP UP

Romans 13:11 Paul writes "And do this, understanding the present time: the hour has now come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed". That was written thousands of years ago, imagine today, how closer we are now than before.

Church, let us stand on our rock, in all we do, our foundation needs to be laid and solidified in Jesus. Where we were once separated from the Father because of our sins, Jesus tore the veil for us to be restored. This isn't so we can praise Him on Sunday and live how we please Monday-Saturday, our lives are to be a pleasing sacrifice to the King, that is our true and proper worship (**Romans 12:1**). We need to have that foundation solid, so we can stand steady on our rock Jesus, in faith, hope and love. He is our Good Shepherd, and we are His sheep.

Remember who you are in Christ and remember that we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us, nothing can separate us from His love (**Romans 8:31-39**). Let us not lose focus, but keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and on heaven. We have our mission, our calling,

let us go forth and press on, all for His Glory. Seek His Will first and foremost, and friends cling to Jesus. Let us Pray.