

Come and Listen:
A Parable for our Nation
Matthew 7:24-29

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Text Introduction: We are in a series for the summer on the Parables of Jesus. Jesus was a master story teller. People of Jesus' day were not really any different from people of today in the sense that they related to stories. Jesus took these stories using the familiar things of everyday life in the first century to capture the attention of His listeners.

When we encounter parables in the Gospels, there are a few basic interpretative principles that we must employ in order to get the real meaning of the text.

1. Understand the purpose of all parables. The literal meaning of the word parable is "to throw beside" or "to set beside." Jesus used parables to throw beside a teaching or an instructive principle. That leads us to the second consideration.
2. We must seek to understand what that principle is. "What is the main point" is the question we should be asking. Most times, if not all times, there is something in the context that reveals precisely what the main point is and the story simply illustrates that main point.
3. Because we are looking for the main point, it is also important to understand that we need not press the details of the story, but rather seek to get the main point.

Today, I want to share with you my favorite parable. It has so many applications. I often share from this text at weddings because I think this story has an obvious application to marriage and families. This story also has an application to our nation and that is how I want to present to you today the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builder, so come and listen.

Text: ²⁴ "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash."

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹ because he was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes.

Introduction: A couple of weeks ago at the Southern Baptist Convention, I heard Ravi Zacharias preach. Many of you know that Ravi has a brilliant mind. He has the ability to debate philosophically as well as Biblically with the greatest antagonists to orthodox Christianity. Ravi, though, is also a great story teller and weaves these stories into his sermons and lectures to help his listeners understand the deep theological and philosophical truths he is teaching.

Studying this passage on foundations this week caused me to remember a story that Ravi told some years ago at the Louisiana Governor's Prayer Breakfast.

Ravi said that he was lecturing at the Ohio State University in the late 1980s. His host had picked him up, and they were driving to the speaking venue when they passed the Wexner Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of the Ohio State University.

Pointing out the building, his host said, "This is America's first postmodern building."

Ravi said, "I was startled for a moment and I said, 'What is a postmodern building?'"

His driver said, "Well, the architect said that he designed this building with no design in mind. When the architect was asked, 'Why?' he said, 'If life itself is capricious (erratic), why should our buildings have any design and any meaning?' So he has pillars that have no purpose. He has stairways that go nowhere, and rooms that are practically unusable."

Ravi said, "So his argument was that if life has no purpose and design, why should the building have any design?"

He said, "That is correct."

Ravi said, "Did he do the same with the foundation?"

All of a sudden there was silence.

Foundations predict futures for nations as well as individuals.

From what we have learned in recent weeks in this series on the Parables of Jesus, we should not be surprised that Jesus closed what has been called The Sermon on the Mount with a story. It is the story that drives home the point of all that Jesus had said in the sermon that is recorded by Matthew covering all of chapters 5, 6, and 7.

So, Jesus came to the end and said, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man....But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man."

Jesus' words are true for individuals. But, on this Independence Day Weekend, while we are thinking about the history of our nation, here in America, I want to apply these words to our nation so that we have a "Parable for our Nation."

"These words!" What are "these words?" In order to feel the full impact of this story and see its application to our lives and to our nation, we must spend at least a moment in recognizing what Jesus has just said before this story. Obviously, we do not have the time to review the whole Sermon on the Mount, so let's think about how we might summarize this large body of material.

A Godly foundation is described in terms of . . .

- **Attitudes**

These attitudes have been called the beatitudes. I like to say this—“Here are the attitudes to be.” You will notice these in 5:3-12. Now, there is much to say, but here’s what we can say today. Would our nation be any different if we were poor in spirit, mourned for the things that are wrong, humble, hungered and thirsted for righteousness, pure in heart, peacemakers, rejoiced instead of retaliated when we were insulted? We do not have to go any farther into this text today to realize that we would be a different nation if we adopted these attitudes Jesus prescribed.

- **Actions**

But Jesus did not stop with attitudes, He went on to actions. Again, just trying to summarize, and not having time to get into the whole of the sermon, let me just highlight these....

- Be salt and light
- Go the extra mile
- Have right priorities—in giving, praying, fasting, toward possessions, don’t worry so much
- Make sure you are on the road that leads to heaven

These are the actions of a Godly foundation.

- **Authority**

Why this foundation? Why is it better than any of the rest? (Verse 28-29) His authority was already being recognized. His authority is confirmed in the resurrection. He is the right authority because of who He is and what He did. He overcame death!

But, remember our thesis—Foundations predict futures. How are those futures described in Jesus’ story?

Predicted futures are described in terms of . . .

- **A Warning**

It collapsed and great was its fall.

- **A Promise**

Yet it didn’t collapse because its foundation was on the rock. When the rain falls, when the rivers rise, when the winds blow and beat against that house, we have a promise! The crisis is inevitable, but the conclusion is determined by the choice of the foundation.

So What?

Always believe that Revival Starts with Me!

My fear is that many might take my sermon today to be negative. Many will conclude that our nation has lost her way, we have forgotten a foundation that once was strong, and are now building on a

different foundation and we are bound for collapse. There is nothing we can do. We hold on and wait for the total collapse.

I don't want to believe that. Beyond that I want to remind us that revival starts with us. What can one man, one woman, one teenager do?

We're outnumbered you say. Well don't tell that to Andrew Jackson. Jackson said, "One man with courage makes a majority." Don't tell that to Gideon. Do you know Gideon's story in Judges 6-8. Gideon lived in the time of the Judges. The summary statement about these times is that things were so bad "everyone did what was evil in God's sight and right in his own eyes." Once in these times when the Midianites were oppressing the people of Israel, God raised up Gideon to be their leader, their deliverer. Now, according to the Bible, Midian had 135,000 warriors and Israel had 32,000 ready to go to war, but God said to Gideon, "You've got too many troops." He told Gideon to say to the troops if any of you are scared, you can go back home. Gideon did and 22,000 left leaving him with 10,000. God said to Gideon, "You've still got too many troops." God told Gideon to take them to the water and He would test the men there. Those who just stuck their faces in the water were dismissed. Those who lapped the water using their hands remained. The remaining troops numbered 300. God said, "Now, we are ready." And they routed the Midianite army with those 300 men by blowing trumpets and breaking pitchers that covered their lamps. In their confusion of the noise, the Midianite army routed themselves.

One with courage, Jackson said is a majority. Gideon would say, "One with God is a super majority."

Pray for A Do Over!

That is pray for a return to Biblical principles and a return to dependence upon God.

I wanted to make sure I got the story about the Wexler Center right. I wanted to verify certain details of the story. My search for information led me to a very interesting discovery. Though the Center only opened in 1989, less than 15 years later, the Center had to undergo a 15.8 million dollar do-over. Almost from the beginning, the building leaked, walls let too much light in threatening to damage the collection of artwork it was built for, and on some days, flaws in the mechanical system caused the interior temperature to swing by as much as 40 degrees.

Foundations predict futures! Now, let me close with this. What is true for a nation is certainly true for us as individuals? Hear the words of Jesus. Note His warning. Note His promise. Trust His authority to reveal these things to us.