

## Settling for Sand

Luke 6:46-49

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**Summary:** Through the course of life, all people decide what kind of foundation they want to build their reputation, their actions, their lives upon. Jesus commands His followers to build their lives on the foundation of His inspired Word, rather than the sandy, uneven, shifting foundations of the world. For those of us who follow Jesus, our foundation is the unmovable, unshakable, unchanging foundation of both the Person and the preaching of our Lord.

One author pulled an event from early American frontier days where one of the early settlements had been built around the lumber business. The town grew in size and prosperity. Eventually, the citizens of this town wanted to build a church, which they did, and a minister was called to serve the church and this community as pastor. Initially, he was well received.

But all that changed one afternoon when he was down by the river and saw some of the men dragging logs onshore, which had been floated down river from another town. The logs had been stolen; they clearly had been stamped on the end with the owners' personal stamp, which was the custom of that day. He watched as several men from his church pulled in the logs and then sawed off the end of the log that bore the stamp.

The following Sunday, he bravely preached a sermon from the Ten Commandments, "Thou shall not steal." Afterward, everyone shook his hand and spoke highly of his fine sermon.

Well, that wasn't the response he'd been expecting, so he prepared another sermon and the next Sunday, he preached from the same text again. Only this time, he applied it specifically by saying, "Thou shall not steal, nor cut off the ends of thy neighbor's logs."

Following the service, they ran him out of town.

<https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2014/april/6041414.html>

It's one thing to preach; it's another thing to point your finger when you preach.

And that's exactly what Jesus is about to do as he concludes His sermon on the plateau.

I invite you one last time to **chapter 6 in the Gospel by Luke**. I want you to notice how the Lord changes His tone and His demeanor. As far as I can tell, He begins to point His finger at individuals in this crowd.

**Notice verse 46:**

*“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”*

*Luke 6:46*

Why do you—why are *you*—calling me, Lord?

That can be understood as a title of respect, like we might call a man “Sir.” But it can also be understood as a claim to divinity; Lord was the common Greek translation in the Old Testament for Yahweh.

And considering this context here, Jesus is demanding to know why they aren't obeying Him, so the term Lord is obviously more than respect; calling Him Lord would be an acknowledgment of His Messianic claim.

And they're not just calling Him 'Lord' but 'Lord, Lord,' “Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord?’” They're not just being polite, they're rather passionate about it, and evidently public about it.

Adapted from Daniel M. Dorian, [Matthew](#) (P&R Publishing, 2008), p. 304

The problem is nothing about who Jesus is made any personal change in who they were.

*“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”*

*Luke 6:46*

In other words, “Why are you calling me **Lord** with your lips, but not with your lifestyle?”



**In what ways can a person act like a Christian without being one? What is the difference between acting like a Christian, and exhibiting the genuine fruits of the Spirit?**

In his comments on this text, written in 1879, J.C. Ryle called this: “Profession without practice . . . they hear Christ's words but are not interested in doing Christ's will.”

J. C. Ryle, [Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke](#) (Evangelical Press, 1879, rep: 1985), p. 99

They are pretending to be disciples of Christ.

And Jesus doesn't pull any punches here. “How can I be your Lord when I have not changed your life? You've listened to my sermon, you haven't missed a word, but I know your heart; you have no genuine desire in taking my words and putting them to work in your life. You're just pretending!”

And with that blistering declaration, Jesus moves on to warn them of a future disaster, not just in this life, but in the life to come.

And he does so by giving them a compelling illustration from the lives of two men involved in home construction.

First up is the genuine disciple who is constructing a house that is built to last—**verse 47**:

*“Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.”*

*Luke 6:47-48*

Literally, it was built to last.

In Matthew’s parallel account, he simply says that the builder built a house, but Luke gives us the construction details here: this builder is digging through the sand and laying a solid foundation.

Darrel L. Bock, [Baker Exegetical Commentary: Luke, Volume 1](#) (Baker Academic, 1994), p. 621

He’s digging down until he reaches bedrock.

Jesus doesn’t say anything about how beautiful or grand this house was.

R.C.H. Lenski, [The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel](#) (Augsburg Publishing, 1946), p. 385

He doesn’t tell us if it was a two-story or ranch, or split level; if it was brick or hardy plank; Jesus doesn’t even tell us where the man built the house; in fact, the implication here is that both men are building their homes in the same neighborhood—using the same building materials and experiencing the same flood and windstorm.

One Greek scholar wrote that Jesus was describing a typical Palestinian autumn storm where fierce rains fall on the mountains and the resulting torrents create rivers and flooding that threatened the typical homes of the day.

Bock, p. 621

So, get this: Jesus is implying that everybody’s house experiences this; nobody can avoid these storms.

I say all of that so that we don’t miss the point here: the distinguishing mark between the genuine disciple and the pretender isn’t where they live, or what their house looks like, or even the fact that they experienced storms in life. No, the distinguishing factor is that one of them is anchored to the rock and other one is anchored to sand.

This genuine disciple has anchored his house to a rock foundation—and this “rock” refers to Jesus’ opening comment—this is the person who not only hears the words but does them.

In other words, this disciple’s house—his life—is tethered to the words of Jesus Christ.

I couldn't help but think of that classic hymn of the faith, written in the mid-1700s. A pastor by the name of John Rippon published a hymnal that included this poem. As an aside, John Rippon pastored the same church for 63 years. I'm only at 35 years, which means we have every reason to believe that we might finish the Gospel of Luke!

John Rippon matched this anonymous poem to a secular American melody when it was published; here are some of the lyrics inspired by the Lord's closing illustration in Luke 6:

*How firm a foundation, ye  
saints of the Lord,*

*Is laid for your faith in His  
excellent word!*

*What more can He say than  
to you He hath said,*

*To you who for refuge to  
Jesus have fled.*

*The soul that on Jesus hath  
leaned for repose,*

*I will not, I will not desert to  
its foes;*

*That soul, though all Hell  
should endeavor to shake,*

*I'll never, no never, no never  
forsake.*

Taken from Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul* (Thomas Nelson, 2003), p. 82

Now with that, the Lord shifts our attention to the pretender, the professor

of Christianity but not the possessor of Christianity.

**Verse 49:**

*“But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”*

*Luke 6:49*

Evidently this builder built a house in the same neighborhood; again, the implication here is that it's basically the same style and built with the same material as the other house.



**How can the same circumstance affect two people differently, based on the foundation they have built upon? How does being anchored on the rock impact your reaction to the regular challenges of life?**

The only thing is this builder skips over digging a foundation through the earth and he just builds it on top of the dirt. Matthew's Gospel uses the word for "sand."

Bock, p. 623

Now we're not told why he'd do such a thing. Maybe he wanted to save a little time and effort; maybe it was cheaper this way; maybe the latest trend was building on sand; maybe other people lived on sand, and they were doing just fine; or maybe a storm had never come through this area before, so why worry about it.

Besides, before this storm arrived, each of these houses looked just as secure as the other.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9 Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, editors (Zondervan, 2010), p. 230

But in this illustration, the point Jesus is making is that pretenders care more about what they look like—whom they appear to be in public where image is everything—so don't worry about the foundation; what's underground is not nearly as important as what's above ground.

These are the people Jesus said are calling Him "Lord, Lord." Mathew's Gospel elaborates on the fact that these people are not only religious but involved in religious service.

They're doing all sorts of things in the name of Jesus. But in the final analysis, they really don't know Jesus or care about Jesus.

And Jesus says that they can be identified as those who know about His Word, but care nothing about His will.

They'll listen to Jesus give a lecture, but they're not about to let Jesus change their lifestyle.

In the past few years, church leaders have come up with a term for religious pretenders, they're called "cultural Christians."

One author I'm currently reading wrote that this is the challenge facing the American church today: reaching those he called "unsaved Christians." In other words, these are people who claim the title Christian but have never been saved; they are not genuine followers of Christ.

He referred to this text here in Luke's Gospel by writing, "Jesus is not preaching to atheists here. He's preaching to people who had religion embedded in their lives. They could say, 'Lord, Lord' without any hesitation. So today, cultural Christians are not atheists; they believe Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that Mary was His mother. They have words like 'faith' and 'hope' hanging in their homes for décor. They think prayer should return to schools and appreciate celebrities thanking God during an acceptance speech; they nod with undiscerning approval when political candidates and sitting presidents end their speeches with the words, 'God bless America.' But ask who this God is, and He will be a generic God—a national mascot who cheers for the home team—a god who never demands repentance, self-sacrifice, obedience, or submission. To cultural Christians Jesus is a lucky charm; He's someone to put behind the wheel during a crisis and then left on the side of the road until the next crisis. Cultural Christians do not tell others about the gospel because it's offensive or

extreme to suggest that someone is a sinner who needs saving. But don't think too poorly of them; cultural Christians admire Jesus . . . they just don't follow Him."

Quotes taken and adapted from Dean Inerra, [The Unsaved Christian](#) (Moody Publishers, 2019)

That's the closing illustration here of Jesus. He says, "You're listening to Me preach this sermon, but you have no interest in obeying Me."

Now keep in mind in this closing illustration that everything is fine with both houses until this one event occurs, and it is this one event that reveals the quality of the work of these two builders. It's this sudden storm.

And this storm reveals everything.

Again, Jesus says here in verse 49b:

*"When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."*

*Luke 6:49b*

The last word in Jesus' sermon, in the original language, is this word **great**—the ruin of that house was great. It's the word mega. This was a mega catastrophe; this was a mega collapse; this was an incredible, total loss.

Adapted from Bock, p. 623

Listen to a paraphrase of this text by Petersen: "Jesus said, 'If you work these words [of mine] into your life, you are like a carpenter who dug deep and laid the foundation of his house on bedrock.

When the river burst its banks and crashed against the house, nothing could shake it; it was built to last. But if you just [hear] my words in Bible studies [or church] and do not work them into your life, you are like a carpenter who built a house but skipped the foundation. When the swollen river came crashing in, it collapsed like a House of Cards. It was a total loss."

Now imagine this scene on the plateau: Jesus has been preaching for quite some time. We're only given the cliff notes of His message; but in both Matthew's account and here in Luke's account, this is how Jesus ends His sermon: "The ruin of that house was great" "It was a mega disaster." Period. End of sermon.

There's no blessing; there's no "Let's have a nice day." Just crash!

Remember that little children's chorus on this text:

*"The foolish man built his house upon the sand.*

*The foolish man built his house upon the sand.*

*The foolish man built his house upon the sand.*

*And the house on the sand went splat."*

The end.

Splat! Sermon's over!

Now some of these people standing here listening to the Lord might have thought

to themselves: “My life hasn’t ended in disaster; in fact, my life has never been more prosperous; things are good!”

This was the confusion of Asaph who wrote Psalm 73. “I know unbelievers and they live prosperous lives; the ungodly prosper and even their death seems painless.”

There doesn’t seem to be any collapse. There’s no crash.



Do you know someone who is unsaved, but appears to be thriving? Have you ever been tempted to become bitter at the success of the wicked? How does this teaching affect your attitude toward those people?

But there is more to this sermon than your short life; this is a warning about an eternal destiny.

Matthew expands on this in his parallel account:

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father.”*

*Matthew 7:21a*

Wait a second. Jesus isn’t just talking about a coming flood; he’s talking about your eternal future.

And get this implication here in verse 21: Jesus is effectively saying that He determines who gets into the kingdom of Heaven.

Adapted from Douglas Sean O’Donnell, [Matthew](#) (Crossway, 2013), p. 200

He’s the gatekeeper of heaven. Suddenly, Jesus is more than a preacher here; He is the ruler over life and eternity.

Jesus says further in Matthew’s account, “On that day, many will say to me...”

Wait—on what day? When will many people be in the presence of Jesus?

On that day of final judgment where all the unredeemed will stand before the divine judge—described in Revelation chapter 20—and Jesus announces in this sermon on the plateau that the Judge just so happens to be Himself!

He’s claiming here to be the fulfillment of ***Isaiah 33:22, “For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our King.”***

Jesus isn’t just talking about a sermon now, He’s talking about a summons before the Lord of the universe where He Himself will declare this ultimate and final crashing, devastating, collapse—the eternal destiny and damnation of unbelieving mankind.

This isn’t just a wise sermon; this is the Lord’s severe warning.

There’s no middle ground here. The life you are living is either going to stand or collapse, and it all depends—it all

hinges—upon what you do with the words of Christ.

Adapted from R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: Volume 1* (Crossway, 1998), p. 248

You hear the word of Christ and know in your heart, “I can take it or leave it!”

Or you hear His word, and you know in your heart, “I can’t live without it.”

That’s the difference.

My friend, I urge you today to stop settling for sand. Your house might look good; you’re convinced it’s just as good as anybody else’s, but truth be told, you’re building it on the stuff and sand of earth.

I want to invite you today to repent of your sin and invite Jesus Christ to bring a wrecking ball and destroy your flimsy house built on the sand of earth and build a new one that’s anchored to the Rock of ages:

*On Christ the solid rock I  
stand*

*All other ground is sinking  
sand.*

Make that decision today before it is eternally too late.

Recently I read that if you lived to the age of 70, over the course of your lifetime you will make around 1.8 million decisions.

That’s a lot of decisions—big and small. Let me assure you that one decision will matter more than all the other millions of decisions combined: the decision you’re making concerning the Word of Christ.

Will it really matter? Listen to Jesus one more time predict the future of those who truly call Him Lord: He says “***Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.***”

Don’t settle for sand. Build upon the rock: the preaching, the Person Christ.

And when you do, you are building a lasting house, a lasting life.

By the grace of God and the gospel of Christ which you believe, you—a genuine disciple—are built to last forever.

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