



September 18, 2022

Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast

The Wise and the Foolish Builders

Jesus asked, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed, and its destruction was complete." (Luke 6:46-49, NIV)



A Familiar Story

Many wisdom folktales are connected to religious or spiritual traditions, and the story of the builders is no exception. I think almost everybody has heard this story from the New Testament. It appears twice: the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew chapters 5-7 and the "Sermon on the Plain" in Luke 6:20-49. The story is so familiar we know how it ends before we read the whole thing! In the next few weeks our "Sunday Blasts" will dig under the surface of stories to find meaning, wisdom, and relevance. A good start is to think of these stories as parables with different levels of meaning.

Levels and Challenges of Parables

One of my favorite New Testament experts, John Dominic Crossan, who has written extensively about parables, suggests a thoughtful way for us to continue our quest for wisdom in stories:

First, is the story a puzzle? Is there a right answer? We can imagine our Sunday School teachers asking us "Where is the best place to build a house?" And we all know the right answer. But, is the story really about houses? If our answer is "the story is more than that," we explore further.

Second, do the people, things, and events represent something other than what is in the story? In our lives, who are the wise and foolish builders? Are we ourselves one or the other? What foundations do we rely on that are important? What does the house represent to us: family, community, our spiritual life? What kind of shape are those things in?

Third, what does the story challenge us to do? Take a hard look at our "foundations"! Where do they need shoring up or replacing altogether? If we have built a firm foundation, what kind of a house (family, community, spirituality) are we building? What are our hopes for this house?

Some Advice! Think about the last few months of Sunday Blasts which pointed out themes in 1 Corinthians and James, especially worldly wisdom vs. divine wisdom. The little story above can become much richer and profound than we originally thought. And I hope it will help all us on our journey to Divine Wisdom – May it be so. Amen!

Let us keep in our prayers: continued recovery for Dawn, Bill, and Margo; all the students going back to school and their teachers; continued prayers for those suffering from extreme weather (Pakistan, Alaska, Mississippi, California); pray for ourselves as we continue to seek and live by the Lord's Wisdom. Lord, hear our prayers!