

Parables of Luke 6-7

Build Your House on the Rock

The final parable of Luke 6 is found in verses 46-49. Jesus addressed the problem of people who hear Him, but refuse to actually listen to Him. Those who would truly listen to Him would put His words into action; they would be obedient to His instructions! The problem that Jesus addressed here is one that is quite common in the religious world today as well.

Jesus spoke of those who called him “Lord, Lord...” This term has lost a lot of meaning, as many think of it as a type of second proper name for Jesus. To more fully understand the lesson that Jesus was teaching, we need to understand the significance of this phrase. Vines’ lexicon defines this word as:

kurios (κύριος, 2962), properly an adjective, signifying “having power” (kuros) or “authority,” is used as a noun, variously translated in the NT; “‘Lord,’ ‘master,’ ‘Master,’ ‘owner,’ ‘Sir,’ a title of wide significance, occurring in each book of the NT save Titus and the Epistles of John...¹

Using the term should have been (and should continue to be) an acknowledgment of the *authority* of Jesus. One who recognizes the authority of Jesus should also be convinced of the need to be obedient to Him. There were many then, as well as now, who try to call Jesus *Lord* without truly submitting to His authority.

In this parable, Jesus shows the foolishness of trying to call Him *Lord* with the mouth, but then not follow that up the kind of actions that He requires. In the parable, Jesus showed the difference between the one who would be obedient and the one who would not. He said that the one who heard His words, and put them into

1 Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr. *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* 1996 : 379. Print.

practice was like a man who, when he built a house, dug down to the rock to set his foundation. This house, when under the barrage of a severe storm, would be able to hold up to the abuse.

However, the one who would hear His words and then not do them would be like the man who went out to build a house, and built it without a foundation, on the surface. That house, when under the barrage of the severe storm, would not be able to hold up, and would be immediately destroyed.

This story makes it clear that it is quite foolish to try to identify Jesus as the authority, and then refuse to be obedient to Him. But, not only is it foolish, but it is also destructive. The storms will come. The question is: On what is his foundation built? How can he respond to the turmoil?

Jesus and His authority are clearly the rock that one must build their foundation on. He is the “chief cornerstone” (Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20). While these two figures are not exactly the same, they do portray the same concept. The foundation is to be built upon the cornerstone, that which sets the standard for all the rest of the building. In Jesus’ parable, He was showing that the house must be built upon the firm foundation. That which is built upon Christ, upon His authority, will withstand the storms that may assail it. To build on anything other than the authority of Christ is to doom to failure and destruction!

This parable speaks to the practices that Jesus instructed as well. There are many who hear, but do not do. Jesus expects that those who will be his true disciples will be obedient. They will put into practice all that He has commanded. This is emphasized by Jesus’ concise statement in John’s account of the gospel:

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. (John 14:15)

Those who continue to reject the instructions of Jesus, whether it be in the manner of their initial obedience, or their ongoing service before Him, are refusing to accept and submit to His authority. They cannot be His disciples! Only those who submit to His authority have a home in the kingdom of God (Matthew 7:21-23). For the many who believe that obedience is something that is not

required, Jesus teaching shows just how important it really is to be obedient. For those who continue to refuse to submit in obedience, destruction is ahead!

Parable of the Petulant Children

The next parable spoken by Jesus as recorded by Luke is in chapter 7:31-35. Jesus introduced this parable in a more traditional way, stating that He was comparing two things together. “To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like?” Many of the parables begin in similar ways (Matthew 13:33, 44, 45, 47, 52, etc.).

Jesus said that the “men of this generation” were like children calling to one another in the marketplace. There are times in which the comparison to children was a good thing (Matthew 18:3). However, that is clearly not the case in this parable. Jesus was not praising these men in any way. In fact, he was comparing them to the bratty kids who could never be satisfied. No matter what might be happening around them, they were determined to complain.

Jesus said that the children would sit in the marketplace and call out to one another. First, they would complain that they played the flute, and the others did not dance. Then, they would complain that they mourned (played a dirge) and yet, the others would not weep. They were convinced that they should be the center of all activity, taking control of how others acted. In fact, if others did not follow their lead, or respond to their desires, then they would mock them in public! This illustration shows that people have not changed much in the last 2000 years. People do the same thing today, and Jesus’ words would be just as accurate if spoken about people today!

Jesus did not leave it to the audience to interpret His parable on this occasion. He told them exactly what He was referring to. God had sent John the Baptist into the world, and he came “neither eating bread nor drinking wine...” The response to him was to say that he had a demon, because he did not behave the way they believed that he should. Then, when Jesus came “eating and drinking” they complained about His actions too! They said that He was

a “glutton and a winebibber...” This made it clear that the “men of this generation” could not be satisfied. No matter what the prophets did, the people would complain about it. The bottom line was that God Himself could not satisfy these people! His messengers were rejected for completely different (and opposite) reasons!

Jesus concluded this parable by drawing a contrast between the children who were calling to one another in the marketplace, and the children of wisdom. Wisdom, personified, had her own children who would not act like these petulant children. The children of wisdom would prove themselves by their own actions. They would stand apart from the children who complained at every turn, and would instead be able to accept the circumstances as they really were. Considering these children in Jesus’ application, we should understand that they would know why John was the more solemn of the two. They would understand why Jesus was celebrated and celebrating. They would not condemn His work as the child trouble makers in the market had done, but rather rejoice in His friendship with “tax collectors and sinners!”

Parable of the Two Debtors

Once again, the context of the next parable told by Jesus (Luke 7:40-50) relies heavily on the surrounding context. Jesus told the parable in direct response to the activities that were going on around Him at that moment in time.

Jesus was invited into the house of a Pharisee, a man by the name of Simon. When He went to the dinner, a woman who was a known sinner, came to the house, and approached Jesus as he ate at the table, and began to wash His feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and then anointed his feet with fragrant oil. Simon, when he saw this woman treating Jesus in this way, thought to himself: “This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.”

Jesus knew immediately what was in the mind of Simon. He clearly didn’t understand the mission that Jesus was on, and thought that if Jesus were really a prophet He should separate Himself from sinful people such as this woman. Rather than just rebuking

Simon, Jesus told a parable for his benefit.

Jesus told of man who had two others who owed him money. The first owed the man 500 denarii, while the second owed only 50. Both found themselves in the difficult position of being unable to repay their debt, and the creditor forgave them both. Jesus asked Simon, "Which of them will love him more?" Simon correctly answered that the one who had been forgiven more would love the creditor more.

Jesus clearly explained to Simon the meaning of the parable. Simon, who evidently thought that he was a good person, and not in much need of the saving grace of the Messiah, had not even made the normal preparations for hospitality of their day. Jesus rebuked him for not providing the water that would be customary for washing of feet, and yet this woman had been washing His feet with her hair and her tears since He had entered the house! Simon had not provided oil for Jesus' head, but this woman had used her fragrant (and most likely costly) oil to anoint His feet.

In the end of His application, Jesus tied the idea of forgiveness to the sins of the woman. He acknowledged that she was sinful, even declaring that her sins were many. Yet, through the love that she had shown to Him, she showed her appreciation for what He could do for her. He forgave her sins!

It seems that Jesus was also acknowledging that Simon was a pretty good man. He was one who needed "forgiven little," at least in comparison. The point here is not to suggest that one sin is less damaging, or less significant than another. It is, however, to show a distinction between how people view themselves. It was not about whether the sin they were guilty of would condemn them, but rather about the immense burden that one who was guilty of "much sin" was bearing. This woman realized the seriousness of her circumstances, and was willing to humble herself before the Lord. Simon, on the other hand (even though his sin was just as eternally condemning if not forgiven) did not see as much seriousness in his circumstance.

Many today face their sin in much the same way as Simon. They view themselves as doing much better than the people who are

around them and therefore not as needful of God's saving grace. They make the mistake of comparing themselves to others who are just as sinful, or more sinful than themselves. Such comparisons are not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12)! Such end up being much like the Pharisee in another of Jesus' parables (Luke 18:9-14). That man trusted in his own righteousness and also misunderstood his true standing before God!

In reality, all sin separates us from God! The one who has "little sin" is just as condemned as the one who has "great sin." Jesus' parable addresses the way we view sin, not the reality of sin! Those who have a greater appreciation for their sins will appreciate what Jesus has done to forgive them more than those who consider their sin to be rather insignificant. Those who think they need "little" when it comes to God's grace and mercy will love Him less than those who truly understand that they are eternally condemned by any sin, and thus in desperate need of His grace and mercy!

The distinction is made clear by Jesus' final actions in this context. He spoke, forgiving the sins of this woman, and the response among those who saw themselves as more righteous immediately questioned His ability to do so. Rather than rejoicing in His willingness to forgive, and therefore potentially offer them forgiveness too, they questioned His right to say that He was forgiving her! She left there forgiven, but they in their self-righteousness departed just as they had come.