

SAND OR ROCK?

Listen to the voice of God and respond with action.



Matthew 7:24-27

October 2022

Jesus told a story, during his 'Sermon on the Mount', about two men: one who built his house upon a rock and another who built his house upon sand. The house upon a rock weathered the storm, and the builder is called wise; but the house built on the sand collapsed

during the storm, and the builder is called foolish. The meaning of the story is quite obvious: proper foundations are necessary. Now Jesus spoke of builders and houses, but Jesus was not concerning himself with building construction and planning regulation violations - he was talking about us, we are each building a life and the proper foundation for life is, by listening to the words of Jesus - not just the hearing of them, but in the doing of them - or as James 1:22 says, 'But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.'

This story of the wise man and the foolish man makes me think of how we should act upon the words of Jesus, who is the Word or Voice of God. How do we know if our feet are firmly planted on rocky ground or if they are sinking into the slippery sands?

One of the challenges of living the Christian life is recognising what is God's voice and what is not. When we pray how do we know that it is God speaking to our hearts and is not simply our own mental script? Some experience I've had leads me to believe that what comes from God stays with us and takes root, it

deepens and grows and bears fruit. Also, what comes from ourselves often does not have a very long shelf life before we get bored or disillusioned, or fades into oblivion.

Another thing I've noticed is that what comes from God always seems to turn my attention away from myself and towards God, his people and God's creation. What comes merely from myself usually centres upon myself and the furtherance of my own personal kingdoms.

There are forces in our lives which, take us away from God. These forces seem to come from the world around us, filling our heads with many different voices and If we are not careful this tangle of voices can block out God's voice. This can prevent us from growing into the person God wishes us to be. This is when our anxieties take over and block out our true godly desires. For example, I want to be myself, without masks or disguises, but people might not like me. I want to say how I really feel, but it might destroy our friendship. I want to do something new and different, but I might lose my security. I want to give you a gift, but you might misunderstand my motives. I want to tell you I

love you, but you might reject me. My anxieties just get in the way.

Listening to God's voice gets easier when we start to recognise the things that actually take us away from God, as well as the positive movements that take us towards God. And once we recognise these things it becomes possible to start to feed the good plants that have been sown and to stop watering the weeds. What is of God is creative, life giving and new. What is not of God quickly becomes stale and boring over time.

Whenever we listen to God's voice, things change.

God's word for us and God's dream for the world cannot be entirely separated. I do not believe that the violence and the unrest and the turbulence we see around us is actually the desire of anyone. I do believe in the goodness of people. Almost all of us, thank goodness, do not go around killing one another. But we all bear resentments, and bitternesses, and unkindnesses, and the voice of God will always want to invite us into freedom, for ourselves and for other people.

The voice of God may be an uncomfortable one, and responding to the voice of God may feel risky and there may be something mysterious about how it works. But if it is of God, it will be a source of joy and fulfillment.

So I wonder what God might be saying to you today, this week, this year? It's probably not going to be a loud voice, and it probably will come in a sideways way. It may be speaking through your feelings, or perhaps by looking at what you are good at, and what God wants you to do more of. The recognition of God's voice might start with a dissatisfaction of the way things are, and a call to make a decision to change things. We are called by Jesus to make wise decisions on how we listen to his words and more importantly how we respond and act upon those words. God's vision for the world, for humanity and indeed the whole of creation is writ large in the life of his Son, Jesus Christ. Our call, as followers of Christ, is to tune into this vision and then make it our own through the way we live our lives.

Hear the voice of love and build your lives upon the firm foundations of Jesus the Christ. Plant your feet firmly upon the rock of Christ.

This was inspired by the words of Revd Kate Tuckett.

