

# "Building for Blessings?"

Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28

Matthew 7:21-29

May 29, 2005

## High School Graduate Recognition

What an exciting day. Not only do we have the privilege of gathering to celebrate with our High School Seniors this afternoon and for worship this morning, but I am also able to share with you the good news that our elevator has been repaired and is fully functional again. I am glad that so many recognized how important the elevator is for us.

Thinking of our repaired elevator makes me think of the day that Ole and Lena came to town. Ole and Lena and their son, Lars lived in a remote area of ND and recently made their first visit to the big city of Bottineau. They stopped here at the church and came in the front door and came face to face with the elevator. They'd never seen an elevator before, and Ole and Lars just stared at it, unable to figure out what that little room was for. Lena quickly lost interest and went to see what was on the bulletin board. It happened that one of the older ladies from the congregations came in and made her way to the elevator and went inside. The door closed and Ole could hear something humming for a moment. About a minute later the humming started again and the door opened and out came one of the stunningly gorgeous young women from our graduating class. Ole couldn't stop staring. Without turning his head he patted his son's arm and said, "Lars, get your mother."

Yes, it is great to have a fully functional elevator again. It is so nice that when you were building that addition you planned for the blessings that the elevator would bring.

Well, graduating class of 2005 - my friends - It is a great honor to be able to speak to you again as you prepared for this day of celebration and for the future that is opening up to you. For that matter, it is a great honor to be able to speak to all of you about this word of God today. - - - I gave some thought to sharing the story of Ole & Lena and the elevator and simply saying 'that's the sermon - think about it in relationship to the scriptures - Amen' - but then I would not get to preach and the spontaneous cheering would seem a bit odd in the midst of Lutheran worship. So .....

Jesus was just bringing a rather long sermon to its conclusion by the time He got to the part of the Sermon on the Mount which we have for our Gospel text today. It is a great conclusion that I would hold up as vital word for young people just on the verge of going out to build their own lives. But it is a good word for all of us because we are all about

the business of building our lives every day. That Sermon on the Mount began with a word about true blessings and included many very specific words about how we live our lives before coming to this conclusion. Build your life on a solid foundation - build on solid rock - because storms will come and you want to remain standing when the storm passes.

Will you build on the rock? I hear that meteorologists are predicting another record year of hurricanes with 3-5 major ones reaching land where people have continued to insist on building on the sandy shores. The storms will come - will you build on the solid rock?

Of course you know that we consider Jesus Christ to be that rock on which we build our lives. You have heard it all before. And I know that it is all very 'churchy' and it is probably exactly what you would expect me to say to you today. It is one of those church platitudes that we have all heard and can make many yawn. And I will confess that there are times when I have a hard time with some of the things I hear from the church and preachers. It can all be so pious and other worldly and it can seem like it is just coming from a bunch of religious nuts that don't know what they are talking about.

Very simply, I am telling you that your lives will be better if you build on the foundation of faith in God - I am saying that you will be blessed because you insist on every part of the building of your life being built only with Jesus Christ undergirding it. There are a lot of people in this world that say that's crazy - many non-Christians - even some people who deny believing in any god can appear to be doing pretty well in this world. There are plenty of non-religious folk that drive fancy cars, live in expensive homes, and generally have a great life. Does it really matter if you keep Jesus Christ in your life?

In our first lesson today, Moses addressed the people of God who had constantly fallen away from their trust in God throughout their wilderness wanderings. And they were continually called back to faith. Moses said it more directly and powerfully than I can imagine saying it. ***"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse; the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God ..... and the curse, if you do not obey ....."*** Do you believe it? - - - - It seems to me that there are times when people get some really wild notions about faith, God and the church. I have known people who truly believe that if you are a Christian - if you do the right things - you will be blessed in very concrete ways. I know people who believe that being a good Christian will mean that you will be happy, healthy, wealthy, good lookin' and you will always get the parking place closest to the place you want to go.

I received a letter from a man named Rev. Ike who wrote: *"Don't be a loser - be a winner..... The Spirit has given me an important message for me to give you ... According to the Word of God, This is your year to be free of money worries! ..... If you do what the Spirit told me to tell you to do ..... I will send you the "Lucky six winning Jackpot Package" The Spirit tells me that before 12:46 PM tomorrow you must send a Faith and Love donation of \$10 plus and extra \$6 [because \$6 is the number of creativity and action] - this is your pledge to God that you are not an Unlucky, Unbelieving Loser, by a Wise, Lucky, Blessed Winner."* Do you believe? Will you build your life on a foundation

of Jesus Christ? Do you believe what Moses says when he tells us that we are blessed in obeying God? — I believe it with all of my heart - but certainly not in the way Rev. Ike wants us to believe. There is no promise of earthly riches, perfect health, or parking places. When the door opens you will not be transformed from Lena into a beautiful teenager. But if you build for the blessing of God you will be lifted up. The very sure & certain blessings are in a life well lived, in compassion, love, forgiveness and strength - the blessings are in the assurance of an eternal life with God. Do you want these blessings of God? The scriptures make the simple claim - there are two options in life - blessing or curse - obey God or don't. You chose!

Congratulations on your achievements. We pray for you as you enter into this new beginning in your life. Build for blessing.

AMEN