

“I Am Persuaded!”

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***First Presbyterian Church
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Luke 6:46-49
Romans 8:38-39***

This fundamentalist Christian couple felt it important to own an equally fundamentally Christian pet. So, they went shopping. At a kennel specializing in this particular breed, they found a dog they liked quite a lot. When they asked the dog to fetch the Bible, he did it in a flash. When they instructed him to look up Psalm 23, he complied equally fast, using his paws with dexterity.

They were impressed, purchased the animal, and went home (piously, of course). That night they had friends over. They were so proud of their new fundamentalist dog and his major skills, they called the dog and showed off a little. The friends were impressed, and asked whether the dog was able to do any of the usual dog tricks, as well. This stopped the couple cold, as they hadn't thought about 'normal' tricks.

“Well,” they said, “let's try this out.”

Once more they called out to the dog, and then clearly pronounced the command, “Heel!” Quick as a wink, the dog jumped up, put his paw on the man's forehead, closed his eyes in concentration, and bowed his head.

Now, I hope I have your attention. I'm not looking for you to heel!! But I want you to consider a fundamental human issue, this morning. That issue is – to what degree are you persuaded – in having the Gospel, the “Good News” of Christ – as your foundation in life? How we have a plethora of choices to make in our lives! What is your foundation for your life? What is the bedrock of your belief systems? What guides you in your daily decisions?

I know we live in an era, a culture where so much seems “it's all up for grabs,” where there really isn't a foundation to stand secure on. But...something is under-girding you, your thinking and actions. There is something there. It may not be all that solid, it may be shifting, but it's there!

It could be a better, firmer foundation! Of that, I am persuaded!! And I hope, if you are not yet persuaded, you will enter the discussion, and be open to persuasion, in your own heart and mind. I'm talking about a way of life! A firm foundation in how to live! Allow me to retell a childhood story.

Way back when I was 12 years old, my father decided to build a larger porch on the back of our home. My brother David, (then 10 yrs old) and I were conscripted into digging the footer for the foundation of the much, much, much larger porch!

It was the middle of the summer – hot and humid. I believe the temperature reached 143°F during our child labor! And, of course my brother and I have nothing better to do with our time – “in the middle of summer!” We were excited and pleased to be doing all of that digging!

I can still visualize the scene. We had dug down about two feet, two feet wide and about 35 feet in length. Well, we thought we were finished! There we were, standing tall and proud in our two foot footer! Our dad came out to inspect and said, “Great job boys. Now, go two feet deeper.” Our countenances fell, as did our hopes for playing baseball that day. Our father explained to us that he did not want the porch cracking due to the lack of a deep and strong foundation. He wanted this porch to last a lifetime and then some. To date there are no cracks in that porch. My dad was correct we needed a deep, strong and secure foundation!

They knew this even back in Jesus’ time. Jesus knew this! We, you – need a solid foundation!! Jesus had something to say to those who disregarded this “reality” in life! Jesus shares: Those of you who pay attention to this fundamental rule of life – concerned about a solid foundation, are like a man building a house.

This fellow knows what he is doing! He digs deep. He lays the foundation on solid rock! A great footer! Stability is ensured!

No matter what happens, when floods come, when the stream breaks lose and hits the house, it is not shaken! Why? Because it has been well built on a solid foundation! Whatever hits against this house will not destabilize it! It is firm, secure!

Nevertheless – there are those who ignore the rules of life, the rules of reality. These people are like the man who built his house on ground without a foundation; nothing undergirding it – securing it for the future. And – once the stream broke, it was all over. Immediately the house fell, and the ruin was great!

Have you picked up the choices here? Either build your home on a rock solid foundation, or don’t. The consequences - follow!

Of course Jesus isn’t talking to engineers, craftsmen, and masons – giving them the “House building hints 101 lecture.” No. He is talking to human beings; he is talking to us – to you and me, about building our lives on a solid foundation to secure us from the elements that will beat against us.

So the search is on. What foundation will secure and guide my life? Your life? Money? Fame? Entertainment? Job? What foundation? (P.S. you know me well enough to know none of these are inherently bad or negative, but they are not enough!)

This foundation goes very deep, every deep!! To the soul, the spirit.

Friends, we need to find what will “heal” our longing lives, our searching souls. We need a solid foundation to live on. That will guide us in our moral/ethical decisions. That will give us a sense of wholeness. Which brings me to some of the most inspiring and powerful scriptures we are blessed to possess, Romans 8:38-39! (I am using the words from the King James Version.) Paul has gone through a litany of horrors, problems, and catastrophes in his life and the life of his Christian brothers and sisters, and yet he declares, in spite of all his and their problems, they are “winners,” “conquerors” through Christ!

Paul declares, standing on the firm foundation of Christ and Christ’s teachings, what we desperately (you and I) need to declare in 2008.

For I am persuaded!! This is faith filled! It flies in the face of a closed, limited, uncaring universe and it supplies a vision of what it means to be a human being!

For I am persuaded! This isn't irrational, infantile! It is directed and determined. Nuances follow.

For I am persuaded... Yes, this is the way I'm going to live! Through the living God, as revealed in Christ to Christians!

I need a foundation!
You need a foundation!

For I am persuaded... that life has meaning and purpose...

Friends, help me conclude. Help me give a benediction to this sermon. Turn to Romans 8:38-39 page 983-983 (We will substitute "persuaded" for "sure")

Let's recite this foundation;

³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angles, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen