

Today is Mother's Day, but I wonder how many of us know the history behind it? I didn't know it myself until this week.

The more recent history of the Mother's Day dates back to the 1600's in England when "Mothering Sunday" was celebrated on the fourth day of lent which included service in church to honour Mary, the mother of Jesus. Children bought sweets and flowers in order to express love towards their own mothers. But by the early 1800's the custom of celebrating Mothering Sunday almost completely died out.

But decades later, two American activists—Julia Ward Howe and Anna Jarvis—campaigned for an official day to be set aside to honour mothers. And on May 8, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed a Joint Resolution designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

In 46 countries around the world, one day has been set aside to celebrate mothers. Just how demanding is the job of mothers? Let me invite you to turn your attention to the video screen.

- **Mother's Day video**¹

There's no such thing as a perfect mother; they have their frailties and weaknesses like every other human being. I am well aware that Mother's Day is a difficult day for those who are estranged from their mother, or have lost their mother to death, and for those who

long to be a mother but cannot. For all who struggle today, may you know the Lord's comfort and provision.

Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created men and women in His own image; there is something about femaleness and maleness that paints a partial picture of what God is like. And while God is Spirit—neither male nor female—He is described as having both father-like and mother-like attributes.

In Isaiah 66:13, God says, "*As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you*". In Hosea 11, God is described as One who teaches a child to walk, One who nurses sick children back to health, One who holds children close, One who nourishes and feeds. Are these not the qualities of a mother? When Jesus looked over Jerusalem for the final time, He proclaimed His love with both weeping and words. He said, "*how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings*".²

Motherhood is not the only calling for a woman, nor is it the most noble, but it is a noble calling to be sure. And I find myself today, profoundly grateful for my mother who raised me, my mother-in-law who has cared for me as a son, and for many women who have been spiritual mothers to me throughout my life.

In each of these different mothers, I have seen women who have disadvantaged themselves in order to lovingly care for me—what I

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HB3xM93rXbY>

² Matthew 23:37

have seen is a sign and a witness to God, who loves us in the same manner.

This morning I would like to pray for our women—young and old, those with natural children and those with spiritual children—may God’s blessing rest upon you. **Pray.**

At this time I’d like to invite you to open your Bibles with me to the final section of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:24-29. With this text, we will drawing our teaching series to a close.

24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Throughout the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus makes frequent use of comparison as He casts vision for a life lived under God’s leadership. In Matthew 6, Jesus spoke about treasure that lasts vs. treasure that spoils (vs. 19-20), living in light vs. living in darkness (vs. 22-23), and serving God vs. chasing money (vs. 24); last Sunday we looked at His teaching about the narrow road that leads to life vs. the broad road that leads to destruction. Jesus concludes His *Sermon* with one final comparison—a wise builder vs. a foolish builder.

The wise builder, we are told, built his house to last—its foundation was rock solid. When the rain came pelting down, the flood waters

rose, and the wind beat against the house (**blow on it**), it held fast in the storm—but not so for the foolish builder.

The foolish builder had other ideas. His real estate agent sold him a lot with a gorgeous view—beach front property no less. And he was in such haste to enjoy his view that he couldn’t be bothered to build on a solid foundation; sand suited him just fine. That is, until the rain came pelting down, the flood waters started to rise, and wind began to tear his house apart. And as his house came crashing down (**knock over blocks**), all around him, I can almost hear his last words—*Oh God, what have I done?*

Take a moment and look with me at vs. 24—Jesus tells us that His words, His life, is like a rock—solid enough to build a life around. And as any student of the Old Testament will tell you, only God makes this claim of Himself.

1 Samuel 2:2 says, “*There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no **Rock** like our God.*” 2 Samuel 22:2-3 says, “*The Lord is my **rock**, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my **rock**, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour.*”

Psalm 40:2 says, “*He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a **rock** and gave me a firm place to stand.*” We all need a firm place on which to stand—God is the firm foundation for life.

The Old Testament looks forward, anticipating the day when God Himself would come to put the world back in order. The prophet Isaiah, writing hundreds of years before Jesus, foresaw the day when

He would come. In Isaiah 28:16 we read, “*this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic.’*”

In ancient architecture, the cornerstone was the principal stone—typically one of the largest, and most solid; the entire structure was built upon and around it. Jesus said, “*everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*” When Jesus’ words are taken to heart and put into practice, a life is built that will last today, tomorrow, and forever—no storm, no matter how fierce, can bring it to ruin.

Jesus doesn’t leave us to wonder what this parable might mean; He gives us the answer before we even ask. The wise person hears Jesus’ words and puts them into practice. The foolish person hears Jesus’ words but doesn’t put them into practice.

I said last week that Jesus wouldn’t have made a very good politician—He drew a line in the sand and invited people to stop whatever they were doing and follow Him. I think Jesus would have made an equally dreadful modern-day motivational speaker.

He doesn’t tell us how to feel good about ourselves, how to unlock our full potential, or how to leave a lasting legacy. He warns us that in the game we call “life,” there are winners and losers. Either our life is being built to last, or, it’s waiting to crumble. And, Jesus tells us that how we respond to Him, and His words, is **the** determining factor.

Life is filled with choices, big and small. Life is filled with the consequences of our choices, big and small. *There is no bigger choice than this—how will you respond to Jesus and His words?* Those who make Jesus their foundation, choose a life that leads to an eternity spent with God and all that is good. Those who choose a foundation other than Jesus, choose to walk a road that leads to an eternity of separation from God and all that is good.

So let me ask—*is Jesus the foundation of your life?*

Jesus’ *Sermon* comes to end with verse 27, but before chapter 7 concludes, Matthew offers an observation in verses 28 and 29. He writes, “**28** *When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were **amazed** at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.*”

They were **amazed** by His teaching, but I wonder, did they ever become disciples? The reason I ask is that I know my own heart. I may think Jesus is brilliant, that His words are wise, right, and true, but still disregard His words and live independently of Him.

I wonder, how often do we underestimate Jesus’ expertise when it comes to the living of our lives? How often do we assume that we know better than Him? That we see more than Him? That we understand the consequences better than Him? Jesus’ voice calls out across the centuries—to me, to you, to the world—and He speaks the words, “*Follow Me.*”

The decision to follow Jesus is not a one time decision—it’s an every day, every hour, every moment decision. Jesus has to do with life: your life, my life, every-day-life. The decisions we make, the things

we pursue, and the way we pursue them—all of it reveals who we are following. The question is, *will you follow Jesus today?*

We come to Jesus asking for a little help—perhaps we find ourselves in a pinch and we need strength, wisdom, or quick exit out of an especially difficult situation. But what we aren't prepared for, what none of us expect, is for Jesus to make an absolute claim on our lives as Lord and Master. We were hoping to find an all-powerful-genie, but we are confronted with anything but.

Jesus invites us into whole-hearted surrender of our goals, plans, and desires—He asks for nothing less. But what He offers is more than, greater than, superior to anything else we could ever pursue. My dear people, we are not diminished by following Jesus—we are enlarged.

I've been saying this for months, but there is vast difference between being a student and being a disciple. **A student's goal** is to know what their teacher knows—**the goal is to master knowledge or skill.**

A disciple's goal is very different—to become like the one they follow. A student says to a teacher, "I want to know what you know;" a disciple says to a Master, "I want to become what you are."

As I said last week, in our English language, we have separate words for "hearing," "listening," and "obeying;" in the Hebrew language, one word expresses them all.³ Jesus tells us that if we want to be wise, then hearing must lead to doing, listening must lead to obeying, believing must lead to following.

We may know Jesus' words—we may study them, memorize them, even cherish them with great affection—but are we working His words into our lives? Are we working our lives around His words? Jesus didn't preach God's word for the sake of being heard, He preached so that God's word might live in us—every true disciple becomes like the one they follow.

And so the question is, *are we disciples of Jesus, or are we just dabbling?* Does Jesus play a part in our schedules, or is He the **centre** around which everything revolves? When we build our lives upon the solid rock of Jesus, we are building for eternity. *Turn to Him today*—for the first time or for 700th time.

May His character qualities take root in your life. May His words about sexuality, marriage, and relationships shape the way you live. May His words about dealing with anger, forgiveness, money, and worry, reshape you in His image. And may you know Jesus as a **Rock** like no other.

Conclusion: I want to conclude this series, by returning to the opening words in Jesus' *Sermon*. He said, "*blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"

The Greek word that is translated here as "poor," refers to someone who is destitute and forced to beg—this person doesn't have the bare essentials and they know it. The one who is poor in spirit recognizes that they need God—utterly and completely—they have let go of the illusion that they have something to offer God.

³ *shāma*—to hear, listen to, obey.

All of us stand before God in moral and spiritual bankruptcy—we are empty-handed, cleaned out, and unable to save ourselves. *Blessed are you*, Jesus says, *when you declare spiritual bankruptcy*. But let's not misunderstand what Jesus is saying. The blessing doesn't lie in the poverty itself, the blessing is found in a life surrendered to God.

We are blessed when we recognize our need. We are blessed when we come humbly, asking for, and expecting to receive, God's gracious mercy. We are blessed when we turn to God, knowing that He is generous, kind, and loving.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit"--why did Jesus start His *Sermon* with these words? Is it not because His entire *Sermon* rests on this truth? Every last one of us is incapable of living out Jesus' *Sermon* on our own. We cannot follow Jesus unless He strengthens us to hear, believe, obey, and follow. In other words, we need to follow Jesus, in order to follow Jesus—He is both the destination and the fuel for the journey.

Jesus' *Sermon* reminds us that our inclusion in God's kingdom is pure gift. Blessed is the person who knows they need God—the one who seeks Him will find Him when they seek with all of their heart. May we be those that seek and find Jesus.

Pray

The Lord's Supper

If you've come to North Shore Alliance today, in need of a Rock that is higher and stronger than you, then you have come to the right place. 2 Samuel 22:2-3 says, *"The Lord is my **Rock**, my fortress and*

*my deliverer; my God is my **Rock**, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my **Saviour**."*

Of all the names applied to Jesus, *Saviour* is among my favourite. We are, every one of us, separated from God because of sin—none of us measure up to His holiness, we have missed the mark and fallen short in every imaginable way. We have not loved God as we ought, we have not loved others as we ought, and even in our quest for independence, we have not loved ourselves as we ought. Apart from the saving work of Jesus, every one of us is separated from God.

But Jesus demonstrated the full extent of God's love when He died on the cross, bearing our sin for us. When Jesus died, the gap that existed between God and us was bridged. We get in on God's life because Jesus laid down His life for us.

On the night He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, *"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."* In the same way, after supper Jesus took the cup, saying, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."* Jesus body was broken that we might be made whole; His blood was shed that we might be forgiven and restored to God.

If you are here this morning, well aware that you stand before God empty-handed, cleaned out, and unable to save yourself, then this holy meal is for you. We come to this meal seeking Jesus and His provision—grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love. May you seek Him and find Him today.

- *invite servers to come forward*

Mt. 7:24-29, *Built To Last*

May 10, 2014

Worship

Benediction

- *announce Ted Allen's memorial* (Friday at 3 p.m.)