

Sermon followed by Service

September 10, 2023

Matthew 7:24

Did you get to build any sand castles this summer? When I was your age, we went to Camp Shetek on Lake Shetek in Minnesota. On the beach we'd build our sand castles and forts and harbors. It was great; you could imagine yourself as governor building your fort against the pirates, and if you didn't feel like being the governor, you could smash it all down and imagine yourself a pirate building your hide-out, and if you didn't feel like being a pirate any more, you could imagine yourself as a typhoon monster smashing it all down.

It was great; you could make yourself and your world however you wanted yourself and your world to be. We seem to like that, don't we? But what always happened? It all came crashing down. Sometimes fast, sometimes slow, but it all came crashing down. No surprise, is it? But that doesn't stop us, does it? We love to build on shifting sand. Not just on vacation, not just on the beach. And no matter how many times it goes bad, somehow we think we can make building on sand work for us. We see it on the beaches; we see it on the news with houses sliding into the oceans; we see it in our lesson.

Our lesson sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? Two guys build themselves a house; one builds his house on sand; the other builds on rock. A storm blows through; the house built on sand collapses; the house built on the rock stands solid and safe. What's the point? Build your life on a solid foundation. Build your life on Jesus and his Word. Easy lesson, right?

So why did the foolish man build on sand? Didn't he know what he was doing? What was he thinking? "The storm won't get my house. I'm too busy ... it'll cost too much ... I like building on sand better"? Was he even thinking at all? We see the houses on the ocean in California. Year after year we see house after house collapse. And new house after new house gets built much the same way. And what do we say: "What were they thinking? How foolish can they be?"

It's easy to point fingers, but sometimes we're like that foolish man building on sand, aren't we? We know storms are coming. We know storms are blowing that could wipe out our finances, our job, our family, our life. We know trouble is coming, sickness is coming, death is coming. We know the storms are coming. We see people all around us blown down and blown away. But so often, what do we think? "It won't happen to me, at least not any time soon; I've got time." Or "I'm too busy; I don't have time." Or "I know it would be good for me for us to build our lives on Jesus more, but ... but ... but ... but." Take away the excuses, I wonder if this would some times be closer to the truth: "I'd build on the Rock, but Bible time with Jesus just isn't my thing; I have better things to do."

You know who loves that kind of talk? The devil loves hearing that kind of talk; he loves watching that kind of life; he loves excuses. But since when has building life on excuses done anyone any good?

Thank God we don't have to build on sand or on excuses! For that matter, we don't need to build on guilt or fear. Think back to your summers building sand castles and forts. Do you remember your brother or sister coming in and smashing everything you built? Do you remember the look on their faces - smiling, cheering as they crushed your world? God isn't that way. He isn't looking to destroy; his heart isn't set on knocking you down and cheering. His heart is set on setting us safe and secure in a life of blessing. Some days, what does that mean? Something that may not always be easy. Moving us, moving us from sand to rock, from a life that will crumble to a life that will last.

So what is the Rock that our God has for us? We might think of family and friends; they can be great blessings in the storm. But sometimes they're built on sand; sometimes they are the storm kicking sand in our faces. But there is a family, there is a Friend who isn't built on sand, a Friend who will stick by you, a Friend with the right answers who will say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done, a Friend who considers you family, a Friend who is eager to be Father, Husband, Brother for you, a Friend and Family who will love you no matter the cost.

So when the storms come at school, at work ... no, how about this? Before the storms come, before the stock market crashes, before your house falls apart, before you don't know how you're going to keep it together - instead of building on sand and excuses, build on the One who holds everything together. Before the storms come and "you don't know what to do," instead of following feelings that spin this way and that, build

your life on the One who does know, who knows better than Google or any feeling you might have. Before the storms come and your head and heart get filled with ugly voices bringing you down, fill your head and your heart with the voice of the One who knows you better than you know you, who loves you even better than you love you. Fill your heart and mind with his voice; he says: “I love you; I forgive you; I’ve got you today; and I’ve got you forever!” Yes, before the death storm blows, and it’s time to meet your Maker, set your life on the Rock.

Why? Because building our lives on wishing thinking: “It won’t happen to me,” building our lives on excuses: “I’m too busy, it’s too much work,” is like building our lives on sand that just won’t hold up to the storms that are coming our way.

So what is the Rock that our God has for us? Jesus and his Word. And what makes Jesus and his Word to be the perfect Rock for us? He weathered the storms. How? Instead of building on sand and living the life of the world, Jesus trusted God and built his life doing what God wanted him to do. Even when the world had him hurting horribly, even when God had him hurting horribly on the cross - “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” - Jesus built his life on the Rock of God and his Word. He trusted God - “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” And what did God do? He took Jesus safe and secure to heaven and raised him to life, alive and well forever.

If we could build our lives like that ... if we could trust God like Jesus ... if we could follow God like Jesus ... we’d be set for the storms too. Somehow that doesn’t sound all that comforting,

does it? Why? I don't trust God like Jesus; I can't follow God like Jesus.

So remember why Jesus came here. He didn't come here just to show us how to weather the storms. He came here to take our place in the storm. He didn't come here just to be our example and Teacher. Jesus came to be our Savior and Substitute. Instead of God judging us and making us pay for building our lives on sand, instead of judging us and making us pay for our excuses, instead of judging us and making us pay for the wreckage we cause by building our lives on sand, God judged Jesus on the cross and he paid. We don't have to go through life kicking ourselves; with Jesus, we don't have to live in fear of God making us pay. God has Jesus for you. With Jesus, God sees you building right, building on the Rock. With Jesus, God holds you as right, right for his love, right for his home in heaven. With Jesus, it doesn't matter how hard the storms blow - you have God to keep you safe and secure.

What do we do with that? We leave wishful thinking behind and check our foundations. We leave our excuses behind and build our lives on the Rock, on Jesus and his Word. That means more than just talking some talk - "I believe in Jesus; I believe in the Bible; I believe." Build on the Rock means: Walk the talk. Walk God's talk.

God doesn't shazam his talk into our hearts and minds; he speaks to us in his Word. It doesn't all make sense all at once; it doesn't all stick up here the first time; that's why we have our

Bibles and church and Bible Study and Sunday School, so we can help each other and build with each other. I know it's not always convenient, but God's Word is the Rock that is good for all times and good for all time. So I invite you and encourage you, don't settle for building on sand and excuses, build on the Rock of Jesus and you will be built right for life right with God. Amen.

September 9 & 10, 2023

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we see (and feel) what happens when foundations fail - lives, families, and our whole world being shaken and broken apart.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we go back to the foundation that our Creator and the Lord over all has for us - and we find a place safe and secure for our hearts and lives.

OPENING HYMN

"Speak, O Savior, I Am Listening"

Hymn 631

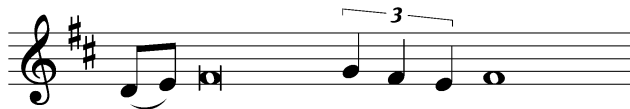
Speak, O Savior, I am list'ning, as a servant to his lord.
Let me show respect and honor to your holy, precious Word,
that each day, my whole life through, I may serve and follow you.
Let your Word e'er be my pleasure and my heart's most precious treasure.

Oh, what blessing to be near you and to listen to your voice;
let me ever love and fear you, let your Word still be my choice!
Many hardened sinners, Lord, flee in terror at your Word;
but to all who feel sin's burden you give peace and words of pardon.

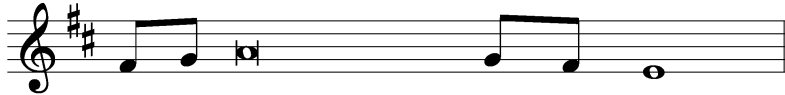
Lord, your words are waters living where I quench my thirsty needs.
Lord, your words are bread life-giving; on your words my spirit feeds.
Lord, your words will be my light thro' death's cold and dreary night;
yes, they are my sword prevailing and my cup of joy unailing.

As I pray, dear Jesus, hear me; let your words in me take root.
May your Spirit e'er be near me that I bear abundant fruit.
May I daily sing your praise, from my heart glad anthems raise,
till my highest praise is given in the endless joy of heaven.

OPENING SENTENCES



O Lord, o-pen my lips.



And my mouth shall de - clare your praise.



Hasten to save me, O God.



O Lord, come quickly to help me.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C: **Amen.**



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



Come, O come, let us wor - ship.

COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.



1 You are a great and a won - drous God,

2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,



cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.

kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.

You made the hills and the mountains high,
 You are the God whom we call our own, *refrain*

you made the seas and the dry land.
 we are the flock that you shepherd.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Merciful Lord, comforter and teacher of your faithful people, increase in your church the knowledge of your will. Strengthen the hearts of those who hope in you, and show them the depth of your promises. Let our children follow the light of your Word, and follow you with eager footsteps; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A MEDLEY OF SCHOOL THEME VERSES

M: Be kind and compassionate to one another,

C: **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

(Ephesians 4:32 ~ 2015-2016)

M: Do not be anxious about anything,

C: **but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

(Philippians 4:6 ~ 2016-2017)

M: I have told you these things,

C: **so that in me you may have peace.**

M: In this world you will have trouble.

C: **But take heart! I have overcome the world.**

(John 16:33 ~ 2017-2018)

SCHOOL CHILDREN SING (SATURDAY)

“Jesus Loves Me”

Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to him belong; They are weak, but he is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me, this I know, As he loved so long ago,

Taking children on his knee, Saying, “Let them come to me.”

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me, he who died, Heaven’s gates to open wide;

He has washed away my sin, Let this little child come in.

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

M: So do not fear, for I am with you;

C: do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

M: I will strengthen you and help you;

C: I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10 ~ 2018-2019)

M: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,

C: and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28 ~ 2019-2020)

M: “I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,

**C: “plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.”** (Jeremiah 29:11~ 2020-2021)

M: Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

C: They will soar on wings like eagles;

M: they will run and not grow weary,

C: they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31~ 2021-2022)

M: Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations

**C: by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.** (Matthew 28:19 ~ 2022-2023)

M: I can do all things

C: through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13~ 2023-2024)

SCHOOL CHILDREN SING (SATURDAY)

"By Faith"

Hymn 868 vs. 1, 3, & 5

*By faith we see the hand of God in the light of creation's grand design,
in the lives of those who prove his faithfulness, who walk by faith and not by sight.*

Refrain

*We will stand as children of the promise;
we will fix our eyes on him, our soul's reward.
Till the race is finished and the work is done,
we'll walk by faith and not by sight.*

*By faith the prophets saw a day when the longed-for Messiah would appear
with the pow'r to break the chains of sin and death
and rise triumphant from the grave.*

*By faith this mountain shall be moved and the pow'r of the gospel shall prevail,
for we know in Christ all things are possible for all who call upon his name.*

Refrain

FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Refrain


Your Word, O LORD, is a lamp for my feet
and a light un - to my path.

My people, hear my / teaching;

listen to the words / of my mouth.

I will utter hidden things, things / from of old—
things our ancestors have / told us.

We will not hide them from their de- / scendants;

we will tell the next gener- / ation
the praiseworthy deeds / of the LORD,

his power, and the wonders / he has done. *Refrain*

He decreed statutes for / Jacob

and established the law in / Israel,
which he commanded our / ancestors
to teach their / children,

so the next generation would know them, even the children yet / to be born,
and they in turn would tell their / children.

Then they would put their / trust in God
and would not forget his deeds but would keep / his commands.

Glory be to the Father and / to the Son

**and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,**

is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain*

GOSPEL

Matthew 7:24-29

“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. 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. 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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN

“Speak, O Lord”

Hymn 633

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you to receive the food of your holy Word;
take your truth, plant it deep in us, shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience, holy reverence, true humility;
test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of pow'r that can never fail, let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds,
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us,
truths unchanged from the dawn of time,
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built,
and the earth is filled with your glory.

SERMON

HYMN

"In Christ Alone"

Hymn 510

In Christ alone my hope is found; he is my light, my strength, my song;
this cornerstone, this solid ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all; here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe;
this gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones he came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied;
for ev'ry sin on him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground his body lay, light of the world by darkness slain;
then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
for I am his and he is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the pow'r of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand;
till he returns or calls me home, here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Eternal Father, your Word is a lamp for our feet and a light to our path.
You inspired the Scriptures for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training
in righteousness, so that your servants might be thoroughly equipped for
every good work.

**Lead us to love your Word more and more and to receive your message
with great eagerness.**

You have given us your Word that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name. Enable
us to see the wonders of your love in Christ from the beginning to the end
of your holy book.

Help us to see Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Work in all your people, especially in parents, the resolve and patience to
teach little children the simple truths about the Savior who loves them.
Walk with us as we take our children to the manger, the cross, and the
empty tomb. Let them find Jesus in stories, songs, and prayers.

**Move us to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the
Lord.**

Provide wisdom and commitment to teachers who train our young people
in Sunday Schools and youth Bible classes. Deepen their knowledge of your
Word as they prepare and share the lessons they teach. Move them to
model a sincere devotion to the Scriptures.

Lead us to plan for and support the Christian training of children.

We thank you for enabling our congregation to provide elementary (and
secondary) education for our children. We know our schools are your
special blessing, and we pray for the resolve to establish and maintain
standards of excellence in all aspects of education.

Move us to be generous in our offerings so that teachers may teach and students may learn in fitting surroundings.

Lead us to provide Christian schools that reflect the immensity of your love.

Bless the schools and teachers who prepare public ministers of the gospel for service in our churches and around the world. Lead teachers and professors to be faithful to your Word and provide insights that enable them to pass on your truth to their students. Ignite the zeal of young men and women to be willing and eager to share the truths of Scripture with others. Move us to support with our prayers and gifts the schools our synod has established.

We pray that you send workers in your harvest fields.

Work in us that we may find the lasting value of growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Lead us to be faithful in our personal study of the Scriptures and in participating in regular Bible classes. Rid us of all thoughts that Christian education ends in our youth. Make us life-long students of your precious Word.

Lead us to believe that at every age your Word remains a lamp for our feet and a light to our path. Amen.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.



The Lord grant you peace for all your days.



A - men.

CLOSING HYMN

"God's Word Is Our Great Heritage"

Hymn 640

God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever;
to spread its light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way, in death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure, we keep its teachings pure
throughout all generations.

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OFFERING

If you prefer online giving, you may scan this code with your mobile device.



(You heard our school children sing today. Tuition Grant Fund envelopes are available in the pew rack to support affordable tuition for our school.)



INVEST IN KIDS!

This year, we have 20 children from 11 families enrolled and hearing about Jesus at St. John through the Invest in Kids tax credit scholarship program. How is this possible? Ten families connected to our church and school have invested over \$65,000 in amounts between \$1,000 and \$10,000 for Invest in Kids scholarships for students here at St. John. And - get this! - those families

will receive 75% of their donation (almost \$50,000) back on their Illinois taxes! That means, for about \$15,000, we have filled and funded a classroom-full of students. It's not too late to take advantage of this program for 2023, as we have two scholarships remaining to be filled. Any donations made through Dec. 31 provide tax credits for 2023 taxes and fund St. John scholarships for this school year. Contact Peter Kolch, Recruitment Chair, at (773) 368-9842 or peter.kolch@stjohnslib.com with any questions.

SPECIAL SCHOOL PROJECTS

- 1 - GaGa Pit base
- 2 - Outdoor Table/Bench board replacement
- 3 - Replenish the Tuition Grant Fund - ~\$2000

You can help with a special gift or special project help. If you have questions, ask Pastor.

EVERYONE OUTREACH

BUILDING A CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH CULTURE

Register today for the Everyone Outreach workshop!

Our St. John family is participating in an exciting new program called Everyone Outreach. The program will help us build a culture of outreach so that every ministry and every member is encouraged and equipped to reach the lost in our community.

Everyone Outreach kicks off with a 2-day workshop on Saturday and Sunday, October 14-15.

- Our Saturday session begins at 8:30 am, until about 12:30.
- Our Sunday session begins at about 10:30, until mid-afternoon (lunch break TBD)

The interactive workshop will help us discover some of our hidden thought habits that may keep us from being active in outreach. Then, we will learn ways to change those thought habits so that, as a result, our outreach actions change as well. Each participant will leave the workshop with sustainable ways to personally help build our congregation's outreach culture.

Disclaimer: Joining us for this workshop does not mean that you are committing to join a St. John cold-call team or a St. John guest follow-up team. You are simply committing to want to be better at sharing Jesus with the people you know, and encouraging us to be better at sharing Jesus with the people God puts in our lives.

To register for the workshop, you can register at church, or use the QR code (left) to sign up at signup.com (you don't need a signup.com account).



For more information, visit EveryoneOutreach.com (QR code bottom right) or contact any of our Outreach Team - Nic Holter, Dan Freeck, Denise Fullerton, Dave Knight, Steve Lemerand, or Pastor.

We encourage every member of our congregation to attend the workshop and participate. In fact, the more of us who attend, the more likely our culture shift in sharing Jesus will be successful!



Building on the Rock

- **Join us for Family Bible Hour - Sundays at 10:30.**
Is it time to restart Saturdays, Weekday Mornings?
- **Join us for Bible Information Class -**
Time for a faith-foundation check? Looking for answers to your questions?
Our Bible Information Class offers all that and more! We start with “4 Key Concepts,” move on to “Faith Builders” and, then as growing disciples, we dig deeper into what God says to us in the Bible. Let’s set up a time!
- **Read your Bible daily - Bible Reading Plans**
 - Christian Worship, p 248ff - This Daily Lectionary (list of readings) leads the reader through most of the New Testament and about 1/3 of the Old Testament in a year. If you’re reluctant to start because you’ll miss some days, mark what you do read without worrying about the days.
 - *Forward in Christ* - Same readings (as above) listed for the month
 - *Through My Bible in 3 Years* (read or listen) - WELS.net
 - *The Peoples Bible* series in our library is an excellent resource.
- **Read (listen or watch) together a family devotion (3x per week)**
 - Meditations
 - StJohnsLib.com
 - TimeofGrace.org
 - WhataboutJesus.com
 - WELS.net subscriptions has a rich list of options, including ...
 - Marriage Moments at <https://welscongregationalservices.net/ministry-resources/wels-marriages/marriagemoments/>
 - *The Peoples Bible* series in our library is an excellent resource.
 - Check out our church library for other options.
- **Set aside time to Pray Each Day** (alone and together)

Join us, encourage us, challenge us!