



**“Two Houses”**  
**Red Letter City**  
**Courage Church, Detroit,**  
**MI.**  
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So, we have come to the end.

And what Jesus does at the end, is he gives us three visuals... and each are contrasting versions of the same thing...

He starts by talking about two gates. Then he talks

about two trees, and he wraps the whole thing up by talking about two houses.

So you may wonder... why have three examples? Why not just show that there are two ways... one good way, one bad way, and leave it at that?

And if you look closely, it is interesting the way that he does this... because each of these images, though they have striking similarities... also have a lot of differences.

The first image is of the gate, and the gate is how you enter and the the path on the other side of that gate is how your life looks like in the world. It is how you will make a difference on society. It is how you will show Jesus to people who need him through your changed life.

The tree is very specifically talking about the things we have allowed into the church. Into the bride of Christ. It shows us how a works based religion distorts the whole thing.

Then, the houses that Jesus describes, is about how you build your own lives... because in this life, as Jesus says in John 16:33, you will face many

sorrows. Their will be trials. Things will come against you in this life. And as you will see when we read the passage, it is fascinating because Jesus says that the difference in the way that you respond to those trials, and what they will have the power to do in your life, will depend on how you respond to the words of Jesus in the sermon on the mount.

Jesus explains to us... his hearers... "I have just given you the foundation for the rest of your lives."

and here it is:

Matthew 7:24-29 -

### **Build Your House on the Rock**

**"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And *the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house*, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And *the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house*, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."**

### **The Authority of Jesus**

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for **he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.**

Let's Pray.

Dawn's dad built his whole house. It is one of those things that he really prides himself on, the fact that he, basically by himself, built this thing from the foundation to the roof. That was 30 years ago. He still today lives in that house. Dawn says, "he will die in that house."

and that always amazed me. Before we got the house that we have now... all I ever really knew was living in houses that just worked. I figured,

someone else builds the house, you pay them for the house, you live in the house, and it works.

But then you actually buy a house, and become responsible for it.

And the sewer backs up, and the roof starts leaking. And you realize, owning a house takes work. But not only that, but it takes a certain amount of understanding. Understanding what to do to fix it, or at least who to call.

Dawn's dad never has to call anyone. Because he built the whole thing and he knows it inside and out and when the times come that he has to make decisions about that house, he knows what the right decision is because he has been such a part of the process the entire time.

But just because he built it from scratch, does not mean that he never has leaks. It doesn't mean that he never has sewers back up or various problems to solve. The only difference is, that he knows exactly what to do when the problems come.

When I face the same problems with my house, I desperately try to figure out what to do... nothing is natural to me. I normally freak out and call Zach or Ben. Or Dawn's dad.

Notice this about the two houses:

*“the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house”*

The same exact thing happened to both houses. Jesus also says in there, that both people hear the same message. They just respond to it differently. It takes hold of one of their lives, and the other, it sort of, gets pushed to the side.

So both hear the message, and both face the storm. And that is important!

The fact that someone listens to the words of Jesus and does them, does not mean that they will not face trials. The storms are coming.

You will face them.

In this world, it rains.

In this world, people set vans on fire for no reason, and attack each other for no reason. People separate themselves from other people because of skin color, culture, or class.

In this world, there are freak accidents, and car accidents, and dogs that get out of control. In this world people have miscarriages, and other children are born sick, and others are born into so much poverty that the idea of a clean glass of drinking water seems a million miles away.

In this world, people loose the things that they have spent their entire life working for, when there is a flood like what happened in Louisiana this week.

They say that what happened there caused the most damage in our country since Hurricane Sandy.

Hurricanes destroy cities.  
Tornados destroy homes.  
People destroy each other.

Because its a broken place filled with broken people, and some houses can stand strong through the storms and others collapse.

and what Jesus says here is: the people who live the sermon on the mount out every day of their life... they treat others the way that they would want to be treated, they trust God and are not anxious, they give generously... they pray the Lord's prayer in private...

those people will know what to do when the storm comes. They will know how to handle it so that it doesn't destroy them. Those people will have support when the storm comes, because they have been planting seeds every moment of their life leading up to that.

There are two houses. And both get hit. but only one remains standing.

And That is the end of Jesus sermon. He ends by saying the rain is coming... the floods are coming... the wind is coming... the storm is coming...

and whether or not you hear and do the words that He gave us, and do them, will determine whether or not you will withstand what comes.

And thats it. That is the mic drop moment. That is where Jesus walks off the stage. There is no altar call. There is no emotional appeal to stand up and say that things have changed.

Jesus merely appeals to the crowd to look at their lives, and figure out, which foundation am I building my house on? and if you are building your house on the wrong foundation... why?

Is it time to change?

Is it time to do something different than you done in the past. Are you sick of hitting the same walls?

Is that not the very definition of insanity... doing the same thing over and over, expecting that the result will be different?

James 1:22-24 says this:

“be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”

If you hear the words of Jesus and they don't change your life dramatically... it is like you never heard them.

You can't just say you have changed. You can't just hear something and then automatically be changed. Everything that Jesus taught us in the sermon on the mount requires a huge amount of intent to actually apply it to your life.

Most people's lives just aren't as they should be. There is potential not being reached. Most people are drowning in debt. They're struggling to stay married. They wonder where the hope is and when they will catch their break... and they keep playing the lottery of life (and sometimes the real lottery) thinking that one day those numbers are going to finally hit and magically life will be a dream.

But that is not how Jesus describes the way that the life of a Kingdom person looks like. Change happens when you change! Not when you wait for your circumstances to.

Far too many people live their life subtly thinking that one day they are just going to slip into accidentally having a successful life. Of course, if you asked them if that was what they were doing... They would say "of course not!"

But if you asked them what they *are* doing, so that tomorrow will look different from today, most people can't put that into words.

You should be able to articulate what it is you are building, and if you can't, there is a good chance it is because you are not building on a rock.

You have to plan to do things differently.

One way that I have heard it said, that is so good, is this:

"One yes means a thousand no's."

Saying yes to getting out of debt definitely means saying no to reckless spending. It means "no" to instant gratification.

It means saying no eating out every single day of your life. That was a hard one for me. We are trying to pay off loans, and we realized,

“if we keep going to Bucharest 8 times a week, we are never going to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The tunnel is just going to get longer and longer.”

and it means saying "no" sometimes when people want you to meet them at the coffee shop then go see a movie.

Saying yes to having a good marriage, means saying no to a lot of the things that maybe used to run your life. Freedom. The flexibility to go out whenever you want to...

and obviously, other people. Jesus talked strongly about this in the sermon on the mount... if your right eye causes you to sin cut it out and throw it away. Having a healthy marriage means you set the boundaries up in your life, so that your eye doesn't hook to anyone or anything else.

It is just like what we talked about in the ten commandments about marriage. When you choose to marry someone, you are choosing to reject everyone else. You are choosing to reject the life you had when you are single... and you are choosing to reject anything that could get in the way of your relationship with your spouse.

and if you aren't intentional to reject the things that don't grow your marriage, you will start to find gaps in it.

It is the same way with following Jesus.

You have to be intentional to follow the words of Jesus.

and that requires a LOT of “no's”

If you say yes to the way of Jesus in the sermon on the mount, it means saying no to oaths. It means saying no to taking vengeance, or even holding grudges against others. It means saying no to doing things in the light that make you look good.

It means saying no to being the one in control.

That is how He ends the sermon. By telling us there are two ways to live, and if you want to find life... if you want your life to not get crushed by the weight of everything that WILL come at you, you have to be intentional now, to listen to, and obey, the words of Jesus.

Jesus was very intentional here. He says "listen, and do." And this would not have come as a surprise to his hearers.

In Hebrew culture, listening was never enough.

Every morning, even to this day, practicing Jews wake up and the first thing that they do is they recite what is called "the Shema" - it is Deuteronomy 6:5-6, and it says:

"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

It is one of the most important verses to their culture. But the word "hear" in the old testament is the Hebrew word "*Shema*" and what it literally means is "listen and obey."

So when Jesus says things like "He who has ears, let him hear" he is not just saying that we should hear what he is saying. He is saying, "you need to do these things."

He makes it obvious in the sermon on the mount... He says both...

"everyone who hears, and does not do them..."

Not because your salvation is found in what you do... it is not.

but your life is.

and truthfully, if you build your house on the sand, and you hear the words of Jesus but you don't do them... your life is going to stink. You aren't going to like who you are. Other people are not going to like who you are. You are going to have anxiety. You are going to be miserable and make others miserable.



Jesus ends the sermon by saying to us: ACTION! No more sidelines. It is application time...

“you have to do it now!”

He doesn't end the message by asking people to say that they have changed... by raising their hands and saying “I want to change.”

Because it will be obvious if you changed or not, by what happens when the storm comes. I love the way James puts it. What is in the mirror? If you haven't changed, it is like you look at yourself... and you go away, and forget.

What did I even see?

Who was that person in the reflection?

Jesus is trying to turn us into Kingdom people. People who look in the mirror and see a child of God. People who love his word, and they love living his word out in our lives and in our communities. And the people who live the way that Jesus describes... yes they are going to have amazing eternal blessings... but even in this life, they will land on their feet.

That is the one thing that Jesus promises. He doesn't promise that the storms won't come. In fact, really, if you read the language closely, he kind of in a way promises that the storms will come. He tells us that the storms are unavoidable.

But he does promise us that the house built on Him will not fall.

So go home... and reread the sermon on the mount. Then read it again. and again. and again. It starts in Matthew 5, and goes through Matthew 7. And start applying it to your life,

start thinking... “how can I make SURE that I am doing this?”

“What can I do to position myself to live differently?”

and see if everything doesn't begin to change.

Think about it practically, lets rewind. I will give you a couple of examples...

if you stay angry at your brother, which Jesus says not to do in Matthew 5... he says you are liable to judgment... that is eternal. but what happens *in this life* if you stay angry at your brother?

you lose a brother.

If you always spend your money on yourself and you never look for ways that you can meet needs... you never store up treasures in heaven... you never treat others the way that you would want them to treat you...

what is going to happen when the time comes that you need to make a withdrawal?

What will happen when you need a friend?

And you suddenly need some of the people that you should have been treating the way that you would want to be treated?

Odds are higher that they won't be there.

If you judge people, they aren't going to hang around you very long.

If every time you have an enemy, you hate them instead of love them... you will have burned a bridge that later in life you may need to cross. And it won't be there anymore.

you built your house on the sand. And a storm is coming.

When we lived in New York, for a while we lived in Rockaway Beach, and it just so happens that we lived there when Hurricane Sandy hit... and that neighborhood was one of the worst hit places in the nation. And I am going to tell you more of that story in the fall... I think.

But when that storm came, we had neighbors looking out for us, sharing food with us... We had to move out of our apartment for about a month... and someone from our church gave us a FREE apartment to live in until ours was livable again... so many friends called to check on us, and encourage us... others sent checks, and others came and helped work on getting life back to normal.

Our church started sending crews to our neighborhood, just to try and help people because the damage was real bad... and I remember the landlord of the house we rented in... we helped him like crazy, cleaning up all the damage. Just doing what we could.

and it just so happened that our car was destroyed in the Hurricane... but my landlord owned a used car dealership, and because of all of the Kingdom people that I brought to the neighborhood to try and make a difference in our community... This guy saw that, and he saw that we lost our car...

and he pulled up one night, with a car for us, from his dealership, and he said "here you go. It is yours."

Now listen:

A storm came. A real, physical storm.

and I am not downplaying the spiritual here... because there is a ton of amazing things that can happen supernaturally when you follow the words of Jesus. But there is something so practical that happens too.

when you treat people the way you would want them to treat you...

they will want to be around you!

and we don't treat them this way because we want things from them... that would make us Pharisees.

but if the time ever comes when we do need something, God may use them as a conduit of hope in your life, and they just may be a bit more open

to it... and where we should all, always be looking for the needs of those around us... people notice when things happen to those who are closest to them...

they notice when *bad things happen* to *good* people.

I didn't for a second even consider the possibility that by helping my neighbor, he would give us a car. I didn't even know he owned a car dealership, I thought he just owned apartments. The first time I met him was the day after the Hurricane.

He shook my hand and said, "It is nice to meet you. I wish it were under different circumstances."

And I remember asking him if he would want me to bring some people to help? And he looked at me like I was crazy. Not because he didn't want my help... but because he didn't think there was any chance that anyone would actually get out of their worlds, to help him with his world.

then we brought some people over and just started helping, because this dude was trying to get 10 feet of standing water out of his house, along with all the stuff, furniture and drywall that the storm destroyed.

we just saw a need... and when we look at the red letters, and we look at the need... the only thing that makes sense is to do our best to meet that need.

and God blessed us for it.

Or how about this:

Several years before Hurricane Sandy, a Tsunami caused enormous damage in Japan. It was insane. And the global church of Jesus Christ stepped up. They sent money. They sent missions teams. They opened shelters.

They did for others what they would want someone to do for them, if it were them.

Years later, Superstorm Sandy hit... and we were displaced for a month from our apartment, and we get this care package in the mail, filled with letters from people in Japan that we could not read, along with a check.

A whole bunch of families, poor families, still recovering years later from the devastation that they went through, pulled together to raise I think over a hundred dollars between several of them, and then sent it to help our family. The letters, written in Japanese and rough broken English, all said thank you.

“Thank you for helping us when we were displaced.”

When they lost everything, it was the American church who stepped in, and rescued them. Who found them places to stay, who rebuilt their homes. Who sent money and supplies and men. And so when we got displaced from our American, first world house... They wanted to return the favor, in some way.

Kingdom people built a Kingdom foundation. They invested into the lives of people that they did not even know, and those people years later responded with the same generosity.

It would seem that Japan was good soil to plant those seeds. But the truth is, it is what we have been learning the whole time. God doesn't visit people in their affliction... Isaiah 57:15 makes it clear... God lives in those places. He lives in the broken places of our hearts, when people are at their lowest... when they are broken and lost and in their own strength know that there is no way out of this...

and when we show up in people's lives, God shows up in ours.

Think about that.

Did you send money to Japan? Did you go? Did you pray? Did you care?  
Did you even know?

Somebody did. Somebody saw that as an opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus... and it changed a whole lot of lives... That was a firm foundation. That was responding the way the sermon on the mount says to respond...

The church is the hope of the world.

When Jesus anointed Peter to be the head of the church... What did he say?

He said "I am going to build my church on a ROCK. He said, "I am *building* the breathing, living, life giving institution of world change on a SOLID FOUNDATION." - and that is you Peter.

and that is the way that Peter describes the church in 1 Peter 2:5... as "a spiritual house" - a bunch of bricks coming together to create something amazing.

Founded on something that can handle a storm.

Why do you think that the church is still around? After everything that has come after it century after century, generation after generation? Entire nations have waged war with it, and Christianity has always prevailed and it always will... the church can be outlawed but it can never be contained.

Because it was built on a solid foundation. It was built on a rock.

and people keep discipling more people, teaching them to love.

Teaching them that even when the broad road is hate... and the broad road is war, and the broad road is walking over other people so that you can get to the top... and most people take that road. But there is another road. It is a hard road, but it is the right road.

The hard road is love. and it always wins. Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 13...

it never fails.

So Jesus ends the sermon by saying there are two houses. And if you build it on the rock, which is, on Jesus' words... you are good. But you have a choice. and there are going to be plenty of reasons to choose to build your house on the sand.

There are plenty of reasons to enter through the broad gate, and travel the broad road. There are plenty of reasons to eat from the wrong tree.

We talked about this during salt and light... something in the Hebrew culture called "*yetzer hara*" - which means "the evil inclination."

It is this belief, that every single decision that you made either brought you closer to darkness, or closer to light.

And the reality is that people naturally are inclined to gravitate toward darkness because it is an easier road... it is a broader road... more people are doing it, and it at times can be incredibly pleasurable.

but the choice is always yours.

But following the masses can happen automatically. Doing what everyone else is doing, that is easy.

But to gravitate toward light, you have to be incredibly intentional. All the way down to the foundation that you build your house on.

You don't wake up one morning living in a house that you built on a rock, without ever building it. You have to build it first.

Look at what the Torah says:

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 -

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell

in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Do you see it?

God promised them something. But they have a choice on whether or not they accept it.

They have a choice: Am I going to enter the promised land?

Am I going to pass down good things to the next generation, so that they can enjoy the fruit of my good decisions?

Am I going to choose life?

Or am I going to choose death, and curse?

Jesus wants to do something amazing in your life. That is why he gave us this road map.

Salvation is found exclusively in the blood of Jesus.

But ultimately, at the end of the day, whether this sermon that Jesus gave does anything to change your life here and now, will be determined by what you ultimately choose.

Listen, and obey O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.  
Love the Lord your God with everything in you.

and before long, that love is going to begin to manifest through you, and others will see Him too.

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Now, I want to, for the rest of our time together today, focus on the last thing that Matthew wrote in Matthew 7. Jesus had just finished the sermon on the mount. The red letters are over. and Matthew says something that ties it all together, and explains a lot about what is to come.



so this is the final two verses of Matthew 7. It is verse 28 and 29:

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for **he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.**

So Matthew says this, and he ends chapter 7. And we read this, and we don't put much stock in it, because we just had Jesus make our heads explode with his red letter wisdom. But what Matthew says explains a lot about what happened that day.

Matthew says that the crowds were astonished. The literal is "ekpléssō" (ek-place'-so) meaning: "to be struck with amazement." I love that. They struck! These words hit them, and they knocked them off their feet.

If you are struck with amazement by something, and then you go away unchanged by it... then what a waste. What a waste of time. What a waste of life. What a waste of resources, and of materials building a house on nothing.

The crowd was so amazed because Jesus wasn't like the scribes. He didn't just teach as someone who knew something. As someone who is passing down information from another source.

It was very obvious to them, that He is the source.

and if we are going to make real change in our world...

then we need to get as close to the source as possible.

We must not just be like the scribes... these men who record what they hear others say. We have to hear the words of Jesus, and let them take shape in our lives, and then go into all the world with them (Matt. 28:20)! and have gospel experiences of our own with them! Its like this...

Jesus says in John 14:12 that we will do even greater works than He did. He says “you will do what I did, and you will do more.”

But it could be really easy, to hear these amazing words... and be like the scribes.

But every word written in red in that book has the power to transform our entire world. and we are the body of Christ. We are being made in his image. We should look like him!

A.W. Tozer says this, in his book “The Pursuit of God” and this is so powerful -

“Men of the breaking hearts had a quality about them not known to or understood by common men. They habitually spoke with spiritual authority. They had been in the Presence of God and they reported what they saw there. They were *prophets*, not scribes, for the scribe tells us what he has read, and the prophet tells what he has seen. The distinction is not an imaginary one. Between the scribe who has read and the prophet who has seen there is a difference as wide as the sea. We are today overrun with orthodox scribes, but the prophets, where are they? The hard voice of the scribe sounds over evangelicalism, but the Church waits for the tender voice of the saint who has penetrated the veil and has gazed with inward eye upon the Wonder that is God.”

When our lives are transformed by Jesus Christ, we suddenly see things differently. We look into situations and we see what God is doing there, rather than see what it looks like is happening there...

We look into the lives of those in our broken city... and when everyone else sees hopelessness...

all we see is potential.

When you can get past yourself... when you can penetrate that veil and actually begin to start seeing the world through Jesus' eyes, it is not hard to see that you and I have a roll in it. But the men of the breaking hearts understand something that others don't.

They understand that they have the authority because they have been with God, and He changed them. God met them in the broken places of their hearts... And now they break for what he breaks for. They break for the broken. For the lost and the lonely. They break for the hurting and the hungry and the sick. And they understand that they are here on this earth for a reason.

And it is bigger than the scribes.

It is bigger than the people who sit back, and are critical about everything, but don't actually do anything to bring about real change.

Jesus was not like them, and his people shouldn't be either.

Jesus spoke with authority.

and when Jesus established the church, on the rock... on the solid foundation... he said to Peter something that we studied earlier in this series, he said "I have given you the keys to the Kingdom..."

I have given you the authority.

In Luke 10:19 Jesus says "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you."

In Luke 9:1 Jesus calls together the disciples, and he gives them the authority over demons, and to cure diseases... and he sends them to "proclaim the Kingdom of God"

and the last thing that Jesus says in Matthew, the great commission, essentially starts by Jesus saying "All authority has been given to me... and with it, I give it to you."

Go into all the world, and make disciples. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

and never forget, “I am with you... even to the end of the age.”

Do you feel like it is too much?

Don't worry. The one who has all the authority is with you.

Be a prophet, not a scribe.

Be the type of person who can walk into a room, see the need, fill the need, and in doing so point the entire room to Jesus.

Be salt and light. Love your enemies. Give to the poor when nobody is watching. Lay up treasures in heaven. Don't be anxious, don't judge...

just love.

Do unto other's whatever you wish that others would do unto you. and point them to Jesus.

The scribes were lame.

It doesn't matter what you write.

It doesn't matter what you say.

It matters what you do.

That is how you know if your house is on a rock or if it is on sand.

It is not how you know if you are getting into heaven. Jesus died to do that.

It is how you know that you are bringing the Kingdom of heaven to earth, now.

The Red Letter City is the story of a city, filled with a bunch of broken people, that love Jesus, and rely on Him to make us whole. It is the story of a bunch of people who love each other in the middle of all of our differences. It is a city of imperfect people being made complete in Jesus Christ.

It is a city of people who hang on every word printed in red, knowing that though to many, it is just a color of a word printed on a piece paper, that it was breathed by the Holy Spirit and was literally, physically spoken by the God of all grace who meets us right where we are.

and then shows us clearly how to get where we all want to go.