

Is our house built upon ‘the Rock’?

In today’s Gospel from St. Matthew, Jesus continues His teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven as He wraps up what we call the Sermon on the Mount.

But there appears to be something a bit off about Jesus’s attitude ... !!!

If you’ve been following the daily readings, you’ll recall that in Friday’s Gospel, Jesus cursed a fig tree just because its fruit was not in season and then he upset all the tables in the Temple ... tables which were necessary for those who came to pay the temple tax and to offer their sacrifices.

It would seem that Jesus is in a bad mood!

And then, in today’s reading, we hear that some who look as if they are doing God’s work in Jesus’s name are called “evildoers”!

Why?

Have you ever heard that even Satan can quote scripture if it suits his own purposes? Do you remember back in Matthew, Chapter 4? There ... on the Parapet of the Temple ... as he tempts Jesus ... the devil quotes scripture to try to get Jesus to do what he wants.

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Here’s an illustration that might be a bit closer to home:

Remember Lucy ... that terrible-tempered sister in the Peanut's comic strip? One time she came into the room where Linus was watching TV and demanded that her brother change the station.

Linus said to her, "I was here first, so I get to watch the show I want."

Without a word, Lucy marched over and changed the channel to a different show.

"Hey! That's not fair!" Linus protested.

Assuming her best know-it-all stance, Lucy intoned:

"In the book of Matthew it says 'Many that are first will be last, and the last first.'"

Linus's response to this seeming paradox sounds like something you or I might say.

"He just mutters to himself:

"I'll bet Matthew didn't have a big sister!"

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That seemingly innocent little story does give us a hint as to why Jesus was so hard on those who went about doing things in His name.

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They did it for show ... just like the devil and ... yes ... just like Lucy ... they did it for their own purposes, not because it was the work of the Kingdom of Heaven!

Jesus blasted them ... not because they were doing His will ... which, after all, wouldn't make a lot of sense ... but because they were otherwise living evil and corrupt lives.

As we heard in the Old Testament reading, we need to take the Word of God into our hearts and into our souls.

It's important that we examine our lives, too, to ensure that what we do for the Church is for the Church and not for ourselves, lest we, too, are rebuked when we call out to Jesus!

We need to put His will into practice not just say the right things, participate in all the Sacraments and greet each other as brother and sister.

The criteria God will use at the final judgment is not how well we say the correct words, utter acceptable doctrines, and repeat the right prophecies but how our deeds are matched by faithfulness to His teachings.

Which is why Jesus gave us yet another example in His sermon:

The parable of the two houses ... or ... more accurately ... the two house builders. Each builder represents a disciple.

The first disciple not only heard the Word of God ... but also converted hearing God into obeying God.

This builder internalized God's word and lived by it. He built his "house" upon the Rock ... that is, on the Word of God ... on Jesus Christ.

The second disciple heard the Word of God but failed to take it into his heart and into his soul. He built his house upon public opinion, the "conventional wisdom" of the day, and the popular culture.

If words are not translated into action, we ... like the second disciple ... are building our houses on shifting sands. When the storms of sickness, death of a loved one, job loss, betrayal, war, or natural disaster come, we will feel our spiritual houses sinking beneath us.

But the wise builder ... the disciple who digs his foundation down to the bedrock of God's love ... and who sees and understands the joy of not only hearing the words of God but the ultimate recognition and reward behind acting upon the Word of God ... will forever ... for all eternity ... be acknowledged by God as His own.

Are we building our spiritual houses on sand that will shift and open up beneath us? Or are our homes built upon the foundation of God's Word?

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Based on Dt. 11:18 and Mt. 7:21-27