

How Firm a Foundation ~ June 1, 2008

Genesis 6:9-22, 7:24, 8:14-19; Romans 1:16-17, 3:22b-31; Matthew 7:21-28; Psalm 46

All three of our readings for this morning stress the necessity we have for a firm foundation of one kind or another in our lives. A foundation is the base upon which we build things and which supports whatever it is we choose to create. It is something we rely upon to support our relationships with others, our institutions, our buildings that reach into the skies, our bridges that arc high over rivers and lakes and any number of things, and our faith. A strong base upon which to build is essential for all areas of life.

The most obvious of these foundational stories this morning is the parable about the wisdom of building one's house on rock instead of on sand. That seems very logical for those of us living here—there is not much other than rock under the soil of the surface. Selecting a solid building site instead of one with a shifting base, is easily understood by those who hear this little story. Of course, as with all parables, there is an earthly meaning as well as one that is heavenly.

Jesus was not only talking about a physical house, but of the house of spirit and faith. To have a sturdy spiritual life, we need to create a solid base on which to build. Without a solid base, we discover, as we go through life that we have nothing upon which to gather further spiritual knowledge and from which we may venture into avenues unexplored. It is important for our spiritual growth that we have a base against which to measure all the other competing faith adventures we encounter.

Jesus knew his followers were surrounded by pagan cults and temples built to one god or another. He knew they needed a firm base from which to judge those things that were worthy of consideration and those that were not. A sturdy foundation and framework would support and sustain his and their mission to spread the good news throughout the world.

In my life journey as a pastor, I have found many people who, because they claim to have been “hurt by the church,” decide their children will not be exposed to it. I have often found myself a defender of the need for children to have a religious base from which to live and grow and have their beings. I tell these parents that I believe such a foundation is necessary because their children will be out in the world and they need something to hold on to or to reject when the time comes for them to focus on and select a faith system. If there is no base from which to work, there is confusion. Children love to explore and should be encouraged to do so as they grow up. Whether the parents choose to have Christianity be the base or not, is their decision, but, “Please,” I tell them, “give your children some base, some foundational belief from which to grow.”

The story of Noah and the great flood, required that Noah had a foundational belief in his God. Many of those who observed him building the ark mocked him. I am sure he wondered at times just why he was doing what he was doing. But he kept right on going believing that he would be saved through his actions along with his family.

The story tells us he was saved and because of him another piece of a foundation was laid—that of covenant. According to the author of Genesis, a covenant was established between God and God's creation through Noah that there would never be a flood that would wipe out all creation again. The sign to remind us of this covenant or

promise is the appearance of the rainbow. There is far more meaning to a rainbow than the hoped for pot of gold at its end. It ties us to God.

And, the foundation heard of in the Letter to the Romans, a complex exploration of Paul's theological stance, is that of simple faith. Because of the life and teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus, the future of all Christians is assured. Paul, while never knowing Jesus, developed a strong theological base that informed and supported the early church and still does so today.

Our sacrament of communion is another foundational piece of our faith we build on. As we take the bread and the wine into our beings, we take in the covenant that ties us, through Christ to God. We take in the promise that if we live lives in the manner of Jesus we will find our way to eternal life. And, **we** make a promise, too, that we will strive to live in the ways that are known to us and that will be made known so that we participate in making this world a better place for those with us now and those who will come after. Through our actions we continue to build on a foundation of faith and love that supports us all.

-- Amen