

Sermon: *Christians Under Construction*
Text: *Matthew 7:21 – 29*
Date: *June 1, 2008*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

A few years ago, a survey was taken of high school graduates and their parents. And the parents were asked: What is your goal for your child's life? Do you know what the number one answer was? ... Success!

A new bank president met with his retiring predecessor and said: "*Sir, I would like to know the keys to your success.*" And the older man said: "*Young man, I can sum it up in two words: good decisions.*" Well, the young man said: "*Thank you, sir. But how can I know which are the good decisions?*" And the man said: "One word: experience." The young man said: "*And I suppose experience comes with time.*" And the old man said: "*No, son. Experience comes with bad decisions.*"

Everyone wants to be successful in what they do. I don't know anyone who starts out to be a failure at anything they do. We all want to do our best ... in business, in marriage, in parenting ... in life! And if you go to Books a Million or Barnes and Noble, you will find tons of books to tell you how to be successful in almost every area of life. Even the Christian section is filled with books like: *Living Your Best Life Now*, *Turning Failure into Success*, and *God's Measure of Success*.

Well, in our text this morning, Jesus comes to the end of what most people agree was His greatest sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. Now, at least one scholar summed up the message of the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus' Suggestions for Successful

Godly Living. And in our text, Jesus seems to sum up the entire Sermon on the Mount. He said: *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father ... there are many who will call me Lord and talk about the great things they did for me, but I’ll just have to tell them, ‘Get out of here; I don’t even know you.’”*

And then, to illustrate His point, Jesus told a story. He said: there were once two men who went out and built houses. One built his house on the beach and the other built his house on the side of the mountain. And everything was going great and then, the storms came and the rains fell and the winds beat upon the houses. And the house that was built on the beach collapsed, but the house that was built on the side of the mountain stood strong. Now, the point of Jesus’ story is: Who was the most successful builder? And what was the key to his success?

Now, the first thing you and I need to understand is that Jesus is talking about life. These two men weren’t building houses; they were building their very lives. And so, Jesus isn’t interested in making sure that our buildings follow the building code. Jesus wants our spiritual lives, our very existence as men and women of God, to follow God’s plan. And in these verses, He is giving us the keys to successful Christian living.

Let’s spend a few moments reflecting on this story together, because nothing is more important than this. This is the key to success in your life. This

is the key to coming to the end of all this and hearing Jesus say: “*Well done, my good and faithful servant.*”

1. THE PRIMACY OF THE WORD OF GOD!

There is not another book in the world like the Bible. For 2000 years, the Church has proclaimed the Bible as the very Word of God, that it contains everything we need to know to lead us into a personal relationship with God, the Creator of the Universe.

Now, the Bible isn't a science book, but it does contain many truths that are scientifically accurate. And it isn't a history book, but it does contain the history of God's interaction with His people. And it isn't a literary masterpiece, but friends, the Bible's stories can rival the best stories that have ever been written. But you see, the Bible was never meant to be a science book or a history book; the Bible is the Word of God; it is God's revelation of Himself. And everything we need to know about God; and everything we need to know about the spirituality of humanity; and everything we need to know about salvation and living a holy life can be found in this book.

That's why we read and study the Bible; that's why we preach the Bible. That's why the Protestant Reformers said: Solo Scriptura! Scripture alone! That's why John Wesley proclaimed: “*I am a man of one book.*” And that's why the United Methodist Church says: The Bible is our primary source for knowing God and living for Him.

You see, what you believe about this book will determine the success of your life. The first thing we need to come to grips with is the primacy of scripture. It's not just another book; it's the very Word of God.

2. RECEIVING THE WORD OF GOD.

When Johnny got ready to go to college, his parents sat him down and said: "*Son, we don't have much money, but what we have right here in this box will change your life.*" A little while later, Johnny wrote home and said he was a little short on money and dad wrote back: "*Silver and gold have I none, but what I have I give to you. Read your Bible.*" Johnny wrote back: "*I read my Bible daily, but it hasn't helped me with my money problems.*" Well, at Christmas break, they sat Johnny down and told him they knew he wasn't reading his bible, because they had tucked ten \$20 bills in its pages.

Jesus said: our responsibility begins with listening to God's word. Verse 24 says: "*Everyone who hears these words of mine.*" And how do we listen to God's Word?

First, we listen to God's Word by reading it. I have been so excited to have people tell me, "*Tucker, I'm reading through the Bible with you.*" Listen, one of the things that happens when we read God's Word, especially when we read it systematically like reading it through in a year, is that you really come to understand the whole flow of scripture in a way that you can't understand by just reading a verse here and there. I tell you, there's no substitute for reading three

or four chapters of the Bible every day. When we do that, God begins to speak to us through His Word.

Second, we listen to God's Word by attending Sunday School or Bible Study. You know something that troubles me about our Church is the amount of people who show up to worship, but don't come to Sunday School. And then, it's heartbreaking to stand and shake your hands on Wednesday night and watch you go through the line and get your belly full of food and when it comes time to study God's Word, I stand there and watch half of you walk out the door. There has to be a place and a time in our busy lives for us to listen to God's Word; Jesus told Satan, "*It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*"

Since this book is not just any book, but the very word of God, receiving it, listening to it is vital to the success of our Christian lives.

3. OBEYING THE WORD OF GOD.

Jesus said: "*Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house upon the rock.*" Now, this is where the rubber meets the road, isn't it? It's one thing to listen to God's Word. That's the really easy part. Read the word, study the word, and meditate on the word, but actually living by what we read and know is a little more difficult. And Jesus said: the heart of wisdom is not listening to the word; it is living by it, actually building your life around the truths that you have heard and learned.

When Roger Staubach was the quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys, he was completely miserable. Here he was a Heisman Trophy winner and a Superbowl winner and Coach Landry wouldn't let him call his own plays. Coach Landry told him when to pass and when to run and if Roger changed the play, he better have a good reason. And Roger was completely miserable because what he really wanted to do was run his own team, call his own plays.

That sounds like us, doesn't it? Oh, we'd never say it. We'd never say, "*God, what I really want is to do things my way, call my own shots for a while,*" but that's the way we live. We live our lives our own way, until we find ourselves in a bind and then, we want to run to God. Then, we want to hit our knees and call our Church friends to pray for us. But you can't go wrong when you live in obedience to God's Word.

Roger Staubach said: "*Once I learned to obey, there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory.*" This indeed is the key to victory in our Christian lives ... obedience to God's word.

Jesus tells the story of two men who were very similar, both heard the Word of God, both built houses, and both houses appear to be fine and dandy until the storms came. Those, who study such things, see very little difference in the lives of Christians and non-Christians. From the outside looking in, sometimes it's hard to tell the difference ... until the storms come. For you see, the storms fall upon each of us; we all face life's challenges and difficulties. And when the storms come, and the rains fall, and the

winds beat upon the house, really the only question is: what have you built your house upon? Have you built upon the rock or upon the sand? What is the foundation upon which your life is built?