

Sunday, September 8, 2019

I Corinthians 3:10-15

Matthew 7:24-29

The Church's One Foundation- Jesus Christ"

Happy 64th Anniversary, Glenwood United Church! What a glorious day to gather together as a church family- to renew acquaintances, share stories with friends, and to just enjoy each other's company, while we worship and praise God together! What unites us this day is the presence of God in this place at this moment! And this is God's Spirit which is leading us as we begin this new academic year, with hope, with excitement and with the assurance that we are not moving forward in faith alone. Christ Jesus is with us each step of the way!

As we celebrate our Anniversary Sunday today take a moment and reflect upon what it is that binds us together as Glenwood United church? What calls us to be together in this place and how do we define this? If someone were to ask you why is Glenwood church your home? What would you say? Our youngest full members who were confirmed in June- answered this very easily—because this is where my roots are, my family is there and there are people I've known all my life; it is another home for me.

Home—for most people it is a place of comfort, relaxation, rest; a place where one can where pjs at 3p.m., eat in the living room, and enjoy doing what is fun and enjoying. But what happens if there are problems with the windows, the roof or even the foundation?

Leaning Tower of Pisa: How many of you recognize this building? It was built between 1173 and 1399 at only 2m above sea level. It is the bell tower of the cathedral at Pisa, Italy. Legend has it that this tower was used by famous scientist, Galileo, to test the force of gravity. In his test he dropped two balls of the same mass and found that they reached the ground at the same time. This was Galileo having fun at his church- for this was where he had been baptized as an infant and here he was raised. This church was not only his home church where he began his spiritual journey but it is also the place which inspired his questions of how and why things work as they do.

But if we look more closely at this tower we realize that it is leaning and it has been estimated that it is falling at a rate of 1-2 mm/ year. Originally the tower stood at 60 metres but now—the high side sits at 56.67m, and the lower side is at 55.86. But what caused this building to lean? When the tower was being built after 3 storeys had been made, the foundation was shifting. The stones which made up of the foundation had been laid on soft ground clay with a mix of fine sand and shells. So why didn't they stop and fix it? Well they did but with the whole area being composed of the same kind of

soil and at that time the knowledge of rock and sand and how they physically bond tightly or loosely was not well known. Yet even these pauses in construction did help as the sand/ clay was able to get a little harder. But another factor was that Pisa is a port city and the bell tower was built so that the bell ringing would be heard and people would come to mass. The Leaning tower of Pisa is still standing today and has become a major tourist attraction in the area but for how long? The tower leans because of a poor foundation.

Jesus talked about foundations not because there were huge buildings where he preached but because he wanted to emphasize his whole message in a quick way. Jesus has been speaking for a while at this time which we call the sermon on the mount. And as he is finally drawing to an ending, he wants to have his overall message hit home and be easily remembered. He talks about houses- every person who was listening to him could automatically relate—they all live in a house of some design; just like us. The houses Jesus referred to were not the wood and frame kind but the human heart that is the very being of life itself. But to truly emphasize his statement, he looked at houses- Two houses the same design, build and everything- They both look good and there is no need to worry in the sunshine heat filled days of the desert environment in which they lived. Then Jesus talked about the storms where the winds blew and there was a lot of rain. The storms came and things went wrong for the house that was built on sand. But the house that was built on a rock withstood it all.

Yet Jesus was not talking about modern homes being destroyed by hurricane winds, rain pelting and floodwaters rising, he was talking about our lives as individuals, as the church in the 21st century and our relationship with God. We know that hurricane winds and rain destroy everything in its path—we can see this in our recent news of what occurred in the Bahamas. But what happens to the people and the faith of the people in these times when storms overpower us all?

Yet there are other storms in our lives—whether there is enough money, health issues, children family safety and protection, violence, social justice issues worth advocating for, even life and death. But what is most important is where our house sits—are we sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to his words—or really hearing what he says and trusting him to be the rock the strong one? Or are we putting our house on sand—so that we can shift which ever way we want as the storms lead us. But if we truly have faith as individuals and as a church our foundation, our main thing, must be Jesus Christ. Every church today is facing storms—we know that people are just not attending nor supporting churches as they once did and buildings are falling into ill repair costing millions. Yet what we need to

remember and focus upon is this- when God looks upon Glenwood United church where is the heart of the people? Which house holds our hearts? The house of the foolish or the wise?

When Paul was establishing churches and people were yearning to hear the Good News of Jesus for the first time, there were some difficulties around issues of the old way and the new way. There were divisions amongst the people of the church. But what Paul states in our reading from 1 Cor. 3 is that through God's grace alone he was able to lay a foundation and that someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. But the foundation remains- Jesus.

We have received a great inheritance- this church was established 64 years ago which is relatively new to several in the city but the true heart of this church has never changed—the foundation is Jesus. How we continue to build upon the legacy of those who went before us, enables us to grow with each other, but we must choose wisely- looking at and understanding who we are in this community as the city around us changes. We have been challenged many times in the past to figure out how we reach out to others and help others who are in need and we've mastered those challenges. Maybe just maybe what we need to do at this time is to envision what God sees us doing as we enter our 65th year. We don't need to have a tower to test the laws of physics as Galileo did—but what do we need to put us into 2020? Is it anything different than what Jesus said by building our life in the hands of the foundation of all life- Jesus? Or does it mean really hearing Jesus' words and letting them sink deep in our hearts so that we want to respond in action by sharing and showing love in different ways with people?

On this anniversary Sunday might we be challenged anew to look at how we as a church are building up the heart of our church family and how we continue to focus on Jesus as Saviour and Lord? It all begins and continues with prayer as we seek God's guidance and what it is He calls us to do in His name. We must pray together for these are the challenges before us and as true people of faith and as the church family of Glenwood United we believe we can meet these challenges. For we believe, trust and know that God is with us each step of our life's journey. And if we believe this we can sing that children's song—"the wise and foolish builders" the third verse

"Build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ (3x) and the blessings will come down

The blessings come down as your prayers go up... So build your life on the Lord Amen.