

HOW IS OUR HOUSE BUILT?

Matthew 7

How is your house built? My parents had a solidly built house made with mainly brick. But after living there 25 years, they found signs of termites. Fortunately, the pest company put our traps around their house. Though they had to be monitored year after year, the termites did no great harm to their house.

One thing we have had to face here at Memorial is how our building is built. The original building went up in 1940 which houses the student center and the gold rooms downstairs as well as the parsonage. It is still secure, but the fire company has told us that because of its wooden construction we need to keep all doors to it shut when not using it as a fire block because it is the easiest part of our building to start a fire. The 1957 structure which houses the main worship area and the fellowship hall downstairs and the most used part of our kitchen may have seemed more secure, but over 25 years ago we found out that it had to be restructured because concrete bits of the ceiling downstairs were falling down. We found out that our building was on such soft ground that they had to auger anchors used for securing lighthouses 70 deep into the ground. One hundred years ago the street to the west of us was not “Lynn Avenue,” but aptly named “Swamp Road.” We built an addition in 1990 for our offices, restrooms, and meeting rooms below the offices, but in the first installation we found out during heavy storms that the bathroom plumbing was connected to the sewer, not the sanitary. So, our toilets looked like Mt. Vesuvius. And when you think of all the times plumbers, electricians, HVAC workers, painters, roofers, carpet and floor layers have come to fix this place, just how well has it been built?

But Jesus wasn't really talking about buildings when He spoke the concluding words of the Sermon on the Mount. He used the comparison of the house built on the sand versus the house built on the rock, but the story is really about a life built on “me” and this world versus one built on Him.

So how are our lives built? How secure are we for the future? The big issue in this country now seems to be “affordability.” Nearly half of people in American families cannot afford the true cost of living. Urban research finds 49 percent of people in American families don't have the resources to cover essential expenses to live securely in their community. The cost of essential goods and services is rising faster than earnings. Since 2017, average earnings have grown about 43 percent nationwide. Over the same period, home sale prices have increased 81 percent and rent 54 percent. The lowest-cost Silver health plan on the Affordable Care Act Marketplace has risen 77 percent, and child care costs have grown dramatically. Rising everyday expenses, including energy and transportation, are adding new pressures on households. Residential electricity costs have increased faster than earnings across much of the country, leaving customers paying about \$40 more in December 2025 on average than they did in December 2017. Gas prices have also risen sharply, with the national average growing by \$1.00 per gallon since late February 2026. Affordability pressures are spreading beyond traditionally high-cost areas. So the emphasis is on having the funds to get beyond that and live securely. Are our lives being built then on Christ or what we have?

When I think of building, I picture the story of the “Three Little Pigs.” In it, three pigs each build a house. The first makes his house of straw, the second out of sticks, and the third out of bricks. When the Big Bad Wolf comes, he huffs and puffs and blows down the house of straw. He does this also with the house of sticks. But when he comes to the house built of bricks, no matter how he blows, the house stands secure. Finally, he decides to climb in through the chimney, but the pig has prepared underneath a pot of boiling water.

So what pig do you think you are? How well have we prepared our houses? On rock or sand?

Jesus directs us to what He means about “house building” when He talks about “hearing God’s Word and putting it into practice.” In the Old Testament the word for “hear” did not just mean “listening;” it meant responding. In the case of God’s Word “hearing” meant obedience. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus giving us His insight into the Ten Commandments. In doing that He tells us that we are to “love our enemies” and “Be perfect, as Your Father in heaven is perfect.” Are we loving even our enemies? Are we perfect as God is? What kind of house are we building?

When Disney did their cartoon version of the “Three Little Pigs, the pig who built his house out of straw and the one who built his out of sticks, lost those homes. But the Big Bad Wolf does not eat them. Instead, they both escape to the house of the third pig whose house is built of bricks. Their houses are destroyed, but they are saved.

St. Paul talks about house building in 1 Corinthians 3:

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

So much of what we work hard for will not last. But our salvation does not depend on it. That depends completely on what Jesus has done for us. Hebrews 3:3 tells us, “Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.” St. Paul says our bodies are the “temple of the Lord,” built by Jesus, not us. Our faith rests on what He did for us.

But what we do for Him, not because we have to, but because we want to as His people is lasting. Jesus put us on the rock of Himself so that what we do on that rock will remain, just as

the house on the rock withstands the floods and wind. That motivates us to not sit on our faith, but to live it out. Think of how much more careful we are to do something if we want it to last.

Jesus illustrates this in His teaching on bearing fruit. Good fruit comes from good trees. How good we are bearing good fruit in our lives depends on us being good trees. And what makes trees good? It is the soil they are planted in, the moisture that gets to their roots, the sun that provides the energy for plants to make food to grow, that weather that avoids great extremes. We have been planted in the good soil and plenteous moisture, and sunshine of God's grace to us in Christ Jesus. We are planted, not just to sit here, but to grow. We can be like that third pig whose house was built of brick who can provide shelter for the other two. We can use the firm foundation of Jesus to provide a base for us to reach out and help others drowning in the high waters of life because their houses have been built on sand.