

THE PENTECOST

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Cover photo: painting of 'The Parable of the Two Houses' by Ramona Stevens

Above photo: Chilliwack, BC

In this December issue of The Pentecost we will look at some parables. A parable is a simple story with a spiritual meaning. Parables were a favorite way that Jesus used to teach His message to mankind. Take some time to study several of His parables with us. God bless your seeking heart.

Shawn Stevens

We pray that this issue will give you some revelation on Jesus' parables and encourage you to read more of the Bible as the whole book has application for our lives.

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THE PARABLE OF THE TWO HOUSES

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

(Matthew 7:24-27 KJV)

The picture, here, is of two houses in the midst of a storm. One is built on rock and one is built on sand. One house weathers the storm; the other house is destroyed. Some of Jesus' parables do not require interpretation because Jesus explains the meaning of them for us. Jesus explains this parable, saying that the one who hears Jesus' teaching, and does not follow it, is the one whose house collapses. Further, the one who hears Jesus' teaching, and follows it, is the one whose house stands through the storm.

This parable is about builders and the choices

that they make. You may, or may not, be a house builder in the natural, literal use of the term. However, friend, did you know that whether you are a contractor, framer or construction labourer, or not, you are a builder. You are building your life. With every day that passes, you are building, shaping and forming your beliefs, values, convictions and purposes for your life. You are also building friendships, relationships and, maybe, a family. For a moment, think of all of these things as being a part of your house. Your life is your house. Who you are, as a person, is your house. Your house may be small or it may be a mansion. Your house may have fancy framing, have custom and intricate architectural design, or it may be basic and plain. What is of primary importance to every house is its foundation. In fair weather, bystanders or passersby may not know what kind of foundation was used for any house. However, the builder knows. The builder knows whether he built on firm foundation, or on poor. Even though the bypassers may not know what the foundation is in fair weather, they will know in time. All know, in time, because the storm is coming.

In Jesus' parable a great storm comes to each house. Use your imagination to picture this storm. This storm has torrential rain, winds with hurricane velocity and flood waters overflowing their usual boundaries. Both houses are under a fury of severe pelting, beating and battering from the elements. Is this not how life is? Life is hard, filled with disappointments, losses, heartbreaks, violations and abuses. Sometimes, life's hardest dealings come all at once, back to back, with little or no intermission between them. In the midst of

these calamities, many people collapse. You can collapse mentally. You can collapse spiritually. You can collapse financially. You can collapse emotionally. You can collapse eternally. You can have everything stripped away from you, even your sanity, in the midst of life's storm; that is, you can have everything collapse if you have built your house on sand. Building your house on sand is hearing Jesus' words and saying, "That's not for me. That may be good for somebody else but not for someone like me." Building on sand is saying, "I will consider Jesus' words at some future date after I have lived a full life for myself." Building on sand is hearing Jesus' words and being offended at the claims He makes on your life. It is being offended at His call for you to surrender to Him and give Him your life. It is being offended and not repenting. Building on sand is saying to yourself, "I am a good person and don't need God ruling over my life." Building on sand means having your house/life flattened when life's storms hit.

However, although one house in the parable fell, there was another that did not. Why? The surviving house/life was the one which was built on the rock of hearing Jesus' words and obeying them.

This house was also subjected to storm. Becoming a follower (obeyer) of Jesus does not make your life smooth and carefree. To the contrary, conflict, crisis and pressures are poured out on the Christian also. However, what a difference in the outcome of this house/life! This builder heard the words of Jesus and recognized the value that Jesus' message had, if it was lived out. This builder

heard the words of Jesus and realized that, contained therein, was everything that he needed to build his life upon. He eagerly began building his life on this foundation.

Is it easy to build our lives on the teachings of Jesus? Jesus did not say that it was. Although we are not told, here, I imagine that the builder, in order to find this rock foundation, had to go to a rocky place. Perhaps he had to climb up and down a mountain, carrying supplies and building materials. Perhaps he had the strain of carrying materials around jagged, seemingly impossible, sections of the climb to get to the rock slab that he was looking for. Perhaps it cost him everything to build his life/house on this foundation. The other builder built on the flats, on the flood-plain and upon sand. His life/house went up easy and fast. However, it came crashing down just as fast.

How about you, builder? What have you built your life upon? What foundation is beneath your life/house? Examine yourself. You may have had many breaks in life and you may have many things going for you. However, the fair weather is going to change. When it does change, foundation is everything. Are you following Jesus Christ through life? Are you connected to Him?

Friend, Jesus Christ died for your sins and for mine. He paid a terribly painful price that your life and mine would be saved. He died for us, and then He rose again from the dead. Now, because of what He has done, you can be forgiven and saved and brought into His kingdom. Will you accept this and now start building your life/house on Jesus and His Word?

Perhaps you are saying, "I am older. I have already built my life and it has not been upon Jesus' teachings." Start over! That is right, start over! Count your sand-castle life as a total loss and start over with Jesus. You are privileged to have heard this call in time.

You may be saying, "I can't change my life now. I have traveled too far down the path that I am on." You can change, not by your own power, but by God enabling the changes that need to come. You can make a decision today to put your life in Christ's hands and give up your self-rule. Jesus' words have come to you. Do not make the mistake, of not heeding them. Jesus' words are for you to build your life/house upon.

You may say, "I don't know how to change." You may not understand all that needs to change in your life but you can fall down before the Lord and cry out to Him. You can make a commitment to following Him and ask Him for the ability to live that commitment out. This does not mean that you will never fail. What this does mean is that the direction of your life has changed from going your own way to following God's way. There will be much grace and much forgiveness, along the way, but your direction needs to be one of following Christ. That direction is set in moments of decision, such as this, when you choose to surrender all of your life to Jesus Christ.

Will you choose the way of Christ? Will you be transformed? Will you become a new person with Christ dwelling in your heart, Christ sitting on the throne of your heart, guiding your actions and life? You can begin a new life

today, one with the peace of God abiding within you. You can begin a life clean and new by the grace and power of God. Will you choose this?

Friend, if you have not surrendered your life to Jesus, put your hand in His today. Call out to Him in prayer. Make your full commitment to Him today. Pray to Him in your own words or, if you need help, cry out to Him in words such as these:

Lord Jesus, I have been building my life all wrong. I have been acting like I don't need You. I see how wrong I have been. Life is not a casual thing. Life is serious, and I want to be serious in building on a foundation for my life which will stand throughout the storm. Jesus Christ, You alone have what I need. You have the remedy and You offer the forgiveness that I seek. Forgive me for running from You. Today, I stop running and I surrender to You. Today, I choose to obey Your call. Jesus Christ, You died for me, for my sins and then You rose from the dead. I believe this. Forgive my sins, every one of them. I fully surrender my life to You. I want to follow You from this day onward. Give me the direction and strength to live this out. Thank You. Amen.

Shawn Stevens

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THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD TREASURE AND OF THE EVIL TREASURE

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

Matthew 12:35-37KJV

Did you know that your heart is a treasure chest? It is. However, the human heart does not store diamonds, rubies or pearls. The human heart stores one of two things, good treasure or evil treasure. What are good treasure and evil treasures?

A man or woman who has been given a clean and forgiven heart, has growing out of that heart godly and righteous things. What things? The fruit of the Spirit is recorded for us in Galatians, where we read; “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23KJV).

These are the qualities which God's Spirit births in those who follow Christ. How are these qualities seen? Through words and deeds. The parable that we are discussing deals specifically with words. A person's mouth is like the door to the treasure chest. When a Christian with a good heart opens his mouth and starts speaking, the door to his heart-treasure chest opens and out come words of love, words of joy, words of peace, words of longsuffering, words of kindness, words of

goodness, words of faithfulness, words of gentleness and words of self-control. These words are used by the Lord to minister help, hope and healing to others. Such words are a treasure, more valuable and more useful than pearls, silver or gold. Such words are more precious than material goods because material goods merely decorate the outsides of man, his body and his environment. However, spiritual words go down inside of a man and can bring hope to his heart and soul. Also spiritual words in some way reflect God's nature and enlighten men and women to truth.

If the spiritual things such as the words and fruit of God's Spirit constitute good treasure then what are the evil things that constitute the evil treasure that Jesus speaks of? We find the answer in another passage of Matthew where Jesus says; “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: ...” (Matthew 15:18-20 KJV). Here Jesus is listing things such as murder, adultery and blasphemy, etc. as things which begin in the heart or imagination of a man or woman. These things don't just stay in a person's heart, they are expressed in words.

Scripture is filled with references to people sinning with their mouths. God speaks through the prophet Jeremiah:

“And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue

*to speak lies, and weary themselves
to commit iniquity.”*

(Jeremiah 9:5KJV).

Here the sin of lying and deceiving is rebuked.

With all of these scriptures, the verbal sin which is identified, whether it be lying, cursing, oppression, deceit, hatred is all a part of the evil treasure of men's hearts. This kind of treasure is treasure that we can do without. The average man has stored up in his heart and spoken forth with his mouth much of this kind of treasure.

Jesus' words again were “ ... for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matthew 12:34 KJV). Usually there is an abundance of sin in a man and woman's heart to verbalize.

Does a Christian ever sin with his or her mouth? Yes, we do and perhaps that is why Paul says to the Colossian Church; “But now ye also, put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” (Colossians 3:8KJV). Even though the Christian may sin with his mouth, he can come to God for forgiveness and find grace.

Sometimes it is not until a man has verbalized the thoughts of his heart that he sees just how evil and bitter his heart really is. Friend, how is it with you. Your words are usually a good gauge of where your heart is at. What kind of treasure do you possess? If you have evil treasure then empty it out by coming to God and asking Him to forgive you, cleanse and re-make your heart. Bring your guilty soul to the cross of Christ and plead to Christ for pardon

and cleansing. Part with the sinking wreck of your own self-righteousness and enter Jesus' lifeboat. Commit your life to follow Jesus. It is time to exercise faith. When a bride gets married, she makes a life-long commitment to a man and then lives forever afterward as a married woman. This is how it is to be for us. This is faith, to commit yourself to God and to trust your life to Him for all eternity. Once you have committed your life and heart to the Lord, you will be a speckled bird who's life does not match the lives of most other people around you. That is okay, you will now have good treasure within you. But count the cost and choose rightly. Do not let it be that on the Day of Judgment your heart and record is laden with iniquity. Come to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. Jesus is willing and able to change your heart. Confide all of your heart to Him. Jesus will then put good treasure in you.

Until that good treasure has been placed in you, what do you have? May God waken lost men and women to their dead, miserable, guilty condition. Dear reader, if you do not know the Lord and the Lord's salvation yet, then may the Lord awaken you to your need of Him as well. His bowels of compassion are moved and He reaches out to you. Cry out to Him in earnest. Let God change you from the inside out. Let God put good treasure in you. Let spiritual life in you commence.

The Scriptures teach that Jesus is the sinless Son of God and that He died for our sins. The day that He did this, the penalty for your sins and mine was paid for by Him. Then in three days He rose from the dead and conquered death. The truth of this will set you free if you

believe and embrace it with your heart, and then confess with your mouth the faith of your heart.

Friend, it is not enough to affirm the truth of Scripture in your mind. If that scripture has never come alive in you, then you need to wake up. This is faith. Make a full surrender to the Lord and pray that He would birth in you a living faith, robust, real and full of zeal. Pray that He would birth real treasure in you. Evil treasure is really no treasure at all. It is just rottenness of soul. Make the choice today to give over control of your life to Jesus.

Pray to Jesus in your own words, or if you need help, I offer this prayer.

Lord Jesus, I don't want to be judged for my words. I want to be forgiven for my words and for my deeds, which have been sinful. Jesus, You died for me and then rose from the dead. I choose to believe in You and follow You for the rest of my days. Take away all of my evil treasure and put good treasure in me. I give You my life. I choose to repent of my sin and self-rule and to, by Your strength, live for You. Forgive my sins and be my Lord. Amen.

Shawn Stevens

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WHEN GOD REVEALS

The Gospels record an incident from the childhood of Jesus Christ where Jesus' parents took Him to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Once the event was over, they started heading back and only Jesus lingered behind. What was he doing? His parents, after searching for Him, found Him in the temple conversing with the temple teachers. Jesus was only twelve years old and the teachers, and others, who were listening to Him ...

"...were astonished at His understanding and answers." (Luke 2:47)

What was it that made Jesus' words so astonishing? It was His *understanding and answers*.

Jesus, even from His childhood, had a relationship with God, His Father. In that relationship there was divine communication and the transference of wisdom. This wisdom was one quality that would characterize His life. He repeatedly gave God, His Father, the credit for His teaching. He said:

"... When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." (John 8:28)

Jesus was teaching His Heavenly Father's wisdom.

After receiving teaching from His Father, Jesus shared this truth with others, bringing them to understanding also. Jesus is faithful to lead and

shepherd and teach His followers in any age. A Christian begins to know the voice of Jesus. Jesus referred to His followers as His sheep and said:

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."(John 10:14-16)

Jesus' followers are enlightened by His voice and come to discern it. When we read the Bible and it is illuminated before us, we see in print and hear Christ's voice, and we know that they are the same source. Jesus instructed us to walk in His teaching. He said :

"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them." (John 12:35-36)

Here, we have Jesus giving two commands to us, that is if you want to consider these as separate things, that we are to walk in the light, and to believe in the light. The result of this walking/believing is that God's light becomes such a part of us that we become sons of light.

Enlightened sons of light, who are walking and believing in God's light, begin to understand mysteries. A mystery is something unexplained, unknown or something kept secret.

The Apostle Paul also spoke of mysteries. He said:

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)

The apostles had been given quite a revelation when the Gospel was made known to them. Who would have imagined the Gospel without God revealing it to them? Jesus Christ would save His people by dying a sacrificial death for them, and then rising from the dead. He was creating a church of all who would receive His rule over their lives, regardless of their race or background. God's kingdom was a spiritual kingdom and now His spiritual revelation was coming out in a greater way than ever before. Unlike the mystery religions of Paul's day, the apostles were not trying to peddle this information in little bits and pieces, holding back as much of it as possible and speaking only as much as was necessary to lure people into mystery cults. They were not trying to preserve God's truth in mystery form but, rather, were doing everything they could to get

their message out.

Nevertheless it was still a mystery, in that most people didn't understand it. It required heart knowledge, over head knowledge, to grasp it. Their message was soundly based in the Old Testament books, but it was not until this time, as a result of God revealing , that a real understanding of those books was coming out. It was a progressive revelation. The gospel was rooted in the Old Testament but the explaining of it, by revelation, was for this time. The message that the apostles were bringing was profoundly new to the people's thinking. It was deeply spiritual. You could call it a mystery but the apostles were doing everything they could to get the word out.

It is God's great pleasure to reveal His light and mystery to all who would receive it. Jesus said:

No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. (Luke 8:16-17)

Friend, are you walking and believing in Jesus' light? Are you a son or daughter of light? In the Bible, Jesus has shared with us His Heavenly Father's words.

What was once a mystery is now revealed. Is it open to your understanding because you have believed it with your heart?

Shawn Stevens

CREATION

Have you ever wanted to make something? Perhaps you have wanted to make a model or a picture. One day God wanted to make something. He wanted to make the heaven and the earth.

The Bible says in Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." What did God do next? Next God made light. God saw that the light was good. He divided light from darkness. The light times God called day. The dark times God called night.

Was God finished now that He had made the heavens and the earth and light? No He had only just begun. Next God did something to divide the waters that were in the air from the waters on the earth. Once the water on the earth was divided, He organized it so that there were both land and seas. He saw that it was good.

What was God going to do with the land that He had just made? He decided to decorate and supply it with grass and herbs and fruit trees.

Next there was something else the world needed. The earth needed sunlight in the day and moonlight in the night. So God made the sun, moon and stars.

This was all so good.

What did God do next? He made fish and other sea creatures and He also made birds. Then God blessed them.

God then decided to make land and animals. Some of these animals ran and leaped. Some crept slowly. The animals reproduced each one after its kind.

This means that buffalos gave birth to buffalos. Laughing hyenas gave birth to laughing hyenas. Baboons gave birth to baboons. They were all good.

It had been good for God to make all of these things but God had been waiting to make his favourite thing. His favourite thing, out of what he had made on earth was man and woman. God made man and woman.

We are told in Genesis 1:26-28

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Man was made in God's image. What does that mean? This means that man was in some ways like God. This means that man is very special.

Did you know that you are very special to God. You are much more special to God than the

animals, birds, fish, or even the whole earth.

Why did God want to make man? God wanted someone that He could love. He wanted someone who would believe in Him and would love Him too.

Lastly God rested, not because He was tired but because He was done.

Did man turn out to be someone who would believe in God and love and obey God? Sadly man chose not to believe God and disobeyed God. Many today do the same thing. In fact we have all disobeyed God.

Many people do not even believe that God exists or that they could ever know Him. The Bible calls unbelief "sin." Do you believe in God? Do you know that you have sinned? Sin is doing our own will and not obeying God. Do you know that you can know God?

We read in Isaiah 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Our sin separates us from God. God loves you and me. You are special to Him.

The Bible says in Acts 16:31 "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Jesus Christ is God's Son and He came to earth to save you. How does Jesus save you? First, He died for you and took your penalty and your punishment for your sins. Then He rose from the dead. You can believe in Him today, ask Him to forgive you. You can pray to Him and give Him your life today. Are you willing to

give your life to Jesus? He made the whole world including you. He wants to remake your heart in a way that pleases God. He makes everything good. We have not been good. We have sinned and disobeyed God. Jesus still loves us and chose to come to earth to take our punishment by dying for you and me. We need Him. We need him a lot. Pray to him and thank Him for dying for you. Ask Him to forgive you for your sins. Tell Him that you want to follow Him and you want to give Him your life. God bless you.

Shawn Stevens

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