

Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom
Storm-Tested Faith • Message 7
Bryan Jones
August 2, 2026

Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- **Pray that Jesus would be the foundation of your life.**
- **Pray for strength when storms come.**
- **Ask God to help your faith become visible through your actions.**

Worship Psalm:

“The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety.”

Psalm 18:2 (NLT)

Scripture Reading:

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Matthew 7:24-29 (NIV)

A. Introduction

When I lived in Chicago, we said there were 2 seasons:

- 1.) Winter
- 2.) Road construction

Oftentimes, the road, because of the salt and extreme cold, had to be constantly worked on. The winter had a tremendous effect on the roads.

But what struck me when I lived there is how prepared people were for the storms, for the winter weather.

Steph and I grew up in the South... where if you even think it's going to snow, people buy out the whole grocery store.

In fact, when we first lived there, Steph worked at a restaurant, and it snowed like 5 inches. She called in and said she wasn't going to make it to work... and they said, *Are you sick?* She said, *No, its snowing...* and they were like, *So...*

Now, people prepared both physically and mentally for the storms that hit...

I find it interesting in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus closes talking about the storms of life. The truth is, we all face storms... you are either coming out of a storm, in a storm, or heading towards a storm.

So, how do we make sure we are spiritually and mentally prepared for what's ahead? Because the truth is, some of you are terrified of the future, afraid of what it might hold.

So, I want to give you some things that will help you navigate the storms in life...

B. Storm-Tested Faith

1. What is your FOUNDATION of life built upon?

(Matthew 7:25-27. C/R: James 1:2-3)

"The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

Matthew 7:25 (NIV)

Did you notice it says *the rain came...* not *if...* See, the storms hit everyone. It hits the godly and ungodly... the wise and foolish... the young and old... the rich and poor.

I did have someone say to me, *You must be good at living this passage out... you're a Dallas Cowboys fan...* but yes, the storms hit everyone...

We have to have correct theology... when I meet with people... one of the top reasons they say they stopped following God is because of a storm that hit their life...they would talk about a situation and say, *Why would God allow this?*

There isn't a verse in the Bible, church, that says when you follow Jesus you won't have problems...

Following Jesus doesn't mean you won't have storms; it just means you have someone who will walk with you in them...

And let me say, here's one of the major problems with storms: they hit suddenly... so that's why we have to ask these questions now!

There is something called a **wadi** in Israel- **(show picture)**

It's a dry riverbed or valley that only fills with water during periods of rain. In a country like Israel... where much of the climate is arid or semi-arid... the water dries up, and it seems safe to build or be in these areas... but here's what's crazy: it can be sunny where you are while it's raining ahead of you, and that can trigger flashfloods in these riverbeds... many people in Israel are killed even today because of this...

It's because it comes out of nowhere... and that scares us because some of us walk around wondering when the next bad thing is going to happen.

Because did you notice this? *It didn't fall...*

I've shared this before... but when I had a season of anxiety, I wondered if my faith was even real. Why am I struggling? I was so overwhelmed... felt like I was in a pit... but read this verse...

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

James 1:2-3 (NIV)

The fact that you are here and you're still seeking Jesus is a sign your faith is built on the right foundation... storms reveal our foundations; they don't create them...

And its sobering, because did you notice what the final verse says...

"The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Matthew 7:27 (NIV)

Notice it says, *with a crash...*

Henri Nouwen talks about the difference between first love and second love... He says if you build your life on second love... a relationship, a job, a home, stuff, friendship... even good stuff... those things will end up leaving you one day... they can hurt you... it causes a crash when something happens to them, if you will.

(Picture of house- Jesus foundation/ other foundations)

That's why we say Jesus at the Center.

But when you build your life on first love—the love of Jesus—you understand He will never leave you or forsake you... and He will walk with you in the storms of life...

It's interesting, the word foolish actually means moron, but it also means godless.

Jesus is showing how fleeting and quickly stuff of this life goes away... and how it's not a foundation to give your life to.

When you build your life on Jesus, you won't be spared from the storms of life... but you will make it through them!

(Picture of house in storm) Built his house on 40-foot pylons... built his house to withstand 250 mile-an-hour winds. The result? One cracked bathroom window.

This strong foundation became a blessing to other people...

And notice the house—when you build your life the right way, you become a blessing to others...you have an impact on others...

2. DAILY life with Jesus prepares you for the storms.

I want to encourage some of you that your faith is stronger than you realize. I have seen people walk through some of the most painful situations, and they find out their foundation and their love for Jesus were strong.

And each day you read your Bible, each day you spend time with Him, He begins to strengthen you and makes your foundation strong...

See, you don't get yourself through the storms. Jesus does. And sometimes, sadly, you have to hit rock bottom before you see Him as the Rock!

Let me show you this... I think this will hit home for some people...

Christian life:

Try harder-----→ Fatigue -----→Quit-----→ Shame

Went on a hunting trip, learning how to shoot guns several years ago... and I missed everything with an

AK-47... like, I got done, and the guys said, *I don't think you could do that again if you tried..* so, guess what...

I went fishing with some other guys instead...

So people get pumped up, *Man, I'm going to try really hard...* and then this happens, and they think, *I'm not very good at following Jesus...* so they just kind of give up on seeking Him...

Now, I need to make this clear... Some people get to the end of the Sermon on the Mount and think, *I've got a lot of work to do...I've got to do this and that...* and they miss the whole point.

If we take the Sermon on the Mount accurately, if we hold ourselves to the standard... we are all lustful, adulterers, liars, oath breakers, and idol worshipers... nah, it's about our need for Jesus...

So, the Sermon on the Mount shows us our need for Jesus.

I have shared this before.... but the studies show that if you read the Bible once a week, it has little to no effect. If you read the Bible two to three times a week, it has a nominal effect. But if you read the Bible four times or more, it has a radical impact on you...

The point is simple: when Jesus and the Word, and not the world, become the majority of your life...everything changes...

You've got to make a commitment to get in the Word of God... to make church a priority...

You have to be around Jesus...

Consistency vs Intensity

Like if you have worked out, or if you decide you're going to pick up a hobby, or read a book...

What happens is we get passionate, so we do something one day for 3–5 hours... and we do it the next day... and then we realize it's not sustainable.

So, when I was growing in this, I just got consistent... I said, *I'm going to give God my first 30 minutes every morning.* Doesn't matter if I'm off, have to get up early, or if I'm preaching....

I'm in this... and it has radically impacted my life. I've come to understand Jesus alone can change me, but I must be around Him.

3. You have to ACT on what He says to you.

(Matthew 7:24. C/R: James 1:22-24)

But then when you spend time with Him... when you are around Him... apply what He said...

Listen to what Jesus says here:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

Matthew 7:24 (NIV)

So, this is the last part of the Sermon on the Mount. They have been around Jesus, and He's telling them... *Act on them. Put them into practice.*

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

James 1:22-24 (NKJV)

I love what Tony Evans says about this...

The word someone is actually the word for man. The New King James Version of the Bible actually says that he is like a man who looks at a mirror and quickly turns away... and it says man because women don't look at a mirror and quickly turn away...

Women hang out in multiple mirrors. There's the bathroom mirror, the vanity mirror, there's a half mirror that allows you to look back at the vanity mirror, there is a full-body mirror, a mirror for their purse, and there's also a car mirror... I will have to say, I have seen countless women put on makeup at a stop light with a car mirror. But I did see a man the other day... shaving in the vanity mirror. He had shaving cream and everything!

But women look, and then they touch up, fix up, or they sandblast... they do something. They act on what they see.

Women don't quickly turn away. They hang out in the mirror.

And James says, when it comes to God's Word, don't be like a man. Be like a woman.

(I guess women are more godly... self-absorbed but godly.)

Don't let the Word go in one ear and out the other...

Slacktivism – churches are filled with people that hear sermons every week.... but they don't honor God with their money, body, or their influence...

Jesus says, *When you pray, when you give, when you fast*, yet churches are filled with people who hear sermons every week but rarely pray, rarely give, and rarely fast....

Love and pray for enemies- yet churches are filled with people who viciously attack others and spew hate on social media...

Detrick Bonhoeffer says, *One act of obedience is better than one hundred sermons*... we have to build our life on a solid foundation, which means we have to live it out.

Tristan - Captain America - he realized one day he will have pain and problems and became afraid...

You can't keep him from the storms of life, but you can introduce him to the One who will walk him through it...

Storms will come, but you don't have to be afraid...

- What is your foundation?
- What is Jesus asking you to do to make Him your foundation?

Be faithful...