

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood.
- B. I'm extra happy that you are here today, because today we are launching our new summer series. All summer long, we will look at the parables of Jesus.
- C. I'm calling this series MazeRunner. I'll explain that in a minute. The subtitle is Finding Your Way to Peace in the Parables of Jesus.
- D. A parable is a mini-story that has been crafted to make a point.
- E. Jesus told a bunch of parables. On one level, they were easy to understand, and Jesus made his point clear.
- F. But, most of the time, when Jesus told a parable, he left everybody scratching their heads. His parables were complex. They were multi-layered. They needed explaining.
- G. Jesus didn't tell parables to make stuff easy.
- H. He told parables to separate listeners between motivated and unmotivated.
- I. He said so:
 - 1. *To those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But to those who are not listening, even what they have will be taken away from them. That is why I tell these stories, because people see what I do, but they don't really see. They hear what I say, but they don't really hear, and they don't understand. (Matthew 13:12, 13, NLT)*
- J. So anybody who says, "Yay! Parables! This will be fun! This will be easy!" I've got news for you.
- K. This isn't the kiddie table. It's the grown up table. And you've just moved from chicken strips and fries to calamari appetizer, rigatoni with in a marsala cream sauce, lobster carbonara, and veal parmigiana...

II. Scripture

- A. *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 'and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 'But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 'and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.'" (Matthew 7:24-27, NKJV).*
- B. When I study the Bible, I use a method I learned in seminary. It's called syntactical outlining. I won't inflict the details on you, but here's the big idea.
- C. I take the section of Scripture I'm studying and break it apart phase by phrase (actually clause by clause). So, for this message, I took all of Matthew 7 and most of Matthew 8.
- D. Then I break it apart, line by line. I indent it grammatically, with subordinate, coordinate, and superordinate clauses.
 - 1. Are we having fun yet?
- E. Then I start looking for connections. I look for repeated words. Repeated patterns. I look for logical development and logical flow.
- F. So the harder I looked at Mathew 7, the more I realized something. There are 8 sections I this chapter. Chapter seven is the end of a larger section, that begins in chapter 5.
- G. Matthew 5, 6, and 7 contain the largest unbroken section of teaching by Jesus in the whole Bible. Do you know what this teaching is called?
 - 1. The Sermon on the Mount
- H. So, our paragraph about the house on the rock and the house on the sand... this little parable is the tail end of the Sermon on the Mount.
- I. If we zoom in a little, chapter 7 alone, like I said, has 8 sections. At first, I thought they were random. As if Matthew cut and pasted teaching of Jesus together without much of a plan.
- J. Which brings me back to my syntactical outlining, and the big idea that emerges. It's a really big idea. I told Margi I wasn't sure if I could do it justice today. So I explained to her what I saw, and she said to just teach that.
- K. So here we go.

III. The Big Idea

- A. The Big Idea of Matthew 8 is something I would call the Law of Congruence.
 - 1. The Laws of Congruence (Consistency): the only way to experience peace, and joy, and abundance in life is to bring every part of your life into congruence with God and his truth.
 - a) So that...
 - (1) You are aligned with God.
 - (2) You are aligned with reality.
 - (3) You are aligned with your deepest nature and truth.
 - (4) You are aligned in your words.
 - (5) You are aligned in your thoughts.
 - (6) You are aligned in your actions.
 - (7) You are aligned in your emotions and psychological state.
 - (a) Everything snaps together like Legos. All the pieces fit. No gaps. No forcing things to stay together.
 - (b) Whether we are talking about your finances, or your dating, or your sexuality, or your marriage, or your speech, or how you drive, or your self-talk — there is a seamless whole. A perfect integration of one thing with the next, because God has dropped the plumb line of his Word, and you are bringing more an more of your life into alignment with that.
 - 2. In every paragraph of Matthew 8, there are things that should match up but don't.
 - a) Section one (1-5): *If you are going to judge others, you will feel judged yourself.*
 - (1) You should align the way you judge others with the way you judge yourself, and show grace to everyone, including to yourself.
 - (2) It's the Law of Congruence.
 - b) Section two (6): *If you devote your life to the inconsequential and unclean, you will feel torn up and broken inside.*
 - (1) You should align what is precious with what is precious. It is insane to give your life to what is messed up and expect you can be happy and at peace.
 - c) Section three (7-11): *If you never pursue the limits of your Father's grace, you'll never find the adventure he made you for.*
 - (1) You should align your expectations with your endeavors. These should be congruent. Don't be surprised if life doesn't give what you have never bothered to pursue.
 - d) Section four: (12-14): *If you choose the path without God, you'll reach a painful destination without God.*

- (1) You should align the path you choose with the destination you desire. Every day, you choose a road — don't be surprised when it leads you where it goes.
- e) Section five: (15-20): *If your inner truth and outer truth don't line up, your output is dysfunction and waste.*
 - (1) You should align your fruit with your root. You are rooted in Christ — abide in him and bear the fruit of grace in the world.
- f) Section six: (21-23): *If you do religious things without first being saved, your religion masks your need for Christ, and you will find yourself far away from God.*
 - (1) A child of wrath can imitate the deeds of a child of God. It's not a problem with the deeds, it's a problem with whose child you are. *"I never knew you."*
- g) Section seven (24-27): *If you increasingly align your life — mind, emotions, words, and choices — with God's truth, you will find power to stand strong in the storms of life.*
 - (1) The giant pain machine called life on earth may knock you down, but it can ever knock you out.

3. There's the setting for today's Scripture.

4. Now, let's take it apart.

IV. The Parable of the House on the Rock or Sand

A. Therefore...

1. Jesus said, "therefore."
2. When you see a therefore in Scripture, pause and figure out what it's there for.
3. Therefore introduces the big idea. The grand summary. He has been speaking about the Laws of Congruence, and now he's going to bring it home.
 - a) The parable of the house on the rock or sand is the heart and soul of the Laws of Congruence.
4. This is the big idea. This is the main point. Get this parable, and you get everything that comes before.

B. Whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them...

1. Two parts are essential.
 - a) First is hearing.
 - b) Second is doing.
2. We'll get back to that.
3. These sayings of mine. Jesus was the Savior above all else. In second place, he was a teacher. When he talks about "these sayings of mine," he is not simply talking about his own verbal teachings. He is talking about everything the Bible teaches on every subject.
4. The whole Bible is the sayings of Jesus.
 - a) The Law of Moses is the sayings of Jesus.
 - b) The Psalms of David are the sayings of Jesus.
 - c) The promises of the Prophets are the sayings of Jesus.
 - (1) You can't go anywhere in the 66 books of the Bible without landing on a verse that Jesus would call "these sayings of mine."
 - (a) The heart of Scripture is Christ, the heart of Christ is grace, the heart of grace is the Cross.
5. Jesus pointed to the Bible and declared, "these things speak of me." Why? Because the whole Bible is the mind of Christ, written by human authors, influenced by God the Holy Spirit, in a process called inspiration.
6. And you can't live like Christ unless you think like Christ.
7. And you can't think like Christ without knowing the Bible.
8. Jesus said, whoever hears and does these wonderful truths in the Bible.
 - a) To hear, that's what you're doing right now. That's what you do every time you open your Bible. Every time you read a verse, study a verse, sing a verse, think about a verse of Scripture.
9. And then you "do" whatever the Scripture says to do. Sometimes the Scripture calls for action, other times inaction. Stand still, wait, and believe. Sometimes it's to pray, other times, it's to stop praying.
10. Grace is not an app. It's an operating System. You're switching from Android to Apple. And it's exposure to the Bible that writes the new code upon the deepest recesses of your heart. You're reformatting your soul. You're renewing your mind. You're gaining the mind of Christ.
11. Look at the next line.

C. I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock...

1. This is not the normal word for wise. This word means to think God's thoughts after him. It means to fly up to heaven, sit in God's seat, to view your circumstances, and your situation, and to understand your life and your world from God's point of view.
2. That is the wise person. And that requires storing up all that Jesus calls "these sayings of mine."
3. Jesus says you will be a wise person who built your house upon the rock.
4. Your house is your soul. It is your psychology. It is your emotions. It is your opinions. It is your beliefs. It is your instincts and your feelings.
5. Your house is your soul.
6. And the rock is the bedrock of God's truth.
 - a) Jesus taught, *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24).*
 - b) Paul taught, *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19).*
 - c) And King Solomon taught, *"Through wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established; By knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches" (Proverbs 24:3,4).*
 - d) God is building something, and he's building it in you. Why?
 - e) So you can become the dwelling place for his presence.
 - f) If you have received Jesus, you have received God. He moved into you. Bible experts call this his "indwelling." It's mind-blowing when you think about it. Ever since I've received Jesus, God indwells me all the time.
 - g) His presence is the only way we can handle the tidal waves that wash over our lives.
 - h) The heart of every Christian has become a home for Jesus.

- i) The Bible uses the word-picture “edification” to drive this truth home. The Greek word (oiko-domeo) means, “to build a house.” In the Bible, to edify doesn’t simply mean to encourage. It means to restructure your inner world. It means to create structures in your soul that can enjoy and respond to the presence of God himself.
 - j) It means that you end up with the same structures in your soul that Jesus had in his.
 - k) That’s why the missionary, Paul, made edification a central priority in the church: “...But we do all things, beloved, for your edification” (2 Corinthians 12:19).
 - l) A fully constructed house in the soul stands in the eye of life’s hurricane.
 - (1) That’s where you’ll find peace in any storm.
 - (2) You’ll find comfort when you’re sad,
 - (a) guidance when you’re lost,
 - (b) rest when you’re weary,
 - (c) truth when you’re confused,
 - (d) and acceptance when you’ve blown it.
 - m) Building the house in your soul is the key that unlocks a storm-proof inner world.
 - (1) This is why Daniel withstood the pressures of Babylon. He had something inside him that kept him tight with God. He visited daily with the King of Heaven and no matter how much the King of Babylon huffed and puffed, he couldn’t blow Daniel’s house down.
 - n) Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you,” (Luke 17:21). Maybe one reason we’re so vulnerable to adversity is because we’ve tried to build God’s kingdom in the world but we’ve never built it inside our souls.
 - o) I’ve heard a million sermons about “seeking first” God’s kingdom—usually in the context of activism. But what if Jesus was talking about the kingdom within? What if he meant that we should prioritize the Royal Palace in our soul and then all our blessings would flow and we’d have nothing to fear? How can we seek God’s kingdom “out there” if we’ve never sought it in our hearts?
 - p) Jesus is telling you to build your house on the bedrock of his truth.
7. What is truth?
- a) Truth is reality.
8. What is truth?
- a) Truth is reality as God sees it, God experiences it, God defines it, and God reveals it.
9. The law of congruence states that the only way a human can function without dysfunction is by constantly aligning yourself to truth.
10. The word for rock here isn’t just a giant rock or a big boulder. It’s the rock of Gibraltar. It’s a massive cliff.
11. There’s a story of a young boy who went over the side of his boat. He spent the night clinging to a giant rock outcropping. When he was rescued somebody asked him if he was shaking all night in the cold. He said, “I was shaking, yes. But the rock I was holding onto never shook at all.”
12. So, God’s truth doesn’t move either. It doesn’t change with the times. If it was true two thousand years ago, it will be true ten thousand years into the future. It is a rock. It is unchanging and firm.
- a) God’s truth stays true because God stays God.
13. What are you believing? Where are you looking for truth? How do you arrive at your opinions and beliefs? Who is your source? What is your source?
14. If Jesus right now flew from heaven, walked into this room, walked across this stage, and stood at this pulpit, and knew that he was going back to heaven in 3 minutes, I am absolutely convinced he would tell you three things:
- a) 1. Major in the Cross.
 - b) 2. Remember my love.
 - c) 3. Be devoted to the deep things of Bible.
 - (1) Build your house on the rock.
 - (2) Why?
- D. *And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house...*
1. Some of you are living that reality right now.
 2. God is good. His grace and beauty is everywhere. But life on earth is still hard.
 3. Jesus said, “in the world you will have tribulation.” It means hard times. I think he knows what he’s talking about.
 - a) Medical problems.
 - b) Financial problems.
 - c) Relational problems.
 - d) Something messed up in your kids.
 - e) Your marriage is struggling.
 - f) You feel tempted and pulled away from God.
 - g) You can’t shake your depression.
 - h) There are rains descending and floods rising up, and winds blowing.
 4. Jesus said, they beat on the house. They attacked.
 5. Never forget that all of life is a spiritual battle. The devil is there.
 - a) He will tempt you.
 - b) He will deceive you.
 - c) He will accuse you.
 - d) He will devour you if he can.
 - (1) But if you follow the laws of congruence, if you are flipping the switches that make your life match up with God’s truth... then here is the result:
- E. *...and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock...*
1. It did not fall.
 2. Not even the devil could huff and puff and blow down a house built on the rock of the truth of God in Christ Jesus.
 - a) The devil came to devour you, but you ate him for lunch. You stood firm in the faith, resisted the devil, and he fled from you.

- b) The devil came to accuse you, but you pointed to your crucified, risen Savior, and you said, “Who is he that condemns, when it is Christ who died and has risen again, and is also seated at the right hand of God.”
- c) The devil came to deceive you, but God’s Word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.
- d) And the devil came to tempt you, but you are so satisfied in Christ, and so at peace on the Rock, that he’s got nothing better to offer...
- 3. When you are built on the rock, when you are congruent with the truth and reality of God as revealed in Scripture, you can handle anything life throws your way.
- 4. This is spiritual maturity. This is spiritual adulthood.
 - a) Life is hard, but you keep faith with God.
 - b) The world is unfair, but you keep faith with God.
 - c) The people around you are undeserving, but you love and serve them anyway.
 - d) You are aware of your own failures and shortcomings, but you speak to yourself words of grace and truth — you don’t go Gollum on your inner mess.
 - (1) In the Bible, Job suffered immensely. His own wife said, “Why don’t you just curse God and die.”
 - (2) Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.”
 - (a) The rains came down and the floods came up and the house on the rock stood firm.
 - (b) That was Job, and that can be you, and that is God’s invitation to you. His call to action to grow deep in Scripture and mighty in faith.
- 5. Contrast this to the incongruent life.
- F. *But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: “and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. (Matthew 7:26, 27)*
 - 1. There is the ultimate violation of the law of congruence.
 - 2. It is being a connoisseur of doctrine, and sermons, and books, and Bible studies, but never walking it out. These two things don’t go together.
 - a) The Word says, do not lie, but you lie.
 - b) Do not commit adultery, but you commit adultery.
 - c) Do not hate, but you hate.
 - d) Be kind to one another, but you are harsh and cruel.
 - (1) They don’t match.
 - 3. When you know Scripture, and break it, you break yourself.
 - a) You spoil your peace.
 - b) You damage your conscience.
 - c) You hurt your relationships.
 - d) You bond with evil people and things.
 - e) You subject yourself to temptations you should have never faced.
 - f) You break your own heart.
 - g) You chase the wrong things.
 - h) You get addicted to the pleasures of sin.
 - i) And you reap what you sow.
 - 4. Principle
 - a) You can’t break God’s truth. You can only break yourself against God’s truth.
 - 5. The way of peace, and happiness and goodness and joy is to bring your life into harmony with God’s truth.
 - 6. First, you have learn it.
 - 7. Then you have to believe it.
 - 8. Then you get to live it.
- V. Conclusion
 - A. I have titled this series MazeRunner.
 - B. Why?
 - C. Because the world is so confusing. Every day, you hear conflicting messages. You are bombarded with propaganda and with the devil’s lies. It looks so good, but it’s just so wrong.
 - D. The Internet. The news. The values of the world. The culture all around. What if what everybody calls normal God calls sick?
 - E. You swim in a sea of craziness.
 - F. Unreality.
 - G. You are caught in a giant maze. It is God’s Word that will show you the way out.
 - H. So MazeRunner... finding your way to peace in the parables of Christ.
 - I. Why peace?
 - J. Because peace means inner harmony. The world around you may be chaos, but there is a quiet place deep inside that no storm can shake because you are building your life on the rock.
- VI. Call to Action
 - A. Bring one thing into alignment with God’s truth that is currently out of whack.