

Come and See 2024: The Way of Love

Two houses: [Watch on YouTube](#)

Thanks for journeying through Come and See this year.

We've explored the two ways, one is broad and leads to destruction, one is narrow and leads to life.

We thought about the treasures, it's worth giving up everything to know the love of God in Jesus Christ.

We've explored the two tablets of the law, which call us to respond to God's love for us, in love for God and our neighbour and we've looked at two ways to live in Jesus' image of the fruitful and the unfruitful trees.

We've asked the two questions which lead to the parable of the Good Samaritan. How should I live the law in a way which leads to life? And who is my neighbour?

Most of these pairs and many more are found in the gospel of Matthew in Jesus' own teaching, and Jesus ends the Great Sermon on the Mount with another pair, another contrast; the contrast of the two houses and two house builders. One is wise, one is foolish.

'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came and the winds blew and beat on the house but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock, and everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was its fall.'

Sometimes the stories in the gospels can become a bit too familiar and we lose their meaning. The story of the two housebuilders is one of those too familiar stories for many of us; we read the story through the eyes of little children.

Many of us will remember the action song which tells the story, the wise man built his house upon the rock, the rain came down and the floods came up, as the very last line, the house on the sand fell flat. The song is faithful to the original, this is a great passage for an all-age sermon in many ways but - and I think it's a big but - I think Jesus' story is told for adults not for children. I think Jesus is saying that the house in the story is the life we are building, seen across the whole span of our lives, the decisions we make, the way we live, our key decisions as families, what will all of that be based on? Will it be founded on the knowledge that God loves us powerfully and deeply and calls us to live in this way of love?

I think Jesus is saying that this life is very difficult, that every life, every house we build will be tested. There will be rain and floods and wind all over the course of our life, physical illness, mental health issues, relationship challenges, times of hardship. In those moments of real stress, many lives, many houses, do fall. When that happens, there is tragedy and distress for those involved, great will be the fall of it, but it is possible to build in such a way that the lives and the houses and the households we build will endure life's storms and provide a secure home for ourselves and for others.

And the difference is the foundation on which we build. If we take the easy routes in our lives and build on the flat tempting sand which is smooth and easily moulded, then we might be able to build quickly, we might be able to build with the minimum of effort, but what we build will fall under any kind of rain or flood or wind.

I spent several fun afternoons on the beach in St. Ives last year with seven of my grandchildren. They were really good at building sandcastles, but not one of the sandcastles survived more than half an hour. The next day on the beach it was as though they'd never been there. The sea came in, the cracks appeared, they were overwhelmed and destroyed, we were building with sand and on sand. Jesus says that to do that is to hear Jesus words and not to do them, to walk away from the gospels, from this course, from this Holy Week and forget what we've learned.

But there is another way. That way is to build on rock, to dig down and find a foundation, to anchor the super structure of our lives on solid ground.

One of the things I love to do is to walk around London; on every walk there is building work going on, often big skyscrapers, apartment blocks or offices of different kinds. If you look through the boards which surround a building site, you'll see in the first few months a deeper and deeper hole in the ground, an excavation. The bigger the building, the deeper the hole; the tallest skyscraper needs the deepest foundation through the sand and earth and soil to solid rock. Piles sunk deep into the desert. When the building is finished, it will stand through every wind and storm.

What kind of builder have you been in your life? Which kind do you want to be into the future? I hope the one who hears the words of Jesus and acts on them, and especially the word of Jesus that rests on the deep understanding that we are deeply loved by God our Father in heaven and called to respond to that love by loving God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength and by loving Jesus as ourselves.

This week is Holy Week. Try and see Holy Week this year through the lens of this way of Love we've been exploring. Remember John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him should not perish, but may have everlasting life.

The surest proof, the surest demonstration of God's love, is in Jesus' gift of his life for the sins of the whole world. Jesus himself says, no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends, you are my friends if you do what I command you. This is how we know that we are loved abundantly and beyond measure, that Jesus gives his life freely on the cross for us.

Every year in Holy Week we tell again this great story of love which we call the passion of Jesus. This season of the year is called Passiontide. Passion means suffering, but it also means a great, deep, undying love which leads Jesus to give up his life for us.

Take a moment to look around you and think of the lives that you know. How many of them have fallen flat, crashed and burned by mid-life? How many have been less than they could have been? The church needs to recover confidence in the power of the Christian Gospel to change lives for the better, to provide and offer that sure foundation in the storms and challenges of this world.

Sometimes the power of the Gospel is seen in sudden transformations, but more often the gospel changes lives in ways seen over decades, quiet, resilient, living with love and purpose and fruitfulness in many different callings.

I wonder what you will take away from Come and See: The Way of Love this year? I hope and pray you will renew your understanding and commitment to the two greatest Commandments. Themselves rooted in understanding God's love for us. I hope you'll find new ways to dedicate yourself to loving the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself.

You might want to follow Come and See with a careful, confidential conversation with a fellow Christian about worship and prayer and service. I hope and pray also, that you'll rededicate yourself to a vital part of loving our neighbour. Bearing witness to the love of God in the whole of your life, so that others can begin to build also on this foundation. That might form a basis for your prayers, pray for those close to you to come to know this love. That might also form a basis for your witness and telling of the difference God makes in your own life. And that might form a prompt for you to be able to say to a colleague, or a friend or a family member who beginning to ask questions and explore faith, come and see...

May God bless you as you go on in the journey.