

**Matthew 7: 24-27**  
**June 11, 2023**  
**Rev. Anna Hubbard**

Today we will continue with our Winds of Change sermon series that we began us a few weeks ago.

On Tuesday after our staff meeting, I went to the Becker's house and as soon as we sat on the couch Kelley took a deep breath and in true Kelley fashion she said, "So do people really just NOT work on sabbatical!?" I told her yes. But that she was permitted to use the time for future work. Sermon series that need outlining, community projects that take creativity and thoughtfulness before they are executed and dreaming. I don't think she loved my answer. I know it was hard for her to leave this place and this job because she loves each of you and her work. But I know too, all of us will be better for her having the time to relax from the on call demands of ministry. Believe it or not, sabbatical taking isn't just important for the minister. It is important for the church as well. In preparing to leave, Kelley spent a good amount of time letting us know what she would be doing while she is away. She even spent an exhaustive amount of time being sure that I was prepared and that we as a community have what we need in her absence. But, what I have found in my own sabbatical leave taking is that this is just as much a beneficial time for us as a community as it is for her.

Sabbaticals are intended to renew us as a community as well. We too, are supposed to utilize this time for reflection and imagination. For remembering where we have been and what might be next. We are offered during this time space, for searching our own hearts about the ways we want to serve, the things we think are missing, the ideas we want to try, and the work God is calling us to together. This isn't a time to get through holding our breath and white knuckling it until Kelley's return— though we will all rest easier when she is back – but this is a time in which we too are called to settle in and listen for the call of our hearts and the call of the Holy. I hope you see this time as a gift and an opportunity.

This week we are looking at Matthew and an excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus talks about wind and foundation.

Let's listen to the the text from Matthew 7:24-27

<sup>24</sup> “Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

The wise man builds his house upon the rock and it withstands the floods. The foolish man builds his house upon the sand, and it falls when the wind blows. We see this contrast between the wise and the foolish man in other places as well. It is obvious Jesus is preaching on the wisdom literature of his faith. Take, for instance, the Proverbs, where we are repeatedly told that the wise man will flourish. His dwelling will remain while the fool is careless and his house will be destroyed.

When I started reflecting on this text I couldn't help but think about the foundation we build our lives on. More importantly, the foundation that DCC has been built upon. I have only been here a short while when you look at the history of the church and so, in my last meeting, I asked Kelley how she would describe our foundation. She said, that the foundation of the church is best illustrated through service. She told me about how when the church was first established the practice was to give away whatever money was left over from the operating budget at the end of the year. She told me about how from day one, the church has been about helping people and building relationships.

Isn't it interesting that 59 years ago the church's mission was about service? About hospitality? Dare I say even then the core values of DCC were to welcome, grow, and serve? Perhaps not on paper, but the work was already being done – the foundation was already being laid.

I've never built a house, (or anything, really). I watched our house get built. But taking daily or weekly pictures isn't the same as knowing how it's done. Even so, I know it must be harder to lay a foundation into rock than it is to just stick a pole into the sand. And I'm guessing that anyone trying to build on rock would find that they can't do it alone. If I insist on doing everything by myself, the best I could do would be to set up some sort of lean to on a beach. It might give me shelter for a time, but it won't be much help when a hurricane shows up.

In today's passage, Jesus is offering us different ways to remember we belong to each other. And more than that, is the reminder that we need each other. Putting up our own tent on a beach may keep us from asking for help and

lots of times may seem easier. But the rains will come. And the winds will blow. And if we stand together through the storms, we'll still be standing when the storm breaks. But I am preaching to the choir. You all already know that we are better together.

Just look back through our history at the foundation that you all and those who have come before you have laid. The foundation of trying new things by planting a church in the first place. The foundation of committing money to a community you believed in. The literal blood, sweat, and tears, it has taken for us to arrive at the place we find ourselves today. The foundation of clarity around who is welcome at the table. Making it known loudly and publicly that all people, but especially LGBTQ people are welcome through becoming open and affirming and then in practice being who you said that you were. Over the past two years I have been amazed at the way new to us people are enveloped effortlessly into the community. And I think you need to know how rare that is. You all do good work or welcoming, remembering names, learning about who people are, and then asking how you can show up for them. That doesn't happen most places. In most the places I have served it took much more time to bring people in and even more time before the community declared those newcomers ours. At DCC, it is as if you have already decided that everyone is ours and you follow through that belief each and everyday by putting it in practice. That is foundation work friends.

At our final staff meeting Ben inquired about how we evaluate the new things we want to try. How do we decided what guidelines to follow when choosing new music, but also new ministries or projects. Kelley reminded us that everything we do come back to our core beliefs – our foundation. Does the new thing help us welcome other people? Is there a way to be more hospitable to our neighbors or to the world? Will it help us to grow? Does it stretch us into answering the call of the Holy? Will it teach us new things about ourselves or about God? And does it serve others? Does it build relationships? Does it help those on the fringes of our community, does it support other organizations that are already doing work we believe in?

This is the foundation we continue to build week after week. This is the work we are called to do. It's the work that DCC in a myriad of ways has always been about. Nola Deffenbaugh wrote a history book about DCC titled "In the Beginning" and I only just got to read through it this week. But what has stuck with me is this quote at the end of the first page – "History is not only about the past. It can be a lesson for the present. As one sees how decisions of the past

effected the church positively and negatively, one becomes more conscious of how decisions of the church today are being woven into the permanent fabric of tomorrow. And one becomes aware that a church never stands still. There is movements and vitality in its joys and struggles.”

What worked for us in 1964 can't be recreated to work for today. And the things that are working today likely won't work in 2050. That's what this text is all about. It is the reminder to hear the words to build on rock – it is the invitation to work and struggle to live into who we hope to be.

If we can learn anything from today's parable it is this – the winds will always come. Winds of change, as we heard in Kelley's opening sermon can bring us the smell of BBQ and cool breezy refreshment on sweltering days, but the winds can also bring chaos and confusion. We know this to be true. We have lived this as we weathered the storm of Covid. Worshipping in our homes and forsaking seeing one another face to face to keep everyone well. And friends, we came out on the other side. We held fast to our foundation and even during the storm continued to build on the things we knew mattered. We thanked community organizations for their work, we grew into a robust online community, we connected virtually. We cared for one another and our needs from afar but still connected. We made more phone calls and did porch drop offs. It wasn't how we hoped it would be and yet, it was holy and beautiful and good. It was uncomfortable for most of us and while we don't want to go back there – I like hugs too much – it is hard to deny that we have come out of the other side of the storm stronger. Because of Covid we are more thoughtful about how we welcome new people into our community both in person and online and we cherish more deeply our connectedness.

I am sure there have been other storms that DCC has weathered over the years. But here's the thing – this community has always done so together. That too, is foundational. We don't just work to carry out our core purposes all on our own. It has taken all of us using each of our gifts and talents and passions to build the DCC that we are today. Working along side each of you - I am not sure there isn't much we can't accomplish or do. Having one another roots us - for with one another we share life – we laugh with, love with, and weep with each other. We walk the journey together. We celebrate the sunny breezy days and we hunker down on the gusty days TOGETHER.

Here's what I hope for us during this time –When Kelley returns I hope she is full of exciting ideas and that we too will have ideas we want to try to share with her. I hope the winds of change have us always wondering with excitement what is next. Wondering what could be possible if we only build it. I hope we will spend

the next few months dreaming and imagining how we serve Bartlesville today and what we might need to be able to serve Bartlesville in the coming years. But before we go committing ourselves to what is next, I hope we will take this time to remember who we are. Where we have come from and the hard work and the good work that has been done to get us here. Who knows what the winds will bring – what I do know is that we will weather them together.

May we stand firm in the foundation that has already been built remembering who and whose we are.

And May we continue to build the foundation of love in a rocky and windy world. Seeking to Welcome even when it is uncomfortable, seeking to learn and grow, and seeking to serve our neighbors.

Amen.