

A Firm Foundation
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Texts: Psalm 127:1 Luke 14:27-30
August 16, 2009 – Memorial Service for Bill Tucker

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Psalm 127:1
Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Luke 14:27-30

If you had only known Bill Tucker for the last 20 years or so, you might not have known that he dedicated 42 years of his life planning and building roads. And counting the cost – in advance – for engineering and building. Bill heard these words of the Psalmist, and these words of Jesus, with a more insight than most of us.

Jesus often used illustrations of building and counting the cost in his teachings. In addition to this brief parable of the man building a tower, Jesus also spoke about the wise and foolish man. The wise man built his house upon the rock. The foolish man built his house on the sand. And when the storms came, the foolish man's house quickly washed away - while the wise man's house was firm on its bedrock foundation. The parable contrasting the wise and foolish men has a similar message to the parable of the man who began a tower but did not calculate the cost and ran out of money half-way through the project. In each case the builder made a foolish decision – and suffered the consequences. Bill understood the wisdom of these words.

The Psalmist and Jesus offer a similar message: our lives stand for nothing if they stand ON NOTHING. A worthy life rests on foundational principles: honesty, integrity, dependability, fairness, kindness, generosity, religious faith. A life built on such values is capable of enduring all manner of stormy assaults. Even death.

But a worthy life comes at a cost - a high cost. Jesus said, "**Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.**" How many lives come unraveled when the going gets tough - because the person has not calculated the cost of virtue in advance? Building a good life comes at a high price. But it is an insignificant price, when compared to the unfathomable riches of a life with God.

The Psalmist says, **Unless the Lord builds the house, those it build it labor in vain.** All of our efforts mean nothing if they are not done in response to God's gracious love for us. We work for others, we work to take care of our families, but all of it is for NAUGHT if we fail to make our contribution to the unfolding of God's marvelous kingdom - if our lives do not point to God our creator.

Unless the Lord builds the house, those it build it labor in vain. It is not the *work we do* that matters. The only thing that counts is *who we working for*. When our work is anchored in God's work, our lives are anchored in the truth and goodness of God – and anchored in God's truth and goodness, our eternal destiny lies with God our creator and Father. When we carry the cross of Christ as his disciples, we are joined eternally with Christ. And as the apostle Paul wrote, once we are cemented to God through Jesus Christ, nothing, nothing in life or in death, nothing in all of creation, is able to separate us from the love of God we have in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now, in our grief and sorrow, let us turn to that rock of the ages, our help in ages past and our hope for years to come, the good and great God, who cares for us like a loving Father. Let us turn to Christ the solid rock; for all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand. Let us place our hope and entrust our lives to our eternal Father, strong to save. Then by God's grace, we will find comfort for our souls and peace at the last. Thanks be to God. AMEN.