

## 2 Pentecost 2011-Sermon

The collect for the day tells us that our chief cornerstone is Jesus Christ himself. Do you wonder what that really means? I have a friend who was a builder before he retired. I worked with him on many occasions trying to learn a little about the building industry. One of the things Bruce pointed out to me was that if the foundation of the building wasn't properly engineered and laid out, nothing would be right for the rest of the project. Corners would not be square, walls would be misaligned, and floors would not be level. The quality and livability of the house would never be right. If the foundation is out of square you're doomed! It is also true of our everyday lives. If we don't have a solid foundation on which to live out our lives we run a high risk of making choices which will ultimately be counter-productive to our life. Foundational to making good choices is knowledge. If I want to build a house which is solid, square, and structurally sound I need to start with foundation. If I don't know how to do it I had better acquire the knowledge before I start. Trial and error can be costly emotionally and as well as financially

and very time consuming. So, how do I become knowledgeable about building a solid foundation for life? I believe Jesus is the chief cornerstone upon which to build that solid foundation and that makes the bible a great place to start. But I must caution you-you may not like what you find there. It will challenge you! It will make you uncomfortable! It will challenge what you value in life!

One advantage I had in becoming a priest later in life is that much of my life was spent sitting out there where you are in the pews. My biblical knowledge came in most cases from what I heard on Sundays from the pulpit. The priest conveniently explained the readings so I didn't have to worry about it. I could cull what I wanted, discard the rest, and be on my merry way. But I wasn't doing any of the building was I? I was relying on someone else who may or may not see the world or the scripture as I do to build my foundation. I didn't know scripture. I knew about scripture which is a far different thing. I tend to think most Episcopalians do pretty much the same thing. The church provides us readings each week and every three years we cover most of the New

Testament. We have readings each week from the Gospels and most of the time I engage them in the sermon. But these readings by necessity must be pulled out of context. We get a juicy tid-bit but we don't the whole contextual meal. In order to grasp the complexity of the message you need to consume the whole theological meal. Just as eating a well balanced meal provides the necessary nutrients for a healthy body, consuming the bible reading in the entire context will provide you the necessary theological nutrients for a healthy life. Ask yourself this question, "How often do I sit down and read the Gospel we are in for this year?" If you are like me the answer would have been "rarely". I still don't spend as much time as I would like reading the Gospels. I mine the texts each week as I do research for the sermon but I still don't just sit down, read it, and let it speak to me, as it wills. I am often shocked at what I hear when I actually sit down and listen. Over time I have heard that Jesus really meant it when he said you can't serve God and mammon. Most of us conveniently think that isn't an issue in our lives. We don't put money ahead of everything else when we make a

decision. Think about this: Our current economic implosion is the result of unscrupulous bankers and mortgage lenders who sold home loans to people they knew couldn't afford to buy them. Then to compound matters they packaged those loans into investment schemes and rated them AAA when they were actually B or C rated packages. And, many of those people who took out those loans knew they couldn't afford them but the lure of living in a nice, big, expensive house was something they couldn't resist. Who is being served here, God or Mammon? What about our health insurance crisis? The issue on health insurance isn't about whether or not we have the knowledge or expertise to provide care but rather who is going to pay for it. So, when we deny care to someone based on their inability to pay even if they are an illegal immigrant what are choosing? Would Jesus deny care to someone in need of medical care if they were, say a Samaritan, or simply because they couldn't afford it? Who does it serve-God or Mammon? 95% of the debates we are currently having in both the state and federal government over budgets aren't about needs but about funding?

Nobody disputes the needs just who or how we are going to pay for it. When we choose no taxes under any circumstances, we choose to cut police officers, firefighters and child protective services and people will die as a result-that is the uncomfortable reality! Who gets served here, God or Mammon? These are large significant issues which we might call glaring problems. But so often in life we make subtle little choices which really say it is about us and what makes us happy. It can be something as simple as what music we like to sing on Sunday mornings. I have seen music wars and they can be ugly! But who is being served in these disputes? The same holds true for liturgy wars. But I ask you, is it about God or us? We tend to choose music and liturgy that floats our boats-makes us happy. Does God want it to be about us or Him? I hate rap music! But, if I thought it would help bring people to the knowledge and love of God in Jesus I would do a rap Eucharist standing on my head. My wife gave me a t-shirt a couple of years ago that brought the issue home- It said, "What do you mean it isn't about me?" Reading the bible, really reading and digesting the bible can be

rewarding and scary at the same time. It will challenge many of the things you take for granted. It will make you examine your values and possibly change some of them. It will make you uncomfortable! But, it will also give you that cornerstone upon to build that foundation from which you can make decisions in your life that will matter the most. I suspect you will find that it isn't going to be about us but rather about Jesus and God-Our firm Foundation.

AMEN