

Sermon or homily notes

Education Sunday 2011

FIRM FOUNDATIONS

Lectionary Readings

- Lev 19:1
- Psalm 119:33-40
- Matthew 5:38-48
- 1 Cor 3:10-11, 16-23

Sermon/homily Outline

This outline for a sermon explores the distinctive and significant contribution our churches can make towards helping society build a firm foundation for the future of all children and young people.

Key Text: 1 Corinthians 3:10-11

‘By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.’

Churches and organisations in every community are seeking to rebuild trust and relationship within the world of education. Biblical morality and church involvement may no longer be perceived as a fundamental building block. Have the resultant cracks given us a broken society, in which social structures are not fit for purpose?

FOUR KEY POINTS:

- **Foundations must be accurately measured**

When starting a building, the first thing is to employ a planner or surveyor, someone who can visualise what the building should look like. Paul declared that he had laid a foundation as an expert builder, he was using biblical measurements. He expects (v10) each one of us to be careful how we build and not use (v18) ‘the standards of this age’.

Refer to Psalm 119: 34-37

34 Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

35 Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.

36 Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.

37 Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, explained the best measurement possible for the way we should treat each other. Society, and young people, should be given the opportunity to measure themselves alongside a Christian community which models best practice. By demonstrating God’s love and grace for all, the church can show what is of less value (Ps 119:37) or (1 Cor 3:18) give communities an alternative to ‘the standards of this age’?

- **Foundations should be fit for purpose**

Foundations transfer the weight of the building onto the ground beneath, and employing a structural engineer is the best way to make sure that the foundations can cope with the expected building. Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with the parable of the two builders.

Are the images promoted by media or the model proposed by certain 'experts', that education should be devoid of faith, leaving children to their own devices? Whilst no one should force a child what (or what not) to believe, the church still has an allowable role within education to offer an insight of what we believe to be the best foundation possible. But before we do that, we must be church communities that children, their parents and teachers can trust.

- **Foundations are hidden and unseen**

We celebrate the years of investment by the church into the education system that for many years remained unchallenged and effective. However, today this influence is unnoticed and has been eroded, so that the foundations that were once 'taken as read' are no longer there.

Over the years this opportunity to influence has given way under the pressure of the more liberal and secular society and the pressure on the church to walk away from education is still present. However, the church can influence this new generation and we can play our part in rebuilding the foundations of society by quietly, and perhaps unseen, supporting local schools.

- **What happens when foundations fail?**

A school recently had to move buildings. A large crack was causing a major flank wall to peel away. It would be unthinkable had the building collapsed with children inside. Fortunately the building closed and the school has temporarily moved.

This generation needs the church to pray. There are cracks in our society and those cracks go right down to the very depths of each community. The church must once again build methodically and sensitively, establishing trust and the opportunity to influence.

Conclusion

Edward Mote was born in 1797 in London. His parents managed a pub and so he was often left to his own devices playing the street. He did not have the advantage of early exposure to Scripture since his parents wouldn't allow a Bible in their house., and so the young Edward was often neglected and spent most of his Sundays playing in the city streets. He himself said that "So ignorant was I that I did not know that there was a God."

At the age of sixteen, he was taken by his boss to hear the esteemed preacher, John Hyatt, of the Tottenham Court Chapel. Here young Edward was genuinely converted to Christ.

One morning in 1834 as Edward Mote was walking to work, it entered his mind to write a hymn. By the time he got to work, he had the chorus and during the day he wrote the verses which were to become one of the most famous hymns of all time:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

His oath, His covenant, and blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Background to Edward Mote

Edward Mote, a pastor and hymn writer was born in 1797 and his parents managed a pub. He was apprenticed to become a cabinetmaker, a career which he successfully conducted for another 37 years. He later settled at Southwark, a suburb of London, where he became known as a successful cabinet maker and a devoted churchman.

Eventually, at the age of 55 Mote entered ministry and became a pastor in a church in Horsham. Edward was never more fulfilled than when standing in the pulpit. He once commented that "when I cease to preach Christ, then turn me out of it!", echoing Paul's comment in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 where he states "I laid a foundation as an expert builder .. for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Edward Mote ministered faithfully for the next twenty-one years until forced to resign because of poor health, one year before he died on November 13, 1874. Just prior to his death, he said: "The truths I have been preaching, I am now living upon, and they do very well to die upon." Edward Mote lies buried in the churchyard of the Horsham church. Near the pulpit in the church is a tablet with this inscription:

"In loving memory of Mr. Edward Mote,
who fell asleep in Jesus November 13th, 1874, aged 77 years.
For 26 years the beloved pastor of this church,
preaching Christ and Him crucified,
as all the sinner can need, and all the saint desire."

Discussion questions:

1. Are our churches a good enough example of Christ's teaching, and if not, what do we do about it?
2. Are our churches afraid of being examples of Christ's grace?
3. What hidden and quiet things can the local church do to support local schools and colleges?
4. What open support can churches offer each local school or college?

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