



6th April 2025

5th Sunday in Lent

*Are the bricks and mortar in our spiritual house,
shaped by God's truth or the world's lies?*

Main Point:

Our lives are like spiritual houses built with the "bricks" of our thoughts, and the foundation we choose—whether upon Christ and His teachings or worldly influences—determines our stability. To build a life that withstands storms, we must anchor ourselves in Jesus and intentionally fill our minds with truth-shaped thoughts that align with God's Word.

Intro |

Back in 1174, Italian architect Bonnano Pisano kicked off what would become his most famous project—a free-standing, eight-storey bell tower in Pisa. But there was one not-so-small problem: the soil was much softer than expected, and the foundation was way too shallow. Before long, the tower started to lean. The builders tried to fix it, but nothing worked. Now, more than 800 years later, the Leaning Tower of Pisa still stands, but it's 18 feet off where it should be. One day, experts reckon, it'll fall—because it wasn't built on the right foundation.

The problem? The builders were so focused on going up that they didn't dig down deep enough. It looked fine on the surface, but because the foundation wasn't solid, the tower still wobbles today. Engineers say a foundation depends on the soil quality, but the best ones go right down to bedrock.

At the end of His most famous sermon, Jesus used this very idea. He made it clear: if you want a life that stands through the fiercest storms in life, you've got to anchor it to solid rock. It's not just about listening to His words; it's about living them.

Now most of us here are familiar with this parable. So today I want to work with Jesus' parable and do a creative spin on his story. Be assured, the teaching and spiritual lesson remain the same. However, the way we apply Christ's lesson to our lives will become clearer, when we identify not only upon what our life is founded, but also on the type of bricks and mortar our spiritual house is actually constructed with.

You see, this last week I read a sentence that invites us to reflect on Jesus' story in quite a unique way. The sentence was,

“The thoughts you choose to fill the atmosphere of your mind and heart are the bricks and mortar of your spiritual house.”

Of course, what this person is suggesting is not a new concept. Many of us are familiar with the notion that our lives are made up of building blocks. For example, if someone was to ask you, ‘what are the building blocks of your life?’ you may answer, ‘the formative years of my childhood, or ‘my relationships with my loved ones’.

And while these certainly are the bricks and mortar of life, I’d like us to include the thoughts and beliefs we hold to be true in our mind and heart. So, not only must our lives, or our spiritual house, be built on the solid foundation of Jesus and His teachings, we must also carefully consider the type of thoughts we will use, for they also are the building blocks which construct our lives.

Am I taking this illustration too far? Are the thoughts we hold in our mind and heart really that important? Let me share a story about a lady named Sarah that will illustrate my point.

Sarah had always been a bit shy and timid. Like most children she encountered other children who were cruel to her and said lots of things that made her feel bad about herself. In addition, Sarah’s parents seemed to favour her sister, Julie. Julie was bold and confident, and her parents would say, “why can’t you be like your sister?” Taking advantage of the situation, the devil planted wrong thoughts and imaginations in Sarah’s mind. He told her she wasn’t worthy of anything and that something must be wrong with her. He told her no one liked her which only increased her shyness and timidity.

She began to withdraw from people, making her childhood and adolescent years very lonely. As she grew up her fears about herself only deepened. Because she felt bad about herself, she put on weight, which only increased her self-loathing. She stayed in a job that she hated, simply because she believed it was the only job she could do. By the time Sarah reached adulthood she began to realise that she was a prisoner of her own thoughts.

When she heard about Jesus and His truth about her life, she realised that she had options about the way she thought about herself. She began to recognise the devil’s lies and started replacing them with God’s truth which she learned from the Bible. In what seemed like an incredibly short period of time, Sarah got engaged to be married, forgave her mother and found the courage to pursue a career as a nurse which she had always dreamed of becoming.

Sarah’s story vividly demonstrates how critical our thoughts are. The thoughts we dwell on and harbour in our mind, are the bricks and mortar with which we build our lives. They literally create the atmosphere that pervades our inner life.

Just like Sarah, every one of us is living in a spiritual house that we have personally constructed. From childhood, we have been building this house, whether consciously or unconsciously, and the construction never stops.

Inside our spiritual house, we store our memories, beliefs, values, thoughts, and feelings. Like a physical home, our spiritual house requires regular maintenance—sometimes reinforcing the foundation, sometimes replacing old furnishings, sometimes opening the windows to let in fresh air, and sometimes undergoing a complete renovation after a storm.

In fact, the thoughts and beliefs we store in our mind act much like the supportive frame of a house, determining where the walls are placed, and how structurally strong our spiritual house really is. That’s why it is crucial we be intentional and wise about what thoughts we choose to build with, and which thoughts we reject.

How do we make such a distinction?

Really, we have two types of thoughts to choose from. Bricks that are shaped by the world or bricks that are shaped by God's truth. And as we saw in Sarah's life, which ever thoughts we choose to construct our life with will drastically effect the atmosphere that pervades our inner life.

If we build our spiritual house with worldly-shaped thoughts, inspired by the devil, the atmosphere of our spiritual lives will be as toxic as black mould is in a physical house. The atmosphere in that house is permeated with bitterness, revenge, complaining, guilt, grumbling, hopelessness – not healthy for anyone!

However, if we intentionally choose to build our spiritual house, on the truth of Christ's teachings, the bricks that make up our thought life will create an atmosphere of peace, joy, grace, hope, and gratitude about the good things God has done and is doing in our life.

Is this not the blueprint the Apostle Paul gave us? He writes, "... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)

Application | How to build a spiritual house with strong truth-shaped bricks

How can we be sure we not only choose the right foundation upon which to build our lives, but also the right bricks with which to construct our house?

1. **Examine your foundation** – Is your life anchored in Christ or in shifting sand? 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."
2. **Take responsibility for your thoughts** – Jesus said that a good person brings forth good things from what is stored in their heart (Luke 6:45). Are you storing up God's truth, using bricks that are shaped by God's truth with which to build your spiritual house? Are your thoughts creating an atmosphere of faith and hope, or fear and despair?
3. **Renovate when necessary** – Just like our homes need repairs, our spiritual lives need ongoing maintenance. If you recognize cracks in your spiritual house—negative thoughts, bitterness, doubt—replace them with God's truth.
4. **Prepare for storms** – Storms are inevitable, but if we have built on Christ with truth-shaped bricks, we will stand firm. Hebrews 6:19 reminds us that our hope in Christ is an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

Lastly, Jesus' parable warns of a final storm—the day when our life's foundation will be revealed. Hebrews 9:27 says, "Just as a person is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." The ultimate question is: Will your spiritual house stand?

If you realize today that your house has been built on shaky ground, or the bricks you've been choosing are permeating the atmosphere of your inner life with toxic fumes, it's not too late to rebuild and refurbish. God invites us to make Him our foundation and to choose truth-shaped bricks. Let's build lives that stand strong in every storm, anchored on Christ, the solid rock.

Prayer

*"Lord, I recognize that my thoughts are shaping my life. I want to build my spiritual house with truth-shaped bricks, rooted in Your Word. Forgive me for building on shifting sand. I choose today to anchor my life to you. Help me to take every thought captive, to align it with your truth, and to stand firm in the storms of life. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**"*

Discussion and Reflection Questions:

Five personal reflection questions:

1. What is the foundation of my life built upon? – Am I truly anchoring my life in Christ and His teachings, or am I relying on unstable foundations like personal success, approval from others, or temporary pleasures?
2. What kind of "bricks" am I using to build my spiritual house? – Are my daily thoughts shaped by God's truth, or am I allowing negativity, fear, and the devil's worldly influences to form my mindset?
3. How do my thoughts influence my actions and character? – Am I intentionally aligning my thoughts with Philippians 4:8 (thinking about what is true, noble, right, and praiseworthy), or do I let harmful thoughts dictate my emotions and decisions?
4. Are there areas of my spiritual house that need renovation? – What patterns of thinking or attitudes need to be replaced with God's truth? How can I actively renew my mind through Scripture and prayer?
5. Am I helping others build their spiritual houses wisely? – How am I influencing my family, friends, and community through my words and actions? Am I pointing them toward a firm foundation in Christ?