

## **Minister Welcome**

Good morning, Mystic Heart. If you're new here this morning, I am Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director for Mystic Heart Spiritual Center, and I want to welcome you Home.

## **Congregational Music: *Welcome to the Mystic Heart***

## **Practitioner Introduction and Prayer**

## **Sermon: *Rock or Sand... You Choose!***

Good morning, Mystic Heart.

I'm so glad to have you all with us today. I'm going to talk about something I'm passionate about. You may not know this...and it feels a little dangerous to confess this to a New Thought audience...but I love Jesus, the Nazarene...the Master Teacher who turned the Jewish teachings upside down in the three short years that he taught. Okay, if you know me, you already knew that.

I want to share a little bit about Jesus, the man and teacher; then I would like to share a parable from his Sermon on the Mount. I'm not sure how much you know about the life of Jesus. Actually, I'm not sure how much any of us really know for sure. But I can share a little bit of what Bible Scholars agree must be true:

1. Jesus was Jewish by birth and socialization; remained Jewish all his life.
2. His scripture was the Hebrew Bible. Almost certainly, all of its authors were Jewish, with one possible exception.
3. The Jewish people did not reject Jesus, except for a small group of Roman elites.
4. The birth and childhood stories of Jesus are not historical; are not central to the early Christian movement. They were common stories from other traditions, borrowed and retold. For example, the virgin birth was a well-known recurring theme from earlier traditions, as was the theme of the bright light.
5. Jesus must have been an extraordinary person. People felt compelled to tell and record his stories, and they are still being told more than 2000 years later.
6. The first historically reliable stories we have – Jesus is 30 years-old

## **Here are some thing that scholars feel fairly certain of...**

1. Probably born shortly between 4-6 B.C.
2. Parents were Jewish – Joseph and Mary
3. Had four brothers and an unknown number of sisters – may have been first born
4. Joseph died before public activity began

5. Grew up in Nazareth, a small town, but near Sepphoris (4 miles away) – a large cosmopolitan city – and four other cities within 15 miles – the trade route in the Mediterranean was very active
6. Likely spoke Greek and Aramaic, as well as Hebrew
7. Went to synagogue, reading and writing from the Torah, or Old Testament
8. Became a builder of wood products- lower end of the peasant class – indications that his family lost their land
9. Family was devout –learned and repeated stories, hymns, and from the Jewish tradition – observed and celebrated Jewish holidays
10. Must have become a religious seeker in early adulthood – became a follower of the wilderness prophet, John the Baptizer and was baptized at the age of 30
11. Probably underwent a conversion experience. **What is a conversion experience?** Likely not a change in religion, but an internal transformation whereby religious impulses and energies became central to his life.

**What are some general observations and impressions about the adult Jesus and his teaching?**

1. That he does not mention himself as Messiah or as son of God in some special way.
2. His teaching is centered on God – not centered on Christ as Savior.
3. His teachings did not indicate the end times.
4. A judging God was not a theme in Jesus’ teachings...natural consequence was.
5. He was a mystic, someone who had an experiential awareness of the reality of God.
6. He was a teacher of wisdom who used parables to teach a subversive and alternative wisdom.
7. Highly intelligent
8. Verbal gifts were remarkable – spoke in metaphor, aphorism, poetic language, and told compelling stories
9. Exceptionally clever in debate
  - a. Both a right-brain and left-brain thinker
  - b. He was a social prophet who criticized the economic, political and religious elites of his time and had an alternative social vision.
  - c. He was a movement founder who revitalized and renewed the Jewish faith to such a degree that it evolved later into the Early Christian Movement.
10. Used dramatic public actions

- a. Ate with untouchables – generated criticism – alternate vision of human community – all people as equals
- b. Entered Jerusalem at the head of a donkey – parody of prevailing ideas of kingship
- c. Staged a demonstration at the temple – overturned tables of money lenders, drove out sellers of sacrificial animals

11. He was a remarkable healer

12. He attracted followers

13. He made enemies of the rich and powerful

14. He was compassionate

15. He was young; had a very short life

Jesus had lots of attractive qualities...he knew what he believed, and he spoke it from a place of Spiritual Authority, but in a language that anyone could understand. He knew how to meet people where they were...a real skill... but did not water down the Truth that he shared. I respect that.

Jesus lived in an agrarian community. He was surrounded by farmers, shepherds, and fishermen. He spoke to them in parables...stories that had both a literal meaning and a symbolic meaning, where both were true. He knew they would understand the factual aspects of his stories, and he invited those who had ears to hear, those who had eyes to see, to find a deeper meaning. He opened up the possibility for greater understanding to grow, and invited those who heard to take action. Every story Jesus told taught the same lesson...that God is the only Power...that Love is the only Power and Love never fails. And that when we remember to live from Love, all is well.

I invite you to take a few moments, preparing your heart for greater understanding, as we listen to a beautiful music selection, again from David Wesley, this time singing all of the parts himself. Please enjoy his virtual presentation of *One Thing Remains*.

**Song: *One Thing Remains*, David Wesley** <https://www.patreon.com/davidwesley>

Such Absolute Truth offered in song:

*Higher than the mountains that I face,*

*Stronger than the power of the grave,*

*Constant in the trial and the change, One Thing Remains:*

*Your Love never fails, it never gives up, never runs out on me...*

*Your Love Never Fails...*

What a perfect transition to a story that Jesus told at the end of the *Sermon on the Mount*. Put on your 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish sandals, imagine yourself to be seated in the sand, as Jesus is speaking from a boat, just off shore. He begins to share *The Parable of the Two Foundations* found in the Book of Matthew, chapter 7, verses 24–27, and I'm reading from the George Lamsa translation.

And Jesus spoke:

Therefore whoever hears these words of mine, and does them, he is like a wise man, who built his house upon a rock. And the rain came down, and the rivers overflowed, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house; but it did not fall down, because its foundations were laid upon a rock.

And whoever hears these words of mine, and does them not, is like a foolish man, who built his house upon sand. And the rain came down, and the rivers overflowed, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house; and it fell down, and its fall was very great. And it happened when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were stunned at his teaching. For he taught them as one who had the power, and not like their own scribes and Pharisees.”

He spoke with Authority. And what was his message? He was using the act of building a house to represent the building of a life. And so, as I listen, I understand that I am the house...that my experience of life is the house. He begins with, “whoever hears these words of mine, and does them...he is like a wise man, who built his house upon a rock.”

In other words, the person who listens internally for what is right, is firmly anchored and immovable in his alignment with Truth, and *acts accordingly*...this person will have a rock-solid, stable experience of life.

“And the rain came down, and the rivers overflowed, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house; but it did not fall down, because its foundations were laid upon a rock.” These storms represent changing and challenging conditions. He is telling the listener that by staying true to your Inner Guidance, and to Spiritual Principle, your life will remain solid, intact. No matter what comes your way, you will still be able to have a fulfilling life.

“And whoever hears these words of mine, and does them not, is like a foolish man, who built his house upon sand.” Sand is nothing but separated rock. The person who feels separate, is inconsistent, who changes his mind and his behavior with the shifting of the wind...the one whose mind is chaotic, and is not guided by Principle, is fooling himself. He blames the outer world for his circumstances, and fails to see the part he plays in his own experience. “And the rain came down, and the rivers overflowed, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house; and it fell down, and its fall was very great.” This person will feel separate and alone, will experience a loss of control, and will ultimately experience life falling apart.

So what is Jesus saying? That no matter whether we build our house on a rock or on sand, there are going to be storms. No matter whether we build our lives on sound Principles or

inconsistency and chaos, stuff is going to happen. But the difference is that the one who builds a life on the solid foundation of Spirit will have a different *experience* of the stuff that happens...will have healthy coping mechanisms and practices to help maintain stability as the waves toss on.

Jesus never says that a house built on rock won't have a leaky roof...won't lose a window or two in the wind, or that a tree may not take out your front porch...he simply says your house will be left standing. The structure will remain intact so that remodeling can occur. And he says that building your house on sand...inconsistency...is likely to lead to a fall *and the fall will be great.*

So, what are the main take-aways from this story?

1. You can't build somebody else's house. The house represents my life, and yours. There are no Contractor Angels that can come and build my house for me. Each of us builds our own house, whether we know it or not.
2. Building our lives on lasting Spiritual Truth is wise and leads to stability and fulfillment.
3. Building our lives on what is changeable, temporal, material, is not sustainable.
4. Jesus is teaching cause and effect...he is talking about consequences for every action. And he is teaching personal responsibility. Don't the consequences help to keep you on the Spiritual Path? Or is that just me? Both the pain and the Vision are useful guides.
5. No amount of being mad at myself for building on sand is going to put me on rock. And there is nothing more I need to know about sand than that it shifts. There is no need to keep testing it. Sand will always shift. There is no need to go into the story of why I built in the sand. When I do this, not only have I fallen, but now I can't get up...the looking backward in self-judgment keeps me weighed down. And finally...taught in other stories, but worth mentioning...
6. As each of us makes choices that align us with what we know to be right for us, we do tend to draw fewer stormy experiences, or at the very least, can calm them as Jesus did, with a *Peace, Be Still*. This, too, is cause and effect.

Rev. Deborah Johnson says that in New Thought, we talk happy talk. She calls it Meta Speak. We don't always tell the whole story. We don't always want to hear the whole Truth. The story is that we are co-creating our lives within the loving and lawful framework that I call God. We don't always want to tell the whole story because people might not understand or believe us, or they may not like us anymore. And we don't always want to hear the whole story because that may mean we need to *change*. Jesus always told the whole story.

We do a great disservice to ourselves, to others, and to the world, when we leave out talking about the negative effects. In my earlier teaching experience, I was guilty of this. Our teaching is so focused on giving our attention to what we desire, to what we want our experience to look like, that we can miss the gift offered by spending some time poking around in the

darkness. I'm not talking about getting weighed down and stuck in regret and pain...that's not useful to anyone. I'm talking about acknowledging the yucky stuff is there and looking to see what it is trying to tell us...checking for any place we are out of alignment with Truth. This isn't always easy and it isn't always fun. But it is always worthwhile.

It's a delicate balance. It's not about asking "What's in my consciousness?" There is self-criticism built into that question. It is more like reflecting on where I may be blaming someone else, where I may be judgmental of myself or another...just doing an overall self-check. And then taking what I find and gently making changes. No setting up a tent in the Valley of the Shadow of Death...no kicking myself for mistakes made...and no self-judgment. If I use this process to see how things can be different next time, and I follow through with my words and actions, then I have made good use of the situation and grown into a more loving, forgiving, and compassionate person. I become more of who I came here to be. I begin to embody the Truth and my life becomes more beautiful, more peaceful, more loving.

Let's close together in prayer...

### **Closing Prayer**

**Camden Voices Video: *Here Comes the Sun***

**Offertory – Feel free to get online and make an offering via PayPal or Visa on our website, or send a check via snail mail to the Mystic Heart Gathering Place. We are so grateful for your ongoing support. Please hold your hand to your heart as I speak our affirmation:**

As I awaken to the God within me and all around me, I see Abundance everywhere I look. I consciously step into that flow of Abundance by this act of giving. I bless this gift, sending it forth to heal and prosper. It is evidence of my deep faith. It does good work in the world and blesses all of Creation. I give from a consciousness of Abundance! And so it is! Amen!

<https://mysticheart.org/?causes=mystic-heart-spiritual-center>

**Daniel Nahmod Video: *Gratitude***

**Blessing for the Offering**

**Invitations**

**Closing Song: *Love Be With You***