

## DECEMBER 4 2025 FATHER PETER JAE CHOI

A long time ago, before people had refrigerators in their homes, people used ice houses to preserve their food. Ice houses were constructed with thick walls with no windows and tightly fitting doors. During the winter months when streams and lakes were frozen, large blocks of ice were cut, and were carried to the ice houses and covered with sawdust so that ice would last well into summer months. There is a story told about a man who had a very valuable watch. One day he lost that watch while working inside the ice house. He searched everywhere, carefully raking through the sawdust, but he couldn't find it. Even his friends came to help him look for the watch, throwing saw dust from one side of the ice house to the other side.

Unfortunately, no one found the watch. Then a little boy from next door came over and told them that he is really good at finding things and he will find it for him. All he asked was for him to be left alone to find the watch. So everyone left the ice house. Within a couple of minutes the boy comes out of the ice house with the man's watch in his hand. Amazed, the man asked the boy how he found it and so quickly. He replied, 'I closed the door, and I lied down with my eyes closed. Soon I heard the watch ticking. So I followed the ticking sound, and there it was!"

The moral of the story is that we have to quiet down all the competing noise from the world in order to find what we're looking for. In order for us to look for Christ, we first have to quiet down all the competing noise from the world. One of the things we can do during the season of advent is to slow down and quiet down the noise of the world and start paying attention to God.

One thing I love about Advent is that it's a season of quiet preparation. It's not just about decorating Christmas trees in our homes and making Christmas dinner plans with family and friends, although they are nice and important traditions, but they are not as important as preparing our hearts. And today's Gospel fits right into that theme. Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father." What Jesus is saying is, "Don't just get ready on the outside. Get ready on the inside."

So while we are busy doing everything related to Christmas, including shopping for our family and friends, and decorating our homes, being busy might be just the one thing that may be preventing us from taking time to spiritually prepare for the coming of Christ.

What do I mean? I recently learned that when we are not busy and feel bored, the part of the brain that tells us that we are bored, also known as the brain's default mode network (DMN), gets activated when we are not focused on a specific task. This very part of the brain that feels boredom also does our deep and creative thinking, problem-solving, and self-reflection. This explains why I come up with the best ideas and strategic planning when I go away on vacation while doing nothing! To use the analogy of driving. When we have missed a turn, in order to turn back, we have to first slow down to make a three point turn. When we have to change the direction completely, to reverse, we have to come to a full stop. Changing the direction of our lives also requires us to slow down and sometimes come to a full stop before we can make the change of direction of our lives. So in order to closely examine our lives we have to first slow down.

In the gospel, Jesus tells us a parable about two builders: one a wise man, and the other a foolish man. What was the difference? One builds his house on rock, the other on sand. When the heavy rain fell and the winds blew, only one house stood. With the solid foundation of the rock, the house built on rock was designed to withstand the inclement weather. Just like the winds and rains, the challenges of life don't take a break just because we're preparing for Christmas. The world around us can be noisy, stressful, sometimes even chaotic. But in the middle of all that, Jesus invites us to check our foundation. What's our life really built on? Is our life built on faith, that is lived, practiced, and steady? Or is our life built on convenience and comfort?

Here is one thing that I think Jesus was trying to challenge us with. Jesus isn't talking about bad people versus good people. Both the wise and the foolish man heard the Words of God. The difference is that only one acted on what he heard from God. The wise builder doesn't just admire Jesus' teaching. He actually lived it out. He let it shape his choices, and allowed it to become the very foundation of his life.

And that's what this Advent Season calls us to do, not just admire the story of Christ, but to let the person of Christ be our foundation and be the construct of our hearts and life we are building with our own actions.

You know, Advent is full of beautiful symbols, like candles, lights, and evergreens, but beneath them all is that quiet challenge: "Prepare the way of the Lord." Not just with wreaths and carols, but with mercy, forgiveness, generosity, and trust. That's what it looks like to build on rock.

Building our life on rock means taking Jesus' words... "Love your neighbor... Forgive... Be not afraid," and putting them into practice. It is only when the storms come, and they certainly will, that's when our

foundation will show. So maybe today, as we are journeying through this Advent season, we can ask ourselves this question:

What is one small place in our life where we can start building on rock?

Maybe it's prayer...making time to be still with God and learning to listen.

Maybe it's reconciliation...letting go of a grudge that's been holding us back.

Whatever it is, Jesus isn't asking for perfection. All He asks is that we try. It's been said, "words are cheap; they cost nothing. Actions require intention, effort and follow-through." So let your faith take shape in how you live, not just what you say. Let this year's Christmas be not just a date on the calendar, but a birth in the heart. So today, let's keep building just like the wise man, one prayer, one act of love, one moment of trust at a time. Because when we build our lives on Christ, even when the rain falls and the wind blows, we will stand firm. And that, my friends, is the real foundation of the Advent of hope.