

Leaning Tower of Pisa— a freestanding bell tower—pride of the city

- Community funded, trying to create an impressive tower as a beacon to the surrounding areas, displaying the impressive accomplishments of the city of Pisa;
- Even though the foundation is underground and unseen, problems became clear immediately. The tower started to lean during construction because the foundation was built on soft ground that had difficulty supporting the weight.
- unfortunate name, embarrassment no doubt, maybe forgotten = tourist attraction

Illustration for new teacher training in the White River School District

- Build a community in the classroom, also part of the community around.
- Build something to show the community—test scores, achievement, responsible respectful citizens, positive contributions to society—
- But if the foundation is not solid, even though you can't see it, it becomes evident when you start to build.
- If some kids fail, fall through the cracks, feel ignored, get disciplined disproportionately to others; if teachers feel stressed to produce and make sure their students achieve—
- If the foundation is not solid, the atmosphere of the classroom can be divided, tense, anxious.

Invitation for us to consider the foundations on which we build a life.

One example is a foundation based on “meritocracy” – the foundation on which much of our society is built: school, career, entertainment

One place not the foundation—hopefully—is family

- Meritocracy is where the talented are chosen and rise to the top on the basis of their achievement.
- You are accepted & rewarded based, not on who you are, but on what you produce.
- And that works for you as long as you produce—if you do.
- But what happens when you don't produce, or no longer can?
- What happens to your worth & value & identity—the foundation on which you have built your life—when you can no longer achieve @ an expected level?

What then, reward mediocrity; give a trophy to everyone; lower the bar? I'm not saying that.

But the danger is in what the foundation of meritocracy means for our identity and as a foundation for our life.

- Kyle Seager, what have you done for me lately ... Felix?
- Sid Flor—two older ladies who didn't fit the image the bank was trying to create—high performance, energy, production
- What if I don't maintain a 4.0 grade point average (5.0), my life is ruined ... what if I never had the slightest hope of 4.0?
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Last week: “I know who's I am. Now I'm discovering who I am.”

- Knowing who's I am as the compelling story (*narrative*) that explains the meaning of my life—is the foundation for my life
- What is this compelling narrative that gives us identity and defines us, that is the foundation on which we can build a life?
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**Luke 6:47 I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. <sup>48</sup> That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. <sup>49</sup> But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.”**

“Such a person must have no stable or solid foundation to build upon, and yet nonetheless tries to build his way out of his problem. It's an impossible situation—cue the Leaning Tower of Pisa. You can't compensate for having a foundation made of quicksand by building a new story on top.”

“Build Us Up, Lord” – after the sermon

- Build us up, Lord; set in us a strong foundation. Lead us to do your holy will; form and shape your new creation.
- Build us up, Lord; as we guide and teach each other, help us to share your love with the world ...
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Love is the compelling narrative that gives us identity and defines us—love is the solid foundation on which we can build.

Love is the word of Jesus we are to hear and act on.

<sup>1</sup>Jn 4:9 **This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.**

<sup>10</sup> **This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

Love is a community made new, committed to living a different way—Different than: division, I'm right & you're wrong, winners & losers—this defines most of our world.

- Election—a winner and a loser;
- Some will be elated, others disappointed.
- Is this a matter of right vs. wrong? But who's right?
- Those on the losing end, what are they to do?
- Are they welcome only if they repent of their wrong views
- Bill Maher on the death of David Koch  
If this is what we are becoming, it is unacceptable and we need to speak out against this as our defining narrative, no matter who says it.

We are a community made new, with the solid foundation of God's love for us in Jesus Christ:

- 3:11 For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
- 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death.
- 3:23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another
- 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
- 4:11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.
- 4:12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

The point should be abundantly clear—over & over—“love one another”

Brooks: “A telos crisis—people don't know what their purpose is.”

- What do I believe in? Where do I belong?
- Telos: an ultimate end—to accomplish

Society says our ultimate end is to rise to the top  
To “be the best we can be” is based on achievement & production.

But God says: our ultimate end is to love one another, just as we have been loved.

Kierkegaard: purpose/meaning/foundation for life—“It is a question of finding a truth ... for which I am willing to live and die.”

What is your truth—the foundation of a) what I can achieve, or b) “for God so loved me that he gave his only begotten son”?

<sup>2:15</sup> **Do not love the world or anything in the world ...** <sup>16</sup> **For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.** <sup>17</sup> **The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.**

According to 1 John: the will of God is simply that we love one another.

### Conclusion

Knowing who's we are is the foundation for our life  
Now we are on a journey of discovering who we are  
Who we are is found in community, fellowship, love for each other.

We are a community made new, committed to living a different way—with the solid foundation of God's love for us in Jesus Christ.

- Build us up, Lord; set in us a strong foundation. Lead us to do your holy will; form and shape your new creation.
- Build us up, Lord; as we guide and teach each other, help us to share your love with the world ...