

“Life’s Missing Ingredients, Part 5--Security”

[BACKGROUND FOR SLIDES: granite mountain range]

Today we’re finishing up the series we’ve been in for a few weeks called, *Life’s Missing Ingredients*. What we’ve been doing is taste-testing our lives to see if some key elements might be missing so that we can do something about it. Because, like with any recipe, if one ingredient is missing it affects the outcome completely. So far we’ve looked at ingredients like purpose, intimacy, calling, optimism, and today, security. And this is actually the most important ingredient of all. And all along through this sermon we’ve not been assuming that all of these things, or any of them, are missing from your life, but if they are, and you know it, there’s something you can do about that. Or if somebody you know is missing one of these ingredients, then you can maybe help them get that ingredient in place. So today we talk about security.

The most famous sermon ever preached was Jesus’ sermon that’s often called, “The Sermon on the Mount.” It’s called that because he goes up on to a low mountain and people follow him there and he teaches them. In fact chapters 5-7 in Matthew are the very heart and soul of Jesus’ entire message. Almost every element of living the life of a Christ-follower is addressed there. He gives his followers all he’s got. And then at the end of his sermons he says these words. **[SLIDE...]** **“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matt 7:24-27, NIV).**

Makes me think of the mud slides out in California. You’ve seen pictures like this haven’t you? **[PICTURES: house sliding of hills in California]** Houses built on something pretty shaky don’t stand for long. And Jesus is trying to teach us that lives built on shaky ground won’t last long either. But, but houses and lives built on the rock have strength, stability and security. **[PICTURE: Lighthouse on the rock].**

Maybe, just the mention of having a rock-solid place to stand in life has some of you saying to yourself, “Oh man, this one’s missing in my life. It feels like everything is shifting around my life. I don’t have a solid place to stand. I don’t have any security in my life. But I want some. I really do.”

You see, security is one thing we all desperately want. The renowned psychologist Abraham Maslow said that security was one of the most fundamental needs that all human beings have. And we’ll go to almost any extreme to find it. But we’ve got to be careful here because sometimes when we think we’re secure, when we think we’re standing on solid ground, it’s actually an illusion.

Think about it: A few years back, a lot of Americans would kind of puff out their chests and say, “I’m secure. I live in America. We’ve got power. I’m untouchable. I’m secure.” 9/11 happens. **[PICTURE: TWIN TOWERS BURNING]** We discover terrorists are right here among us. That sense of security was an illusion. Now most of us Americans feel like we’re standing on this, on sand.

A few years back in the late 1990’s, a lot of people were saying, “I’m solid financially, bulging portfolio, stock market going up and to the right, two years until my finish line. Man, I’m solid and secure financially.” The tech bubble bursts, the aftermath of 9-11, recession, all of a sudden we realize that was an illusion too. We’re on the shaky soil. It was shifting sands.

A lot of times people say, “Well, at least I have my job. I might not have a big portfolio anymore, but I have my job—that’s secure.” But I’ve talked to quite a few people who could tell you just how unpredictable that is. It might feel secure, but it can just as quickly become shifting sand.

Some people say, “Well, I still have my health. I have my health. I have that. I might not have all that other stuff.” Again, I hate to have to point out the illusion, but I deal with this almost on a daily basis. I get the phone calls and the prayer concerns, and visit hospitals. One day you’re the picture of health, then there’s a funny medical report, then that health is gone. It’s shifting sand.

Then people say, “Well, you know I’ll always have my family and friends. That I can count on. I’ll always have my family and friends.” But the truth is that every day you have your family, your spouse, your

kids and your friends, every day you have them, thank God for the blessing of them, because you don't have them permanently—at least not on this earth. We only have each other for a time. Your spouse, your best friend, your kids, your parents, it's shifting sand. Something could change and they could be gone.

When these things are all in place and going strong, it's a blessing, it really is, and we're to enjoy these blessings. But one of the hardest things I'm called to do as your pastor is to point out your illusions. And putting your security in the power of our country, or your job, or health, or people you love, that's misplaced.

I don't want to grim you out, but it's important that you know this. Because if these are just the illusion of security, then where does real security come from? Well that is what Jesus was trying to teach. He's saying, "Build your life on a relationship with me and my teachings. I'm the only secure thing."

(At the beginning of worship we sang the song *My Hope is Built*. The words, "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." You see, I believe that song is true.) **I believe the only ultimate source of security in this life is a rock-solid relationship with Jesus Christ.** I really do believe it's true. All other ground is sinking sand—it's an illusion. Try to find your security any other place and you'll be brutally disappointed someday. So let's talk about this. What do you get when you come into a relationship with Jesus Christ? What do you get that's so rock solid?

[SLIDE...] What do you get when you build your life on Christ? The Bible says the first thing you get, is **[SLIDE: "1. Rock-solid love"]** a rock-solid love when you come into a relationship with Christ. Once again Abraham Maslow stated that love was one of the foundational needs we have in order to function in life. Without it we will never live to our potential. Love. You all know that babies can die without enough of it. Young people get their hearts wrecked for lack of it. Adults wander around feeling lonely and restless until they get adequate amounts of it, and it's still vulnerable at that point. The Bible says you step up on that steady place, you stand in a rock-solid relationship with Jesus Christ, and he will give you love 24/7. It will never be taken away from you. You'll get God's best love every minute of every day for the rest of your life, here and all through eternity.

You get a rock-solid love when you come into a relationship with Christ. Beyond that, the Bible says in a relationship with Christ you get a rock-solid, **[SLIDE: adding to list, "2. Rock-solid forgiveness]** never-to-be-reversed pardon from the wrongdoing you've committed in your past.

We just talked about God and we're told in scripture that God is love, and that God's love is never ending. But at the same time, God is just. God is a God of justice. The things we do wrong have a consequence. We're told in the Bible that the consequence of sin is death. The problem is that we don't have what it takes to pay the price for our wrongs. Which means that all of us are doomed to spiritual death, But God's love provides a solution to the debt of sin we owe. When you come into a relationship with Jesus Christ he satisfies the requirements of justice for you.

When he hung on a cross and said, "It is finished," he said, your pardon has been purchased and it will never be reversed. Your sins are gone as far as the East is from the West. You are washed whiter than snow. You have a rock solid pardon. Of course the choice to accept or reject that pardon is entirely up to you.

Then the Bible says when you come into a relationship with Christ, you get **[SLIDE: adding to list. "3. Rock-solid power"]** a rock solid power. A power beyond your own. A power to overcome temptations that you couldn't before you got his power. Power to forgive those who have wronged you. Power to love instead of hate and power to build bridges instead of walls. Power to control your impulses, your temper, your greed, your lust. Power to get through hard times.

Before you have the power of God, you feel so vulnerable, you feel so weak. You don't know if you really can make it through. And then you come into a rock solid relationship with Christ, and he gives you this rock solid sense of his power. You stand steadier. You walk with more confidence through the valleys, through the troubles, through the trials of life.

Beyond that, the Bible says, when you come into a rock solid relationship with Jesus Christ, he gives you a **[SLIDE: add to previous. "4. Rock-solid guidance"]** rock-solid source of guidance and purpose of your future. I've had a number of you say things to me like, "Man, my career just isn't doing it for me any more, my future just seems kind of mushy, or like I'm just going through the motions. I don't feel like I have direction." The solution to that problem is this: live every day with the rock solid assurance that God's going to

guide your future. As he unfolds it for you and he gives you that next step to take, you take that step and the footing is sure, and you have a sense of purpose and solidity as you move into the future. But just a step at a time, God leads your life. You say, "Well, that rock held." That rock held and pretty soon you realize when you're guided by God, all the stepping stones hold you.

Finally, the Bible says when you come into a relationship with Christ you get a rock **[SLIDE: adding to list. "5. Rock-solid eternity]** solid assurance of where you're going when you die. I have visited with a lot of people as they were preparing to die. And there seem to be two main ways that people face death. Some face it with anxiety and agony about what happens next. Death terrifies them.

Then there are others that face it in a completely different way. They face it like Willa Rickman has. She's been very sick for a long time. In fact a few weeks ago I got a call one night because it looked like she was not going to make it through the night and she wanted me there. I went to go and be with her. And she was ready. She's been ready. She said several times that night as a prayer, "Just take me. Just take me." She doesn't fear death, she has a rock-solid understanding that her death is not an end, it's a new beginning with the one she spent her life serving.

Willa made it through that night. She rallied. In fact she was able to joke. She said, "It would be just like me to live!" She's able to be positive in the face of death because she's rock-solid about what happens after death. She's just rock solid with the assurance that she's going to heaven, that Christ will greet her on the other side. She has let me see how sure someone can be of heaven.

There are a lot of rock-solid things that happen when you start a relationship with Jesus. The question is, how do I get there from here if this is missing in my life? First, let me tell you how you **don't** get there. You don't get to this rock-solid security by trying harder to be good. Just being good is not enough. You don't get rock-solid security by doing good—by working at Soul's Harbor or Salvation Army or building a Habitat house. You don't get rock-solid security by trying to be more religious or spiritual—by reading more of the Bible or praying harder. All these things are important but they come later.

Because, you see, no one has ever made it from shifting sands to the solid place to stand without being lifted and transported by a third party. You can't get from the sandbox to the solid place through human effort, through finesse, through serving in soup kitchens, by flying a little straighter. You can't get from there to here.

The Bible says the only way you get from the shifting sands to this rock solid place of a relationship with Jesus Christ, is to fall on your knees and to say, "I need to be lifted from the unsure place to the steady place. I need my sins to be forgiven through what Christ did on the cross. I need that rock solid love that's promised in the Bible to fill my heart. I need the pardon, the never-to-be-reversed pardon, to take root in my spirit so that I no longer carry anxiety about whether or not my sins are forgiven. I need a power in my life beyond my own. I need the promise of heaven to take root in my life so that I stop fearing the afterlife as often as I do."

The Bible says you get from here to there through a humble sincere prayer for help. One of the simplest Bible verses of all is one that says, **[SLIDE...]** **"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom 10:13, NIV)**. Everyone--and that means you—who calls on the name of the Lord can be lifted out of the shifting sands, and put on the solid rock of a relationship with Christ. But you've got to call. You have to call.

One of my favorite scriptures is Psalm 40. The writer has found himself on sinking sand. He's in a slimy pit and sinking fast. He says, **[SLIDE...]** **"I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God" (Ps 40:1-3, NIV)**.

You've got to give up attempts to work your way to the solid place, finesse your way, buy your way, impress your way. You've got to give all that up and just ask and receive it as a gift of grace. When you do and when you feel what it's like to finally stand in a solid place, when you feel the rock solid love of Christ and his power, the permanence of his pardon, the promise of heaven, that's what enables you to live steady in a shaky world.

I know that an act of terrorism could happen any time, any place. I know that something could happen to the people I love. I know all this stuff, but I also know that I can stand in a steady place. I'm standing there now. Not because I deserve it, not because I earned it, but because Christ gave it to me as a gift. I know who loves me and who's in control. I'm standing in a steady place, and you can too. Every one of you. I really do want you, before you leave this day, to be standing in a steady place.

[MORNING WORSHIP ENDING...] Janet is going to sing a song here in a minute and I want you to listen to what it says and maybe as she sings you'll want to say a prayer. A prayer where you make the call. Where you open yourself to receive. Where you say, "No more illusions about security. I know Lord, that it doesn't come from the power of my country, or the economy, or my job, or my family, or my health. They're not the source of my security. My security is in you. Everything else can be gone in the blink of an eye, but you'll be there. You will be the rock, when everything else is shifting sand." If that's what you want to pray, then say it to the God who created you. He's waiting.

This song is called *In Christ Alone (My Hope is Found)*. **[JANET SINGS: picture of granite mountains, or a house built on a rock]**

Build your life on the rock, everything else is sinking sand. And for today that is the Good News. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[MOSAIC ENDING...] Here in just a minute the band is going to play and while they do I and several others are going to stand right here, I'm inviting anyone and everyone who needs to, to come up here and to let us say just a very short prayer and try to breathe some solidity into the shakiness of your life and your faith. We're not going to talk about anything. I'm not going to answer questions about the church. It's not a time to chat. There's just a prayer for the shakiness of your life to turn into the solidness of what your life could be like if you were on the solid rock.

Many of you are solid faith Christians already. Let me tell you what I want you to do. I want you during my closing prayer to just say, "Oh God, thank you that I'm rock solid in Christ. Thank you for how steady I feel these days." Then I want you to pray like crazy for those among us who aren't quite so steady.

I want to ask all of you who feel a little shaky these days, shaky about your faith, shaky about your pardon, shaky about heaven--anybody who's shaky about anything these days, I want to ask you to just come right down front here, walk up here boldly, and allow yourself to be prayed for.

But you've got to make the decision of how steady you want to be. How much you want to go it alone or how much you want the power of God to give you a hand in this mess. Don't worry about the people you came with. Don't worry about your husband, wife, parents, children. This is about you and God. This is about how steady your faith is, not anybody else. Just come.

You're free to go whenever you're ready and we'll see you next week. But if God's tugging at your heart, then let us pray for you. If you're a rock solid Christ-follower already you can leave, or you sit where you are and pray for the less steady among us.

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