

February 19, 2017
Sermon for the Seventh Sunday after Epiphany
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
1 Corinthians 3:10-23

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

1 Corinthians 3:10–23 (ESV)

¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. ¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰ and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." ²¹ So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

God's holiness is dangerous to sinners. That may sound strange but the thing is, no one can see God and live (Ex 33:20). God's Word tells us this back in Exodus 33.

Our culture, our world, and even the church has lost this understanding of the danger of God's holiness, which means that it has lost the fear of the Lord. "What is there to be afraid of? God is a nice guy, right?" Yet the Scriptures tell a different story. "*Our God is a consuming fire*" (Heb 12:29). Sinners cannot simply walk up to God and shake hands. But the Lord makes a way for us to be close to him and for his glory to dwell with us.

In the Old Testament, the Lord was present in the tabernacle and the temple. God calls Moses to the top of Mount Sinai to give him detailed instruction about building the tabernacle—the outer court, the inner court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place.

The people could not get this close, and the priest could come a little closer, but only at the proper time and with a sacrifice. And that's because sin always separates us from God. If we're sinful, we can't be in the presence of the holy God. His holiness would consume us.

So once a year, the high priest would enter into the Most Holy Place, and he would bring the blood of the atoning sacrifice to cover over the people's sins. Every Old Testament sacrifice was a preaching of Law and Gospel.

Each sinner should be having his or her blood shed. The sinner should be burning on the altar.

But at the temple, the sinner sees that God accepts the blood of another in my place. Every sacrifice, then, is a preaching of the sacrifice of Jesus and the forgiveness that He wins on the cross for us...**for you!**

God could dwell with His people in the tabernacle and the temple because the people were forgiven. Jesus Christ, our mediator removed the separation between God and man!

God's holiness did not consume them because by faith they had the righteousness of Christ through the blood of the sacrificed Lamb.

In the New Testament, through the incarnation, God is present with us in Christ. Things change in the New Testament. God no longer dwells in the temple in Jerusalem. Instead He is with us in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Jesus is called Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Mt 1:23). Names mean things...words mean things, especially when those words come from God.

John opens his Gospel with this astonishing verse: *"The Word became flesh and dwelt [literally, tabernacled] among us, and we have seen his glory"* (Jn 1:14).

That is to say, Jesus is the true temple, the glory of God dwelling with us sinners. And this is all because we have been reconciled to God by Jesus' death and resurrection. No matter what you may have done, you have not out-sinned the blood of Christ! He died for you, personally!

In John 2, Jesus cleanses the temple, and when the people there ask Him for a sign, He replies, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"* (Jn 2:19). John tells us, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: *"But he [Jesus] was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken"* (2:21–22).

Now the Church, the Body of Christ, is the Temple of God, and God is at home with us. Right here, right now, Jesus continues to dwell with sinners, with us.

We know that we are indeed sinners and that we should be far from God. Our eyes wander. We see something that we like, something that we want. If that wandering eye leads to coveting, then before we know it, we have sinned, in thought, which often leads to sinning in deed. And just when we begin to chastise ourselves, thinking that we have failed God once again, way too many times to be forgiven again...guess what, in walks Jesus.

The devil screams that it is too late ... God has had enough of us, but our sins are forgiven; we are covered by the blood of Jesus; we are holy. Not because of what we might do, but because of what Jesus has already done!

Therefore, Paul can use the beautiful picture of the Temple of God to describe the Church. He is not talking about this building. He is talking about **you** and all Christians.

We are the bricks, the holy stones, that Jesus uses to build His temple on earth. So when we ask where the Lord lives on the earth, we know the answer. **YOU!**

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (v 16).

The answer is You! And this is good news!

The presence of God is our comfort and our peace because Jesus is our crucified and risen Savior.

We, the Church, Are Mercifully Built into the Temple of God.

Because of our sins, we should be far from God, far from His face and His kindness forever.

But through the sacrifice of Jesus, we are made fit for the presence of God. His holiness does not destroy us; it gives us life, life that will last through death and into the resurrection unto life everlasting.

This is our great comfort and our joy.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and mind through Christ Jesus!

Amen.