



Seventh Sunday After Epiphany

February 19, 2017 - 10:15 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

**Theme: We--the Church--Are Mercifully Built
Into the Temple of God**

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

¹⁶Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

¹⁸Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." ²¹So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter) or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

God's holiness is dangerous to sinners. Our culture, our world and even the church itself has lost this awareness of the terrible threat of God's holiness. To lose sight of God's holiness means to forego "the fear of the Lord" which the Bible tags as "the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). "Why should I be afraid?" the world wonders. "Isn't God a loving God?"

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org

Page 1 of 4



If there's a heaven, I'm pretty sure I'll be there since I've been a decent person most of my life." That self-righteous attitude is quite common for those who are ignorant about what the Bible says it takes to be in a right relationship with a perfectly holy God. On the other end of the spiritual spectrum are those who believe they haven't a snowball's chance in Hades to assuage God because they've sinned so horribly. Buried under a mountain of guilt they reckon is immovable, they despair of God's mercy, certain they're hell-bound.

Neither the self-righteous nor sinners in despair have it right when it comes to how God operates. He's a holy God, who must punish sin. He must exact full payment for our egregious acts against Him. That's absolutely true. But holiness isn't God's only attribute. He is also a merciful and loving God. That doesn't mean He overlooks sin or chuckles to Himself like jolly old St. Nick when we're a bit naughty instead of nice. God is both holy *and* merciful. We read of God's apparently opposing attributes of holiness and grace in [Exodus 34:6-7](#): "the LORD . . . passed in front of Moses proclaiming, 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation' " *of those who hate me*" (Ex. 20:5).

So where can one find this holy, yet gracious God? In the Old Testament, He manifested His presence among His people Israel in a special tent known as "the tabernacle." On Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses detailed blueprints for building this sacred space and its elaborate furnishings. Later, God gave David similar specs for building a more permanent dwelling place for Him in a temple atop Mt. Zion. It was divided into four distinct areas: the outer court, inner court, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The people could come this close, the priests this close and the high priest this close, but only once a year on the Day of Atonement. No matter what, God required some sort of sacrifice for them to be accepted by Him.

Every Old Testament sacrifice vividly proclaimed both the Law and the Gospel. That's most evident in the lamb the Israelites offered God every year at Passover. That annual celebration of God's holiness and grace began on the Israelites' last night in Egypt. They'd lived in the Nile delta region—the "land of Goshen"—for over 400 years. The 10th and last plague God brought on hard-hearted Pharaoh was to slay the firstborn in every Egyptian family along with the firstborn of their livestock, thus forcing Pharaoh to finally let God's people go so that they could return to the Promised Land of Canaan. Although the Israelites deserved the same fate because of their sins against Jehovah, God told Moses, His chosen leader:

[Tell the whole community of Israel . . . to take a lamb \[per\] family . . . year old males without defect . . . Take care of them \(for four days\) until the fourteenth day of the month when all . . . Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then . . . take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the](#)

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org

Page 2 of 4



lamb . . . On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and . . . bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see [it], I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance (Ex. 12)

The Passover lamb was sacrificed for every Israelite. *Its* blood was spilt instead of theirs; *its* life was given as their substitute so that God wouldn't strike them down in righteous anger. Because of the lamb's blood, God spared them the death they deserved, too, at His holy hands. In the only true God, mercy and holiness exist side-by-side. God could dwell among His people at tabernacle and temple because they were forgiven. The Passover lamb—and every sacrifice offered at God's altar—pointed ahead to the sacrifice Jesus would make on the cross to atone for all mankind's sins. So John the Baptist could point the people to Jesus and cry, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Those who by the power of the Spirit believed John's testimony about Jesus received God's pardon and were spared the eternal consequences of their rebellion against the holy God.

The same holds true for you, me and all in whom God's Spirit dwells! Paul wrote: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" (Rom. 8:1). Things have changed in N.T. times, from future prophecies about the coming Savior to the fulfillment of those pledges in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In Him "all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col. 2:9) the Bible says. So St. Paul might well ask us today what he asked the 1st c. Corinthians, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"

When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem's temple in 70 AD, they tore the entire structure down to its foundation. It remains intact as the "Western Wall," and is the holiest of Jewish sites as it serves as the only remnant of the retaining wall that once enclosed and supported the 2nd temple. Jews also call it the "Wailing Wall" because for centuries they've gathered there to lament the loss of their temple. That's a crying shame, since the temple the Romans destroyed only pictured God's living, breathing temple that His people have become in Christ Jesus! A good builder knows that the foundation is the most critical component of the building. If the foundation is solid, the building will be too. If, on the other hand, the foundation is weak it doesn't matter how the rest of the structure is built. It will be weak, too, and sooner or later its walls will fail. Jesus illustrates this truth with the parable of the 2 foundations in chapter 7 of Matthew's Gospel:

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 doesn't put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org

Page 3 of 4



down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash (vv. 24-27)

What kind of foundation is your house of faith built on? What about mine? On the shaky footings of our own righteousness, or on the rock solid foundation of Christ crucified and risen? And what kind of builder have I been as your called Pastor—wise, or foolish? Could I admit with a clear conscience like St. Paul does that “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder”—a foundation that the pastor who follows me can build on with confidence? “But each one should build with care, for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”

What will “the fire” of Judgment Day prove about “the quality” of our work? Will what we’ve “built” survive, so that we “receive” the “reward” of grace we have coming for a job well done, or will it be “burned up” so that we barely escape with our eternal life intact albeit with little or nothing to show for our efforts in behalf of Jesus or our neighbor? God always “dwells” among His people by His “Spirit”—whether at the O.T. tabernacle or temple made of stones; whether in ornate cathedrals or humble houses of worship like this one; whether in the hearts of the rich and famous or in hearts of the poor and unknown—God always has and always will dwell among His people. Friends, “all things are yours . . . and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.” Because of Jesus, we—the members of His Church—are mercifully built into God’s temple. In Jesus, God’s holiness doesn’t crush us. Instead, God gives it to us as a free gift from the storehouse of His grace! May that truth fill our hearts with great comfort and joy and equip us to work together through our witness to build God’s living temple on the rock-solid “foundation” of “Jesus Christ.” Then our work will stand to, and thru, eternity! Amen.