

GOD'S HOUSE
Oct. 1, 2017 – HUPC Sanctuary 50th

6 ¹⁻⁶ Four hundred and eighty years after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's rule over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, Solomon started building The Temple of GOD. The Temple that King Solomon built to GOD was ninety feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high. There was a porch across the thirty-foot width of The Temple that extended out fifteen feet. Within The Temple he made narrow, deep-silled windows. Against the outside walls he built a supporting structure in which there were smaller rooms: The lower floor was seven and a half feet wide, the middle floor nine feet, and the third floor ten and a half feet. He had projecting ledges built into the outside Temple walls to support the buttressing beams.

⁷ The stone blocks for the building of The Temple were all dressed at the quarry so that the building site itself was reverently quiet—no noise from hammers and chisels and other iron tools.

⁸⁻¹⁰ The entrance to the ground floor was at the south end of The Temple; stairs led to the second floor and then to the third. Solomon built and completed The Temple, finishing it off with roof beams and planks of cedar. The supporting structure along the outside walls was attached to The Temple with cedar beams and the rooms in it were seven and a half feet tall.

¹⁴⁻¹⁸ Solomon built and completed The Temple. He paneled the interior walls from floor to ceiling with cedar planks; for flooring he used cypress. The thirty feet at the rear of The Temple he made into an Inner Sanctuary, cedar planks from floor to ceiling—the Holy of Holies. The Main Sanctuary area in front was sixty feet long. The entire interior of The Temple was cedar, with carvings of fruits and flowers. All cedar—none of the stone was exposed.

³⁷⁻³⁸ The foundation for GOD's Temple was laid in the fourth year in the month of Ziv. It was completed in the eleventh year in the month of Bul (the eighth month) down to the last detail, just as planned. It took Solomon seven years to build it.

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Colossians 3:12- 17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Luke 2:41-52

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the

temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

Matthew 18:19-20

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

King David of sling, harp and find a wife on the rooftop fame would have been a very happy man to see what his son, Solomon, built for the glory of God. Truth be told if you read about David, winner of Battles and street dances in his BVD's was more than a little embarrassed by the fact that with the spoils of all the wars God ensured for him he found himself in a fantastic house made of cedar out in the suburbs. In point of fact, one evening as he was stretched out in front of the fire with his pipe and a glass of the House of Israel's best wine it dawned on him that he was all comfy cozy and God, or what represented for them the presence of God, was in a wooden box in a tent. This makes David squirm a little bit under his fleece comforter and he calls in his trusted advisor, prophet and mentor, Nathan, who by the way is speaking to him once again, and he say, "Uh, Nathan – shouldn't I build God a house?" Nathan says, 'well maybe' and heads off only to have conversation with God that same night who tells Nathan in effect. That's nice of David, I appreciate the offer, but he needs to rest now and let the kingdom build itself up. I'll get one of his sons to build me a house. Hence – Solomon's temple.

The truth is temples and churches and synagogues and mosques and sanctuaries are more about people than they are about God. People like the idea, and it's a good idea, of having a place to call home. A place where in a pinch you can go and find God or at least evidence that God has been present.

Since those tents that used to get set up to house that wooden box with the ten commandment tablets in it so people have a place to worship, people, God's children have been restless until there was a place, like this place where God can come by and hang the divine hat and hopefully stay awhile. Which is most likely fine with God unless those same people forget that God, our God, is not so much a God of in here, as a God of out there.

It's always been that way. This is not to say that God isn't in this place with us. God surely is. Jesus, who let the his ride home from Jerusalem leave without him, later explained his 12 year old actions by saying, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" In other words, don't you know where God is? I do. Not that Jesus didn't find God and worship God everywhere he went. He's the one who told us that wherever two or three of us are gathered in his name he is there. God is there. Worship can take place there. Under a tree, mountainside, lakeside – wherever.

When, after the resurrection the early church was beginning to take shape all the good worship places were taken. The temple, all of the synagogues. Those early Christians, faithful to the gospel, knew that the city planners weren't likely to give them a building permit, so they gathered for worship in one another's homes. Sometimes two or three in a den. Sometimes many more in someone like Lydis's great room. Creatures of habit, Acts tells us that by day they hung around the temple, they knew where God was, too. But at night and

then increasingly they left the temple and began a new focus and identity as the church.

It's right around this time that some confusion begins. Church, which was the people, the body of Christ, began to be confused with church, a place where worship took place. The church met in a church – and we've been doing so ever since. Just as David dreamed of and Solomon undertook, we who are followers of Jesus also like a place where we can do our worship. A place in which we can claim God's presence.

In Colossians Paul pretty much captures the reason and the purpose. He says, "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

That's what we're supposed to be and do – in this sanctuary – in the church – place and body. It's right back to how it began. What these early Highlands

Presbyterians did 50 years ago when they moved from the community club to this set aside place, this place that was certainly sacred, holy that is, to them and surely is holy to us today, is to prepare ourselves in our ordered worship for the unordered pursuit of serving God in the world. In other words, everything that happens in here is about out there. Everything that God does as meet God in our worship and as God meets us through the presence of Holy Spirit here informs our lives, our living – out there, where in truth God has always been and always will be. We like the idea of keeping God inside these walls but in truth these walls, this sanctuary, this people is inside of God.

What is it the hymn says, “God is here! As we Your people Meet to offer praise and prayer, May we find in fuller measure What it is in Christ we share.

Here, as in the world around us, All our varied skills and arts Wait the coming of the Spirit Into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us Of our lifelong need of grace; Here are table, font, and pulpit; Here the cross has central place. Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence, as in speech, Here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome In the Shepherd's flock and fold, Here, as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old. Here the servants of the Servant Seek in worship to explore What it means in daily living To believe and to adore.

That's the church. That's the people of God. That's what this HUPC people of God has been striving to do for 50 years. Generation to generation, one person to the next, twos or threes or hundreds. All we can do is keep on going, keep on striving, keep on trying to keep up with our wildly active God who will gladly meet us and hear our worship but will not be contained, will not be controlled by us, will not be bound by our liturgy, our structure, our history, our presumption. God will not be kept in a box in a tent or anywhere.

We keep on worshiping, keep on praying, keeping on being the church inside this wonderful church we so dearly love, keep on singing:

Lord of all, of church and kingdom, In an age of change and doubt, Keep us faithful to the gospel, Help us work Your purpose out. Here, in this day's dedication, All we have to give, receive: We, who cannot live without You, We adore You! We believe!

That's it isn't it? That's why it dawned on David that God needed a house too. It's why Solomon built the temple, it's why those earliest Christians created house churches, its why people in ever town, village, city and suburb pool their resources in wood and brick and block and mortar build houses for God. Because quite simply we, who cannot live without you – we adore you... we believe.

And you know what's great? What's really great? Our God, the vast omnipotent, sovereign Lord of the universe – comes to us when we are here, -- comes and sits alongside you on the pew, speaks through me in this pulpit, replenishes, refreshes and renews the waters at the font, and lays before us on this table of grace a meal fit for the king. The king of kings and the lord of lords.

Hallelujah! Praise God for 50 years in our midst in this place. Praise God for washing us, filling us and feeding us – so we, with God, can go out there.

Amen.