

**Sermon for
The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church**

Date: September 16, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: 1 Kings 8:22-30

Epistle Reading: Revelation 21:1-5

Gospel Reading: Luke 19:1-10

Sermon Text: 1 Kings 8:22-30

Sermon Title: Dedication in God's House

Music:

LSB 790 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Song: Doxology

Chancel Choir: United in Praise

Song: In Christ Alone

LSB 644 – The Church's One Foundation

Song: Holy, Holy Lamb

Song: Jesus Remember Me

Song: Father Make Us One

Song: To Commune With You

LSB 818 – In Thee is Gladness

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special



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Text: 1 Kings 8:22-30

In the presence of the entire assembly of Israel, Solomon stood in front of the Lord's altar. He stretched out his hands toward heaven and said, "Lord God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth below. You keep your promise of mercy to your servants, who obey you wholeheartedly. You have kept your promise to my father David, your servant. With your mouth you promised it. With your hand you carried it out as it is today.

"Now, Lord God of Israel, keep your promise to my father David, your servant. You said, 'You will never fail to have an heir sitting in front of me on the throne of Israel if your descendants are faithful to me as you have been faithful to me.' So now, God of Israel, may the promise you made to my father David, your servant, come true.

"Does God really live on earth? If heaven itself, the highest heaven, cannot hold you, then how can this temple that I have built? Nevertheless, my Lord God, please pay attention to my prayer for mercy. Listen to my cry for help as I pray to you today. Night and day may your eyes be on this temple, the place about which you said, 'My name will be there.' Listen to me as I pray toward this place. Hear the plea for mercy that your people Israel and I pray toward this place. Hear us when we pray to heaven, the place where you live. Hear and forgive.

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Grace to you, and may God's eternal peace rest on all who worship in this house. Amen.

Happy anniversary! We are celebrating 46 years for this congregation worshipping in this building. It was on April 9, 1972 that this building was dedicated to the worship of the one true holy living God.



That, however, was not the beginning of this congregation. For that you would have to go back 110 years to 1908. That was the year this congregation became a full member of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. That 110 year anniversary occurs just two days from now on Tuesday.

In 1908 the congregation wrote and signed a constitution dedicating themselves, and the possessions they used for worship, to the teachings of the Holy Christian Church and service to Almighty God. It was an important decision. One that affected not only their lives but the lives of their children and their children's children, as well as all who come to offer here their worship and praise. They were dedicated to the truths and promises of Scripture without apology and without compromise. So they dedicated themselves and this house to the God they worshiped.

That same dedication continues today. Here in this house there are people whose families established the congregation back in 1908 and there are people who have been members for a short time. All are children of God, loved and cherished by their heavenly Father. All are able to stand free and forgiven before the throne of a Holy God. Free because here in this house we preach Christ crucified and risen. Here in this house we preach repentance for sin. Here in this house we preach forgiveness through Christ for all who humble themselves before their God. Here in this house we preach the Holy Scriptures of God, in their entirety, as God's Holy Word brought to us by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the very foundation for our knowledge of God and God's will for us, His people.

Where did such an idea come from? Why would people dedicate such time and resources to a building like this? Were the founders of this congregation doing something new, something innovative and unique? In fact they were not. So my question to you history buffs is who did it first? What was the first congregation to dedicate a permanent house to the worship of our God? Who was the first man to pray to God for His blessing on a permanent house of worship? To answer those questions we need to go back about 3,000 years.

Prior to that time there had never been a permanent house for worship of Almighty God. Before that time the men would gather with a teacher of God's Word. They would gather in someone's house or some other place where people came together. There they would be taught. Then those men would take those lessons home and teach them to their families. That was true for thousands of years. It continued to be true when Jacob and his twelve sons move to Egypt because of the famine, and it continued to be true throughout the 450 years they spent in Egypt, much of that in slavery.

In slavery the people prayed to God for a deliverer. One who would lead them back to the land God had promised them. One who would lead them to freedom. God heard their prayer and a little boy was born. A boy who grew to be a man named Moses. Through Moses God did battle with the top ten gods of Egypt. Starting with the Nile River, which the Egyptian people worshiped as a god, counting down to the Pharaoh who they believed was god on Earth.

Through Moses God showed that there is no god but God, and He alone is to be given all worship and praise. Then Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. There was one final showdown between God and Pharaoh on the shores of the Red Sea. In that battle Egypt was brought to its knees and would be unable to give trouble to Israel for hundreds of years.

The very next thing that happened was that God directed Moses to bring the people to Mount Sinai. There God reestablished His covenant with His people. It was there that God also taught the

people how He wanted to be worshiped. The record of those instructions begins in Exodus chapter 25 and continues through chapter 31. In those seven chapters God taught how He wanted to be worshiped, and how He wanted to be praised. There God taught us how to talk to Him, and show respect to Him, and to show gratitude for what He has given to us.

Those directions included instructions on how to build a Tabernacle, a tent of meeting as a house of worship. Much of what you see here in this church was put here because God directed that these things should be here. They all have purpose and meaning. God spent all of that time teaching how to worship Him because he cares about how we worship Him.



That Tabernacle, that tent of meeting, was just that a tent. An elaborate tent but a tent. One that could be taken down moved and put up again. It was not a permanent structure. For as much as a 1000 years the people Israel continued to worship in that temporary structure.

During the course of that time they did a lot wrong, but God honored His promise and carried them through. The nation of Israel became great and powerful.

When King David began his reign he had a dream. He had a dream to build God a permanent house, a Temple, where people would come to worship. He brought his desire and plan to God, and God said He would allow the Temple to be built. David made the plans, but his son Solomon was the one who was to build it.

In our Old Testament reading today we come to that event. The event where the construction on the Temple has been completed and it is about to be dedicated for holy use. Following God's directions for worship, and how a worship service should be conducted, the people were led in worship of Almighty God. In that service Solomon prayed the prayer that ended with:

Listen to me as I pray toward this place. Hear the plea for mercy that your people Israel, and I, pray toward this place. Hear us when we pray to heaven, the place where you live. Hear and forgive.¹

It was there in that moment that the first permanent House of God was dedicated for worship. It was Solomon who did it first under God's direction. That same tradition of dedicating a building for worship has continued now for 3,000 years. That tradition was followed 110 years ago when St. John's Lutheran Church was established. It was followed again when this new building was dedicated to worship of Almighty God 46 years ago.



The Temple was a place of pride and accomplishment for the people of Israel. When they saw the Temple they stood a little taller, they held their head a little higher, because that building was for them a symbol for all to see of their dedication to the God who loves and saves them.

That too is repeated here. This building is for this congregation a place of pride and accomplishment. This building is a symbol for all to see of our dedication to the God who loved and saved us.

Everyone who drives, bikes, or walks by this building can look and see our expression of love and gratitude to God for all He has done for us. The erecting of this house is a



1 1 Kings 8:29-30

statement to all that we are not ashamed of the name of Jesus.² We are a Christian people who have dedicated our lives and our property to the God who saved us. So here today we remember and rededicate our hearts to God for all the wonders He has done in our lives. Not the least of which is the salvation of our souls and the sure promise of eternal life with Him.

Is that why God loves us? Is that why God saved us? Is that why God is proud to call us His children, because we built this building for Him? We know the answer to those questions is, “No.” This building was not built to earn God’s love. This building was not built to impress God. This building was not built to get God’s attention. It was built because of God’s love. The truths of God’s Holy Word teach us clearly that no one can be saved by their own work or efforts. The words are clear when we read:

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.³

and

You are saved by faith, and not by works so that no one can boast.⁴

This building was not built to earn our salvation. Jesus did not come to Earth to walk through all the trials and troubles that plagued Him, and finally to die simply because He knew we would build such a nice place for us to worship Him. This building was built because Jesus saved us. It is a place for us to show our gratitude for the One who first saved us, and saved us from eternal separation from the God who loves us.

This building was not built to impress God so that He would be proud to put His name on us as His children. This building was built because we have God’s name on us and because we are His children.⁵ This building was built because of all that God has done for us, not to earn anything from God.

In fact we know the truth that there is nothing we can earn from God except His anger and wrath. Not one of us here has the ability to do anything good in God’s eyes.⁶ The Bible teaches us that even the things we do, that appear good, are in fact worthless in God’s sight if done outside of a faithfulness to God and God’s truths and promises.

We know that we are in truth sinful, defiant and disobedient. We are rebellious children who too often do everything we know we are not supposed to do.⁷ We know that we are not worthy of God’s love, grace, or peace. We know that if we were left to our own means we would too quickly fall away from the faith God has given us.

That is why this building was built. Not only out of gratitude but also for the sake of those who would come and worship here. So that God’s Word, God’s commands, and God’s promises would be taught here truthfully, faithfully, and consistently. From generation to generation, to friends, family, and neighbors, here in this house the Holy Triune God comes to His people through His Word and His Sacraments. Here in this house we are brought to repentance, and then lifted up in praise and wonder of God’s faithfulness to us.

That is why the first Temple was build 3,000 years ago. That is why this temple, this holy house of God, was built 46 years ago. That is why we are sitting here today, side by side, shoulder to shoulder. Not because we are anything special, but because God is everything special. We are here to worship our God because of His love and light in our lives. We are here because He is, and will always be, that light that brings grace, peace and mercy to us for all eternity.
Amen.

2 Romans 1:16 – I’m not ashamed of the Good News. It is God’s power to save everyone who believes...

3 Romans 3:23

4 Ephesians 2:8-10

5 1 John 3:1

6 Romans 3:23

7 Romans 7:15-20