

Solomon's Temple - 1 Kings 5:1-5; 8:1-13

This week we transition from the anointment of David by Samuel to David's death. David's son Solomon now sits on the throne. David had a troubled kingship with a record of warfare and conflict, family drama, violence and heartbreak. Under King Solomon, the Israelites have emerged into a time of peace.

When David was king, he wanted to build a permanent structure, a temple, in which the worship of God, centred Israel. He was prevented from accomplishing this dream due to all the wars, conflicts and drama surrounding him.

Now that God has given Solomon rest in every way, with neither adversary nor misfortune, in this time of respite Solomon can turn his attention to the building of the temple in Jerusalem, the jewel of his legacy.

Central to worship was the Ark of the Covenant, the home for God. This home had been in a tent which they carried through their time in the wilderness, to battle and the establishment of the new nation. The Ark, would serve as the central focus of worship for the people throughout the entire nation.

The Israelites have one God, unlike the surrounding nations. They

worship the one true God, Lord of heaven and earth. To worship this one true God, they need to have one centre for their sacrifices for all the people. This centre wasn't meant to be a way of limiting God, or confining God, who could be worshipped anywhere and anytime, but they needed a place for the collective worship of the people. God's name was to be placed in Jerusalem as one God, with the building of the temple. The people need and want something concrete.

God's presence would be intensified in the temple. It be an intensification like our sacraments are for us. Yes, God is everywhere, but God promised to be particularly present in the body and blood, the wine and bread of Holy Communion, and in the waters of baptism. Solomon centralized worship at the temple, representing one God who is transcendent and imminent. It also represents the unity of the twelve tribes or family groups as one nation.

The move toward the construction of the temple is spurred on, in part, by a foreign king, Hiram of Tyre. Hiram had been loyal to David, and Solomon capitalized on this friendship after David's death by taking king Hiram into his confidence about the temple project, largely because Solomon wants the cedars of Lebanon as construction material for the temple. This temple for Israel's God will be built with materials from foreign soil. This would be a bit odd, if not for the opening note about Hiram's friendship with David and the fact that Solomon is at pains to make the theological nature of this project clear.

The temple he tells Hiram, is “for the name of the Lord, my God”, and is possible because “the Lord my God has given me peace on every side.” Given that peace, the plan is not “to build a temple for the name of the Lord my God, just as the Lord indicated to my father David.” Solomon is very clear, and Hiram must also be upon hearing this message, that this enterprise is about the Lord, the God of his friend David and David’s son Solomon. Surprisingly in light of the emphatic theology of Solomon’s message, Hiram, the King of Tyre, himself blesses the Lord when he receives the news. So, if the involvement of a foreign power in the construction of the temple is a cause for concern, it is nevertheless also clear that foreign involvement can be cause for joy and a way that the Lord’s name is spread abroad.

However, there are two ambivalent aspects of the temple project. The first is that Solomon instates an immense “work gang” to carry out the labour in Lebanon. The term that is used for this workforce in Hebrew (mas) is also the term used for the Israelite workers in Exodus where the Israelites are subject to a brutal and tyrannical pharaoh and his taskmasters. It is very hard to not see this Hebrew term as an extremely negative judgment on the labour in question as well as on how Solomon has gone about his temple building project. Clearly, the Israelites were not pleased with this forced labour and with their “superiors.” It all seemed a bit too Egyptian.

The second detail is the difference in the time it took for Solomon to build the temple versus how long it took him to build his own palace. The temple took seven years while the palace took thirteen years. The fact that the royal palace took almost twice as long as God's temple to build, communicates something about the structures themselves.

Hiram's Phoenicians supplied cedar and fir building materials. In exchange, Solomon's Hebrews supplied food. Like much of today's construction, temple walls and objects were created elsewhere and brought to the building site where they were assembled and installed. Gold was everywhere, inside and out. Rich furnishing and decorations were made of the finest materials, quite an upgrade from the tent where the mobile Ark had been kept. Unlike temples of the surrounding nations, there were no gods anywhere in this temple. Instead of images of gods, the decorations consisted of palm trees, flowers, and cherubim, reminders of God's creation.

Humans seem to like to build things. We might locate Solomon building the temple within the very long human history of building things in the name of a deity. A building makes things real. Buildings can impress, make a statement about status, and display power. Solomon elevated Jerusalem within the world of his day by building this "house of the LORD." No doubt Solomon wanted to fulfill God's message to David, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name." Yet Solomon undoubtedly sought to be recognized

and immortalized himself as well.

We humans not only like to build things, but we also put a lot of energy into buildings. We donate money for buildings with our names on them. We build churches or add on to the ones we have. Buildings make us feel like we've accomplished something and stand as concrete markers to our common life. We might ask, however, whether we are prone to become attached to buildings more than to our common life that they represent. We take vicarious status from them. We pour resources into their maintenance and upkeep.

At the same time, buildings can be places of ingathering, as the Jerusalem Temple would become for generations up to Jesus' own day. Buildings can be places of celebration and shared life. It's easy when you share one common faith and culture.

What is the purpose of our buildings? How do our buildings further or hinder God's presence and glory? How might our buildings be jumping-off places that send us into the world God so loves? We humans try to put God in one place. Ever since the Hebrews wandered in the wilderness, God has been on the move with them: in pillar and cloud, in the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant. Now God resides in the Holy of Holies in one place, the Temple in Jerusalem.

God's holy presence is honoured more than ever before with gold

coverings and profound reverence. At the same time, God is more removed from the people than ever before, as only certain priests have full access to the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies.

Our very human experience of awe at the glory and majesty of the Holy carried with it a very human tendency to keep God at arm's length, "out there," "above us." In doing so, we have inadvertently "othered" God, that is made God other. When God becomes only a "wholly other," we can keep God at a distance. In creating sacred boxes that protect God's holiness, we also protect ourselves from intimate encounter with God.

We might wonder at the benefits and disadvantages of this arrangement. How do we embrace awe while also allowing God to be part of our everyday lives? How might we experience both God-beyond-all-things and God-with-us-here-and-now?

The Ark of the Covenant, with two tablets of the Ten Instructions or Commandments, Aaron's rod and some manna was all that was in the Holy of Holies. This sparsity was a reminder of the invisible God, the one God, transcendent and imminent, separate from, yet inexorably connected to humanity and creation.

The ceremony dedicating the temple matched the magnificence of the building itself. An eight-day celebration marked its completion. It was a joyful occasion filled with glorious music, lots of instruments, and singers

galore. Solomon himself is known for the composition of the famous Song of Solomon as well as three thousand proverbs and a thousand and five songs.

The offering of sacramental animals was so large that extra space was required for the offerings. The Bible story can't be taken literally - twenty two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep - it was just a lot of sacrificial animals for a population of about five thousand at the time of Solomon.

In Solomon's dedicatory speech and prayers, we find some of the most exquisite passages in the entire Bible. He recognizes that God is beyond physical space. Solomon's prayer beautifully requests that God hear and answer not only the prayers of the people of Israel, but also the prayers of foreigners.

God's claiming of the people is the central element for the people. "I will be your God and you will be my people." The Word of God was the centre of all worship. Reformation commemorates the Word of God. It is central in our covenant with God and God's relation with God's people.

In the sixties, Pope John the twenty-third called for a council in Rome. Why? After all, they just had one, one hundred years ago. Pope John invited ecumenical groups and observers to this historical event. The gathering was to take place in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. There was

a great procession including the invited ecumenical guests, to start the great historical event. North American Lutherans were included in this historical event. As the procession, in pairs, started, one of the seminary professors remarked to his partner, “so this is where it all started.”

At the time of the Reformation, the Catholic Church was running out of money, so they started a great fundraiser. They sold indulgences for the forgiveness of sins, basically, tickets to heaven. One could buy an indulgence even for relatives who had already died or were in purgatory. Luther saw this as corruption, a move away from the Word of God.

The temple was central to both Old and New Testaments. However, in time, the temple became controversial and got caught up in corruption, similar to the church in Luther’s time. Although it was the cause of wars and conflicts, it was still a place, a centre, of community. Our church needs to be constantly checking itself, and reforming where necessary, as Luther demonstrated.

People with good intentions can be easily tempted to stray. The Reformers understood this and came up with a logo: "A Reformed church must ever be re-forming itself." Our humanness, our weakness, our temptations tend to take that which comes purely from God and distort it.

Today the church is tempted by, and distorted by, the escalation of an

individualized faith - people who are spiritual but have need for a church. Our challenge is to be vigilant, to keep re-examining ourselves – to always be in a re-forming mode - changing – getting back to the basics – back to our faith and trust in Christ, back to the communal faith rather than individualized faith. The Lord's prayer uses plural pronouns rather than singular ones. It is a communal prayer; **our** Father, **our** daily bread, **our** debts. Challenges to our faith are always creeping in, unnoticed because we are in a constant state of brokenness.

Yet, a church is simply the people who have gathered together to share a common belief - a belief that salvation and freedom are found only through Christ Jesus. And it is you and I - the people that make up our churches - who need to acknowledge the call to continual re-formation - renewal and change according to what is happening in our societies which is constantly changing. Nothing is static. Within the community of faith, God's Word, God's world is proclaimed as it shapes the life of God's people. "You shall be my people. I will be your God." We need communal faith, a community to fulfill our goals, to reach a world in need of God's love and care, and we can't do it alone, individually. We need our God-created community.

Amen.

REFORMATION SUNDAY PRAYERS OCTOBER 26, 2025

Dear God, On this Reformation Sunday, we thank you for those persons you have poured your Spirit into who then set about reforming your church. We thank you that you are still at work in the life of the church, creating something new, reforming us reshaping us, and remaking us into your image.

Reforming God, your church is in constant process of Reformation, and we thank you for the renewal and reformation you have brought to all your people through our baptism. Let each of us continuously be transformed as we let go of the old and are renewed as we rise to new life in Christ.

We pray for the Church of Jesus Christ; begun, maintained and promoted by the Holy Spirit. May it be true, engaging, welcoming to all, and actively doing your will. May your church be always faithful, gracious God, and ready to stand firm in valuing compassionate love, justice, and peace.

In our zeal to defend our own worldview, to prove ourselves “right”, help us to let go of our self-righteous attitude, and never lose sight of the reality that each person we encounter is a child of your own making, regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, economic situation, sexual orientation, gender, or age. May we see in the faces of those around us and across this globe your own face, filled with love and hope, mercy and peace.

We reflect your image, Lord, by caring for one another with love, support and prayer. We pray for all who need your healing presence and for their families during these times. We pray for those who are in hospitals today; for those at home recovering from treatments and/or surgeries; for those in long term care facilities and those who are home bound. We pray for doctors, nurses, health care workers and caregivers; We pray for those who are facing death; for those who have died and for those who are grieving.

We show your care and love for your people and creation, as we pray for those around the world who as Christians face imprisonment and martyrdom; for those whose countries are torn apart by civil war; for those living in poverty; for those who live with starvation. Give strength and hope to those who are in bondage to oppression, abuse, poverty, drugs,

homelessness, loneliness or depression. We pray for those who are being used in human trafficking, slave labour, child labour and sex trade labour. Through your healing touch, free them from their bondage. May they be comforted and may they find hope and joy in their lives through your love and care.

We grieve for the millions of refugees who have lost their homes, their families, their livelihoods, and some, their lives, in the search for peace. Peace-bringing God, we pray for the vulnerable throughout your world where violence and corruption destroy and devastate lives. Forgive us, and call us to account when, for the sake of economic advantage in the name of “free trade”, we sell weapons to governments and groups who abuse their own citizens.

As conflicts in the world increase and abound, as the ceasefire in Israel and Palestine remains tenuous, as relations in Russia and Ukraine remain tense, and as political leaders change, not always in the way the country feels is best, help to empower those who feel marginalized and excluded, including minorities, vulnerable populations, and those who feel their voice is not heard.

Even as people of all ages in the United States and other nations joined in the No Kings Protest, help people everywhere to realize that our allegiance is first to You. May our stance, and the way we take that stance; our words, and the way we say those words; our actions, and the way those actions come across with gentleness and respect, in a way that shows our Christlike love.

We pray for those who have been affected by disasters; floods, storms, hurricanes, typhoons and wildfires, for those in disaster areas who face outbreak of diseases. Lord, may we put into action our love, care and prayers for those whose lives have been affected and continue to be affected by climate change.

Loving God, send your spirit upon your church and its leaders. We lift up in prayer, St. Peter's Estonian Lutheran in Vancouver – Rev. Andres Rebane (Interim) and Peace Lutheran in Vernon. We pray for Pope Leo XIV; ELCIC Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, Bishop Kathy, Bishop Anna, Anglican Primate Shane Parker, Bishops and

congregations of the Moravian Worldwide church, Bishop Imad Hadda and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, our sister congregation San Juan Camino d'Esperanza and Pastor Ana Maria Jara, and Holy Trinity Lutheran in Port Angeles. We pray that you bless the ministries of all deacons, pastors, lay leaders, musicians and volunteers.

Lord, we pray for your church that we be a beacon of hope, grace, love and light in this world. May our desire to welcome all reflect your open arms to all. May our arms and hands reaching out to those in need reflect your love for all. May our forgiveness of one another reflect your forgiveness for all. With your followers throughout the world, we join in the prayer that Jesus taught ...

Our Father ...