

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany
February 12, 2023

““Build with excellent materials on your solid foundation of Jesus Christ”
(1 Corinthians 3:9-15)
By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 6th Sunday after Epiphany is
from our Epistle reading 1 Corinthians 3:9-15

“9 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

Here ends our text.

Clearly, our text today talks about building a superstructure. It talks about starting with a firm foundation and then building it up with the best materials possible. And at the end, this superstructure will be tested to be see if it is sound. Anything which is done with quality will be rewarded, and anything which doesn’t pass the test will be burned.

What building is Paul talking about? Well, he says it clearly in verse 9, doesn’t he? You are God’s building! God’s Holy Christian Church!

You know, today a sporting event will be played in a superstructure that was built in 2006 in Glendale Arizona. It’s now called State Farm Stadium and it is hosting Superbowl 57. Anybody going to watch the game? Maybe tune in for the commercials? Well, at a cost of ½ billion dollars the stadium was built. And maybe you didn’t know this, but it has something very unique. It has a retractable natural grass playing surface. Yes, in order to take advantage of sunny Arizona, the

whole field moves out to get some sun and then slides back in when its game time. Not even Jerry Jones can boast of that in his 1.3 billion ATT stadium that was built 3 years later in 2009.

Yes, it's all for entertainment and if you're willing to pay \$6000, that's the average ticket price for today's game. Eventually, this superstructure will be replaced by something newer and better just like the old Cowboys Texas stadium was imploded.

But, the superstructure of which Paul speaks of, God's church, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ will last forever! For it is built on the firm foundation of Christ Crucified and His solid work of redemption upon which the whole building receives its beauty and glory! Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone. There is no other foundation that is true. If someone thinks he has a better foundation, any other god which man in his "wisdom" invents, Paul has these words to say:

"17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy..."

Clearly, this superstructure is of the highest, most serious importance. For it is God's temple and thus it is holy. And, then Paul reminds you and me once again...

"which temple you are." Yes, you and I are part of this superstructure of God's church. The Holy Spirit dwells in you! You are laid on the foundation of Jesus Christ by faith in Him, given to you in your baptism! Through your baptism, you have been washed and made holy and fit to be placed in God's holy church.

It is by grace, pure grace, Paul says that he has laid the foundation of the preaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus paid for the whole temple by His holy precious blood. How much does it cost you to be a part of Jesus' most holy superstructure? How much does it cost you for your personal seat license, your PSL, to be a season ticket holder in God's temple? \$100,000, \$60,000? Zero dollars. Jesus paid for it all and you receive it by grace!

Peter says in his 1st epistle in chapter 2, that you are **"living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood,"**

And as a holy priesthood, each of us has been given the highest responsibility to build on this temple of God, on the foundation of Jesus Christ with the most excellent of materials!

What does Peter go on to say in this verse? **“5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”**

What you say and do as a Christian is of the highest importance! For the building up of the church, started by the grace of God through the apostles and prophets continues in you and me!

Listen to what Paul says again.

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

You and I are the anyone. Your work and my work will be tested on the last day. What you say and do is so important! Paul tells you and me to choose the right materials. Choose the materials that give life, not man’s foolish wisdom and false gods. Choose the gold of God’s Word and Sacraments, the silver of pure doctrine, the precious stones of sound hymns and liturgy and not stubble of what gives glory to man.

The Corinthians were still as babes elevating the proclaimer and not the message. There were divisions, factions, dissension, envy and strife because the believers were saying that they were of Paul or Apollos. Paul calls it carnal thinking. Some plant, and others water but it is God alone that gives the increase.

Our lives in all we say and do should be as Paul said last week in chapter 2. **“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”**

And this golden material will stand the test on the last day and the believer in Christ will receive a reward. But, if any Christian uses any building material other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if any works righteousness or man’s teachings and traditions are mixed in, then it will be burned up on the last day. He or she will be like a person fleeing a burning house. Everything is lost, but he or she gets out with his or her life because of faith in Jesus Christ.

So Paul concludes:

“Therefore 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 things present or things to come—all are yours. 23 And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

It’s all yours!

“So closely is the Church, so intimately are all believers, connected with Christ that they partake of His wonderful glory. They are no longer in any way dependent upon men, upon the wisdom of this world, but have a direct claim upon the service of everything which belongs to God and Christ.

At the service of the believers, by the grace of God, stand Paul and Apollos and Cephas, all the apostles and ministers whom He has sent to proclaim the glorious truths of salvation.

At their service stands the world itself, the whole world with all its forces and resources; the right use of them all is in furthering the cause of Christ.

In the service of the believers stand both life and death; whether they live, they live to the Lord, and whether they die, they die to the Lord, Rom. 14, 8.

In their service stand both things present and things to come; all states, conditions, offices, trades, professions, everything should aid in the spread of the Gospel, of the Christian faith. "Everything in the wide world belongs to Christ the Ruler.

And so Paul concludes in a burst of confident triumph: But you are Christ's, but Christ is God's. Since the believers belong to Christ by faith, in and through Him their royal power is exercised.

In this relation, therefore, there is praise for no one but Christ. And Christ is God's, the believers thus, through the Son, being united also with the Father and partaking of His eternal power.

God, therefore, is all in all, and it behooves all Christians, instead of spending valuable time in petty bickerings, in forming factions, and in boasting in men, to devote the energy of faith to the spread of His honor and glory.

God's field of tillage, God's building, God's temple, we Christians are, because we belong to Christ. And this great honor, on whose account we fall down before God in humble adoration, teaches us to deny the ungodliness of the praise of men and to glory in the Lord alone.” (Kretzmann’s Popular Commentary)

Now, lets keep building God’s Superstructure, His Holy Christian Church with the excellent materials of God’s Word and Sacraments in all that you say and do, that the those in darkness may know Christ Crucified and Him alone!

Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)