

Ephesians 2:17-22

So *Jesus* came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together is joined and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Let us pray: Lord, we are so slow in realizing how much we need each other. Together Christ is working tirelessly to build us all into a holy temple, the dwelling place for God. Forgive us for seeking to tear down what Christ has built. Forgive us for the times we have refused to work together with those whom Christ has chosen to place in our lives to bring glory and praise to Your holy name. We desire to be a part of Your dwelling place and to have You dwell with us forever. Amen.

### “The Dwelling Place of God”

This is only the second week that we have been sheltering in place instead of worshipping together in our wonderful church in Valley Forge. It feel like a lot longer. I do not know about you, but it has thrown off my natural rhythms. I have been in the sanctuary of God somewhere, almost every single Sunday of my life. Sunday School has been an important part of the spiritual rhythm of my life for just as long. Personally I cannot wait to freely assemble again with all of you.

Today I am going to talk about the dwelling place of God. It is something grander than any building made by human hands, it is a holy temple crafted by Christ himself. Jesus has built and is building the dwelling place of God. It is a dwelling place that connects us all. In Jesus’ plans nobody is excluded. According to the blue print of God, every single life is essential to the dwelling place God has in mind.

This temple is build upon the “foundation of the apostles and the prophets.” Upon the past leaders, the past movers and shakers, the dreamers and those who were used of God to change the world. But Jesus did not stop there, he wanted more than a foundation built upon the rock, Jesus was building a dwelling place fit for Almighty God.

Jesus made himself become the cornerstone. He is the one who pulls everything together. Jesus keeps the building square and plumb. Jesus relates every aspect of this dwelling place to himself. Jesus has a personal relationship with every aspect of this dwelling place of God and knows the perfect place of me and you and everyone else, now and through out time, generation after generation.

In Jesus there is no longer “Strangers and aliens”, we now are all the same thing, “saints”. Saints is just the way Jesus describes his building materials. All of us have been personally selected by Jesus Christ himself. Jesus does not need your opinion about what he has selected to work with. Jesus is a master carpenter, trained by his daddy and is up to the challenged to build a dwelling place fit for almighty God.

We saints do not all have the same purpose. We each have our own unique callings. This is why it is so important to Christ that we mesh together in the peace, He bought by his precious blood upon the cross. Some of us are nails, we seem small, but are so important, otherwise the sheet rock will fall down. Some of us are stain. We are used in such wondrous ways, to add so much to the beauty of God's house.

Comparison is the robber of joy, so we cannot say we are not necessary, because we are not some as other pieces of the dwelling place of God. We need to find peace in knowing that Jesus found just the right place for your special qualities to shine.

This is also true about others. There is no life that we can discount, and take it upon our selves to be qualified to proclaim that because they are not siding, they have no use in the dwelling place of God. They may be a piece of tile for the back splash that would not be complete to Christ's eyes without their uniqueness.

We just need to be the best us we can be, and to encourage those saints around us to be the same. If you are a nail, be the best you can be. If you the trap underneath the sink, be the best you can be. You do not need to try to be what you are not, even if you are the only one like you in the whole dwelling place of God!

You are a saint. You belong. You are needed. You are not something strange. You are not alien, Jesus has found the perfect place for you.

Jesus is working so hard to create the perfect dwelling place for God upon the earth: The new Jerusalem in all of its glory. Some of us are doing our best to mess it all up. Sometimes we just refuse to live at peace with one another.

We get it in our minds that everyone should have the same calling as we do. We forget that Jesus is more personal than that, and does not just give a general call. He does not just say, "Ya'll come." Jesus calls us by name, because he knows just where he needs you to be in the dwelling place he has designed for the glory of God. Many callings may seem strange to you. You may even have a hard time believing that Jesus could use me for anything at all. You might think I am good only for the landfill, which is the Biblical word for hell. Jesus says you are mistaken, even I am needed, my calling is just different than yours.

We sometimes get uncomfortable about who God might place us next to, and attempt to pull away. Jesus then has to hit us again with a hammer to put us back in place. Christ may be seeking to make a pattern, and we believe it should be a solid, one overall color, one overall texture, but as the prophet figured out long ago, we are the clay and not the potter, we are not the designer, we are only part of God's design. So that means, we need to get use to our neighbors in the dwelling place of God, because we are going to be together for a long, long, long time if Jesus has any say in it. The only other choice is for us to end up in the landfill.

Sometimes our dreams for our lives, for our church, for our community, for our nation, are not the same as God's. From the time of Grandpa Adam and Grandma Eve, we have often believed we have a better idea than God ever had. And we are often bound and determined to have our own way, instead of Christ having his own way, with Jesus being the potter and us being just a lump of clay with great potential in the skillful hands of God.

No matter how rebellious we may be, Jesus is frugal with the gifts of God, so He is doing his best to see that none of us end up in the landfill, but that all of us have a place of honor as a part of the dwelling place of God.

My advise to myself and to all of you is to embrace the peace that Christ Jesus died to give to you when he was upon the cross. Be open to being used, not as you wish, but as God

could only dream. Allow yourself to be shaped under the skillful hands of Christ. Encourage each other to do the same, even when they don't see the world the same as you or hear the call of God the same.

Remember you are saints, the lego blocks of Christ, and together we are going to become the dwelling place of God.

Prayer: We are honored to be your saints, chosen by You.

Help us live together in the peace of Christ. Help us to work together to achieve Your goals even if they are beyond our comprehension. Help us trust Your wisdom as You use all Your other saints, so that through all of us Your dwelling place will be perfect in Your sight. Amen.

Next week because we will not be together for Holy Communion, we are going to share in a love feast. It will be presented live on the Friends of Valley Forge United Methodist Church website at 10:30 am. You will need some kind of bread (can be sweet bread, sweet rolls) and something to drink ( we will not be sharing one loving cup, so have enough cups for the whole family). It will be a unique Palm Sunday experience.

Also for Holy Week I plan to have a message each day as a way to keep us together while we are apart. Hang in there keep safe and healthy. Look out for one another, and keep praying.