

1 Kings 5:1-5; 8:27-30, 41-43
A Place of Encounter
WRCoB 10.27.24

800 years!

It took 800 years

From God's initial promise to Abraham

That he will become the father of a great nation

To the final establishment of the nation of Israel

Under the rule of Solomon.

Stretching from the Euphrates River in present-day Iraq

To the border with Egypt

Israel became a mighty power in the Middle East.

And for 250 of those 800 years

The Israelites carried around those stone tablets

Inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

They were placed in the Ark of the Covenant

And housed in the tent called the Tabernacle.

This was then carried from place to place

From war to war, from battlefield to battlefield

Signifying God's presence and protection.

It had been taken by the Philistines

And retaken by the Israelites

And finally brought to rest in Jerusalem by King David

David wanted to build a proper house for the Ark
But God had other plans.

It was Solomon who would build the temple

And boy, did Solomon take his work seriously.

It seemed he had the whole nation at work.

He set aside 30k workers for the work in Lebanon
Rotating 10k workers in and out per month
To cut and carry the beautiful cedars from there

He had 70k laborers and 80k stonecutters
Working the quarry

And he had 3,300 supervisors over it all.

Quite the work force.

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Chapter 6 and 7 which were not read today
Describes the building of the temple.

When we come to chapter 8
We witness the elaborate dedication
Of the completed temple.

All of Israel was assembled
As they brought the ark of the covenant
To its future and permanent home in the temple.

The priests made so many sacrifices
Of sheep and oxen, they lost count

The grill was hot and busy all day long

It truly was a day to behold.

1 Kings 8:10-11 NIV

¹⁰ When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, a cloud filled the temple of the Lord. ¹¹ And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.

The priests had to stop grilling
Due to a strange phenomenon
They called, “the glory of the Lord”.

This “glory of the Lord,”
Is used 38 times in the Old Testament.

It refers to a physical manifestation of God’s presence

Today, we call it a “God-moment.”
A sensory experience.
A moment when God’s presence is keenly felt
In Greek a Kairos moment.

For example, my daughter Darcy
When she was eight-years-old
Had an experience that could be defined
As “the glory of the LORD.”

In the small village church in Massachusetts
Where we worshiped

It was the practice to close the service
Gathered in a circle around the sanctuary.

We would hold hands
The choir would sing
“The Lord Bless You and Keep You”
And the pastor would give a blessing.

During one of those occasions
Darcy looked around the room
And witnessed a Kairos moment.

She told me later
That she saw light radiating
From each of the clasped hands in the circle.

And within her own hands
She felt an energy much stronger
Than hers or her neighbors’ energy.

It was an experience that took her deeper in faith.

Ask Floyd about his own Kairos moment
With a benediction from a previous pastor here.

The glory of the Lord filled the temple
And all were awed.

Solomon turned and addressed the crowd
Reminding them of their own journey
From the exodus in Egypt to the present day.

And then he closed in prayer.

The dedication of the temple
Was a defining moment for the people of Israel.

It became the center of faith for all Israelites.

All sought to make a pilgrimage to worship there.

Placing the Ark of the Covenant
From a tent to a building
Gave the people a sense of permanence
That God's presence was there to stay.

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It's like us today
We come to worship expecting
That God will meet us here.

That we have captured God in our building
Like in this illustration.



Like the view on the left.

We feel and act as if we have trapped God
In our church sanctuary.

We need to remind ourselves like the second view
God cannot be contained in a tent, a tabernacle
Or a church sanctuary.

And Solomon does just that.

1 Kings 8:27-29 CEV

²⁷ There's not enough room in all of heaven for you, Lord God. How could you possibly live on earth in this temple I have built? ²⁸ But I ask you to answer my prayer. ²⁹ This is the temple where you have chosen to be worshiped. Please watch over it day and night and listen when I turn toward it and pray.

What a lovely prayer of dedication for the temple.

A reminder that we do not have a corner on God.

God is too big for that.

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When the Israelites gathered on that day

To dedicate the temple

They experienced God in a very poignant way.

It wasn't because God took up residency in the Temple.

It was because the Israelites gathered with faith

That there, they would meet the Lord.

Darcy did not experience the “glory of the LORD,”
Because God took up residency
At the little Monterey Congregational church.

But because the small group of Christians who came
Came with the expectation
God would meet them there.

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And so, it is here as well.

We come to church expecting to meet God
Even though we know that God is omnipresent
God is everywhere.

Psalm 139:7-10 NLT

**⁷ I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!**
**⁸ If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave, you are there.**
**⁹ If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,**
**¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
and your strength will support me.**

And so, if that be the case
Why bother going to church?

We can worship God anywhere!

But God promises to meet us
When two or three are gathered in Jesus' name.

God promises

That in the gathered community of believers
We can experience God's presence.

One theologian calls church

God's promised place of encounter.

It's in church that we can say, like Jacob

"Surely the Lord is in this place" (Gen. 28:16-17).

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Take the old cathedrals in Europe

Upon entering, you feel like

You're walking on Holy Ground.

Why is that?

It's not just the architecture

Even though its design is to point heavenward

It's the promise of God's presence

That makes it holy.

It's the prayers lifted up over the years

It's the sacred event of communion taken by so many.

It's the countless times the Bible was opened

And the reading of God's word heard

It's the innumerable times people

Have knelt on bended knee

Confessing their sins and seeking mercy.

It becomes sacred because of the years
People encountered God.

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Whether it is a small country church
Or an elaborate cathedral
I love to go when no one is there.

To sit in a pew and watch the light
As it comes in through a stained-glass window.

I love to listen to the silence
And feel the peace.

I love to walk on the threshold
That is worn by the step of so many a believer.

I get a keen sense of God's presence.

It can be a great cathedral in Europe
A little mountain church in West Virginia
Or a simple structure in Africa.

Anywhere the people of God has designated
That this shall place shall be a place of worship

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And that is why we come to church.

We come with the expectation of encountering God.

Whatever the place may be.

Whether it is a storefront worship center
A circle around a campfire in the woods
A zoom call, or a booth in a diner

It becomes a holy temple
A sanctuary, holy ground, a sacred place
When two or three are gathered in his name.

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Now, I can't guarantee a Kairos moment
Like what the Israelites experienced
When the glory of God covered them
During the temple's dedication

Nor, can I guarantee a keen sensory moment
Like my daughter Darcy experienced
As they were holding hands in a circle.

But I can promise, you have encountered God
By just being here today.

And so, this morning,
We will ask God for a special blessing
An awareness of God's presence.

We gather in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior
And seek his presence in the anointing service.

We ask God to calm our anxieties
To forgive our sins
To ease our pain
To transform any grief or sadness
Into peace and gratitude.

God accepts us as we are
And seeks to transform us
More and more into his likeness.

Let us be comforted in the assurance
That God meets us in our deepest longing

Let us pray:

God the Triune God, your will for all people is health
and salvation; We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

God, through your son Jesus came that we might have
life, and might have it more abundantly; We praise you
and thank you, O Lord.

God the Holy Spirit, our advocate and comforter, you
make our bodies the temple of your presence; We
praise you and thank you, O Lord.

Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and
have our being; We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

Lord, grant your healing grace to all who are sick,
injured, or disabled, that they may be made whole; Hear
us, O Lord of life.

Grant to all who seek your guidance, and to all who are
lonely, anxious, or despondent, a knowledge of your will
and an awareness of your presence; Hear us, O Lord of
life.

Mend broken relationships, and restore those in emotional distress to soundness of mind and serenity of spirit; Hear us, O Lord of life.

Bless physicians, nurses, and all others who minister to the suffering, granting them wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience; Hear us, O Lord of life.

Grant to the dying peace and a holy death, and uphold by the grace and consolation of your Holy Spirit those who are bereaved; Hear us, O Lord of life.

We end this prayer in the way Jesus taught us