

Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 22, 2015
1 Chronicles 22:19
Building Devoted Hearts for Jesus
Rev George Ferch

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

About a year and a half ago, we chose David's words as the basis for our gathering funds to build. We are half way through the three-year commitment period. God's people have been generous. Both the new facilities and the financing are going up.

More important is the growth of devoted hearts for Jesus. No funds or buildings can match hearts that offer obedience, worship and service to God who loved us and sacrificed his only begotten Son to pay for our sins. King David understood this. He expected such devotion to be the engine that drove the construction of the first temple.

The temple would be the place the people also would grow in their devotion after they completed it. They would worship at the LORD's sanctuary with its sacred articles. The Name of the LORD would be their rock and salvation.

We will conclude our stewardship series by seeing how the Holy Spirit creates and sustains devoted hearts for Jesus, and how the LORD's house is the place for his work. **Building Devoted Hearts for Jesus.** We build devoted hearts in the sanctuary. With devoted hearts we build for the Name of the LORD.

When we read Old Testament history, we see that God's people build altars on which they offered sacrifices to the LORD God. "Noah built an altar to the LORD...he sacrificed burnt offerings on it." [Gn 8:20] Between Bethel and Ai, "He (Abraham) built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD." [Gn 12:8]

Moses built a tabernacle for the Exodus that had an altar for sacrifices. David had built an altar earlier in Jerusalem and "sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the name of the LORD and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering." [1 Chr 21:25]

Our spiritual ancestors knew that we build devoted hearts for the Lord in the sanctuary, before the Lord's altar. The altar and the sanctuary are where God's presence dwells and he interacts with his people. We are building devoted hearts for Jesus as we gather in the sanctuary of God's house. Here is the altar, the baptismal font, the ambo or pulpit from which the Word of God goes out into our hearts. God dwells with us not only as he fills all things. He is present with us in the signs of the church, the gospel in Word and sacrament.

This is why the Spirit has called us out of unbelief to faith so that he will call us out of our daily routine to come before the Lord's altar. Here in the sanctuary is the gospel of forgiveness that builds up our devoted hearts for Jesus, our gracious God. Here we acknowledge our many sins, even the ones we do not know, and receive Christ's absolution of those sins. Here is the washing of regeneration, and the eating and drinking of our Savior's true body and blood.

It is in the sanctuary of God's house that we carry out our stewardship of worship and praise in devotion to Jesus for the purpose of building hearts even more devoted to Jesus. Certainly, we build devoted hearts for Jesus in our daily and personal Bible study and devotions. We also gather weekly, called out of our individual homes, to come before the Lord's altar in his temple.

It was with such a devoted heart that King David gathered the materials for Solomon, his son, to build the temple "for the Name of the LORD". David knew, however, that his son was

building more than a building. Solomon would continue to build the kingdom of God through the Word of God and offerings. David told Solomon, “May the LORD give you discretion and understanding when he puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the LORD your God.” [22:12]

With devoted hearts we build for the Name of the LORD. Our new house of worship is not for us. It is for the Name of the Lord. His name is God with us, Savior, King, Christ, every glorious name we call him. It is a house for his reputation to stand in the world, and from which it goes out into the world. When members and guests come into our new sanctuary as into this one, the judgment of the law and justification by grace work to build up the kingdom of God in the hearts of sinner-saints.

David told all the leaders in Israel to help Solomon. David called them to devotion not to Solomon but to “the LORD your God.” They would build the Temple as the place where the kingdom of God and its visible signs would dwell. “bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the LORD.”

One day we will transfer the sacred articles of our worship from this sanctuary into the new one. They will remain the focus of our worship as all eyes face forward to the altar, font, and ambo from which the means of grace flow forth in life giving grace. We are building that sanctuary with devoted hearts for Jesus. In that sanctuary, we have the gospel we need so we do not lose that devotion but have it grow.

It is my prayer, and I trust yours as well, that with devoted hearts for Jesus we will continue to offer our material and spiritual sacrifices to God in the future. Then, we will build the kingdom of God through the gospel even after we have completed the construction of cement and steel. Amen, <SDG>