

Whitsunday (Day of Pentecost): June 5, 2022
“Building Projects”

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

While summer is beginning, June marks a sad reminder to this fallen world. In America there is an attempt to make this month of excitement in building a fun summer into a time where we are commanded by the world to be excited for all who choose to do whatever they want not just with their time but also with their bodies. The world would have us revel in kinds of self-absorbed sins and to be proud of any sinful design that goes against the design of God Himself.

We rightly observe Pentecost this year at the beginning of this month. The many reminders of God’s promise of the rainbow that will be flown, really in God’s face, this month can be a source of repentant joy for you. Consider the connection this morning between the events at Pentecost and Noah’s Ark.

We call it Noah’s ark, but it wasn’t his building project. It was God’s from start to finish. God was the architect and Noah was His laborer. God gave the blueprint. God supplied the wood. God gave the directions, moved the animals, and even closed the door before the flood. He shut Noah and his family into the ark.

From Noah’s perspective, this took a long time. It took years to build this massive ark. It was nowhere near water, and so one can only imagine the sneering and jeering that Noah endured while the construction took place. He no doubt attempted to speak the truth and to live in love towards his neighbors, who reviled him and scoffed at his obviously glaring proof that he had lost his mind, “Noah, are you sure this the God you wish to worship? There must be better things to do with your time. There must be better ways to enjoy yourself. Your holding to this backwards and silly God is upsetting the neighbors.”

We are often told to give God our best, and I don’t suppose we would argue with that; but what is our best? Who defines what best looks like? The ark wasn’t sleek or snazzy. By no means would you call it “beautiful.” It was basically a giant floating box. But it was brilliantly conceived to give God all the glory. It had no oars, no sails, and no steering wheel. It was driven by the wind and waves as God sent them.

While the storms outside raged and God was doing His work of judgment, which took time and was not an overnight endeavor, Noah and His family were safe inside the Ark. Sure, they felt some of the movements and the pressure. They could hear the storms raging. There was most likely fear in God, but there was also love and trust in God above all things. Noah and his family were dependent on God and trusted in Him alone. The glory of the ark belongs to God and God alone.

This is the important context that sets the stage for the Pentecost event. We often rightly talk about Pentecost reversing the curse of many languages which happened at the tower of Babel. While this is right, there is more to it than a simple common language of the Gospel. It bears witness again to a question of building by either God's design or man's design.

Nimrod's famous building—the Tower of Babel, was a completely different building project. God had commanded Noah and his family with the same words given to Adam and Eve. They were to spread over the face of the whole earth, populating and caring for it. Rather than listening to God, there was a group that wanted to make a name for themselves. Many still argue, “Yeah, but Pastor, that Noah lived in a different time. He worshiped a different God. Surely things have changed today. We know better today that Noah did in his time. We've grown passed Noah. Doesn't it also make sense that God has also changed?”

With this driving philosophy, the building of this tower was clearly man's idea from start to finish. Man was the architect and the builder. Man sketched the blueprint and baked the bricks and lined up the slaves. The tower was not some boxy building, purely utilitarian, but was a high tower that pierced the sky and proclaimed the glory and ability of man. They were going to brick bricks and fire fires; that is to say, they were going to use the best technology known to man to design for themselves and build for themselves something that they perceived would be the most glorious thing that they could design.

“Come, let us build,” they said in their one language. “Come let us build,” they said in order to take away their guilt. We will take our guilt to heaven itself and leave it there. We'll go up and demand a place, force God to pay attention to us, show Him that we're worth it.

But God isn't found in the sky. Man doesn't design and build for himself. When man does, God does pay attention; but not in the way that man really wants. The True God is the God who loves to come down. He comes down in mercy. He comes down for the humble and trusting, down to inspect and scatter and confuse the untrusting and the rebellious. He isn't stuck in heaven. He is here with His people. He makes His home with them. He is present in His creation and approachable in Word and Sacrament, which, if rejected, turn to their alien work and condemn.

It is here where we must recall Pentecost. God has come down in the dirtiness of human life. He got His hands dirty, literally. Jesus, the Son of God, true man suffered the pain and agony of sin. He was reviled and didn't revile in return. He didn't look like much. He looked like an ordinary human being, because He was, He is! He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him. He wasn't flashy or sleek. His death was horrible. Instead of flaunting in pride, He was revealed in shame. He was nailed to the cross and crucified for the whole world to see.

This the very content of the sermon preached to all people on Pentecost and beyond, "***Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.***"¹

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus of Nazareth was delivered up according to the plan and knowledge of God. His death was God's plan of salvation for you. He was killed and God raised Him up. The pangs of death are loosed for you. Death could not hold Him, and so also for all you who are in Christ. This church might not look like much. You might hear the raging of the world outside and the storms billowing. You might be afraid of what is out there, but here you are safe and secure in the ark of the Church. Here you fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

¹ Acts 2:22–24

Out there you hear blowing winds of judgment. Here you hear the sound of mighty rushing wind as the Holy Spirit blows on you. You are reborn in God's Family. You hear His voice bestowing words of everlasting peace. He gathers you around His pulpit and His altar. In Holy Absolution, in bread and wine, The Holy Spirit dwells with you.

On this Pentecost, we must reflect upon who is doing the designing and building of your life. Are you building like Noah or Nimrod? Is it about God's glory or yours? Do you trust His Word even when it is mocked by the world or do you seek the approval of men? He sees your priorities, how much you spend on entertainment and nice cars and vacations and how much you give to the poor. He sees what you do in the dark and how you keep silent in your vocational opportunities. He sees where your fear is misplaced.

Will He come down then upon your life the way he came down when He saw the Israelites dancing around a golden calf? Will He come down the way He did at the Tower of Babel and scatter out of His presence forever, scattering the proud in the imaginations of your hearts?

No. He could and He will on the Last Day; but, you belong to Him. You are baptized. You are here in humility and repentance, to hear His Word, to eat His Body, to ask His forgiveness. He is the God who covers Noah's nakedness. He loves to come down to you right amongst your golden calves, your doubts and fears, not to scatter and confuse you, but to cover and protect you, to restore you to His blueprint, to preach to you in plain, understandable English about how His Son came down bear your idolatry and save you. He sent His Son down to a manger, down to a cross, down to a tomb, that He might raise Him up from the dead, raise Him up into heaven to do what we remember this day: His marvelous work of sending down the Holy Spirit.

"Come, let us go down," the Father said. "Come, let us go down and pour out our Spirit through Water and the Word, that they might share in our glory. Son, you go down first, take on flesh and carry their idolatry and mistrust, and answer for it with your blood. Then Holy Spirit, you go down, comfort them, preach to them that they might have access to my mercy down there."

“Come, let us go down and build” your God said on Pentecost as He began His newest and best building project. On this day God came down, but 3,000 were not killed as you suppose. Their sinful nature was killed and through baptism, 3,000 were reborn, regenerated in new life for eternity.

There was not a scattering and confusion of tongues, but the clear preaching of the cross. What a building project His Church is, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone, with you being the bricks. It’s God’s marvelous work from start to finish, one where God is the architect, where God calls the workers, and where God is the builder and maker.

His Building project called the church doesn’t look very impressive to the world. Outwardly it is not an assembly of sleek, glorious, impressive people, but rather ugly sinners who don’t look like they are moving up the ladder to glory. They aren’t perfect, but like Noah struggle with the flesh but belong to God and cling to Him by faith. And where Jesus is proclaimed and believed, there is the Holy Spirit doing His building work, glorifying the unworthy, lifting them above the chaos and death by an Ark He Himself designed and protects.

There are lives being built on the firm foundation of faith in Christ’s saving work. There God is tearing down your old mistrusting life and building up a new one full of faith and confidence in Jesus. Here is freedom to cast away your idols. Here is freedom to be generous, freedom not to worry, to find comfort even in trials, freedom to live for Jesus’ purposes and not your own.

Your Strong Tower, your Heavenly Gate, your Ladder to Heaven is not one made of brick; rather, it is our Lord Jesus Christ wearing your flesh to be lifted up on your cross for your sins. We don’t go up. He comes down, to us, for us, in His risen Body and Blood, in His Word, in His promises. Whoever trusts in Him, will never be put to shame. Blest is the House and Boat, Church and Family, Man and Woman that God builds. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Church
The Day of Pentecost
5 June 2022

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. Gracious Lord, Your Spirit fills the world and gladdens Your Church with the remembrance of all Christ Jesus has spoken. Comfort us with divine peace, and do not let our hearts be troubled or afraid. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, as You once chose apostles to proclaim the resurrection, so open the mouths of Your pastors and people to declare His praises to all who will hear. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You have poured out Your Spirit upon us, that we might believe Your truth and raise our sons and daughters in it. Bless all parents, that they may faithfully catechize their children in Your Word. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, be near to those You have set in place to govern our land. Do not let the ruler of this world govern them and their decisions to our harm, but give us the benefits of good government. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving Father, we give thanks that in Holy Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation, bless those who celebrate baptismal anniversaries this week, especially, *Lilly, Cayli, Julie, and Helen*, grant that by Your Word and Spirit they may faithfully keep the covenant into which they have been called, boldly confess their Savior, and finally share with all Your saints the joys of eternal life; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, You have promised to send Your holy angels to guard and keep Your children. We thank and praise You for the gift of life and for the protection and care you have provided as *Nina* celebrate her birthday. Grant that she may grow in grace, continue to know Your loving-kindness, abide in the confession of Your care and protection, serve You faithfully all the days of her life and finally come to the fullness of Your joys in heaven; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the joy and blessings that You have granted *Ken & Laurie* during the years of their marriage. Assist them always by Your grace that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may ever honor and keep their marriage vows, grow in love towards You and for each other, and come at last to the eternal joys that You have promised; Lord in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

Father, in Your righteousness bring out of trouble all whose spirits faint within them and whose hearts are appalled, Deliver the sick and suffering according to Your will, give peace to the lonely and downtrodden, give strength to the recovering, and comfort to the dying, especially *Marvin, Ruth, Pam, Zoey, Ellie, John, David, Tricia, Greg, Pastor Small (St. Silas, North Liberty), Pat, and those we name in our hearts*]. Help them by Your good Spirit to meditate on all You have done for them in Your Son. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As Your Son comes to us in His flesh and blood, He does not give to us as the world gives, but grants His eternal peace. Preserve us steadfast in this peace despite the sinful world, that our hearts may not be troubled nor afraid, but at rest in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, with Your Son, Jesus Christ, send Your Holy Spirit into our hearts through Your Word to rule and govern us according to Your will, comfort us in every temptation and misfortune, and defend us against every error, that we may continue steadfast in the faith, increase in love and good works, and — trusting firmly in Your grace for us by His death — obtain eternal salvation; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**