

Grace Presbyterian Church, Orleans
“Short and Long Term Building Plans”
1 Corinthians 3: 10-23
Pastor Jonathan

February 23, 2020
Transformation Sunday

Have you noticed the booming real estate market here in Orleans? If you are selling, you are in for some wonderful surprises. If you are buying, you are in for a scary ride. At open houses, we've met young couples trying to get into the real estate market here for their first house, and they are having a hard time. Pray for them. We are grateful for those who are selling who are seeing great increases to their investments. We are wondering if we will ever buy, given so many factors going against buying right now. We have thought about building a house. We went into one of the builders' offices and they told us that on such and such a date, six lots were becoming available and they usually sell out in an hour. Then, of course, it takes about 1 ½ to 2 years to complete the building project on that lot. Building is something that takes finances, patience and faith in the market not going down, but going up consistently. We've owned six houses and rented seven times across Canada in our 38 years of marriage. It's been quite a ride. We have made and lost money on houses, including the last one that took 2 ½ years to sell. Construction and real estate is big business. Everyone needs a home to live in.

Paul asks us what kind of a spiritual house we live in. He notes that his specialty in building is the laying of foundations. How many know that if the foundation of your house is off, you have all kinds of troubles? If the foundation isn't laid correctly, the house can collapse or be flooded or sag or be unsafe in many ways. So getting the foundation of the house right is one of the critical first steps. Paul said he laid foundation correctly for the Corinthian's spiritual house. He laid the foundation of Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is the rock solid foundation upon which everything we do at Grace depends. He is the reason we exist as a church, as a congregation. He is the mission we have, in introducing others to Him. He is the way we continue in health, and truth and love. Our spiritual house, which is a way of talking about our personal faith, has as its sole foundation, Jesus Christ. If you have any other foundation, the house will fall. It will not endure.

Jesus needs to remain the centre of why we exist as a church. He is why we are here. Yes?

And once we know the foundation of our faith, our trust relationship to God through Jesus is laid, then we can talk about building on that foundation. Now remember the house is not a literal, physical house. This one is built with lots more than lumber and bricks. Paul uses two sets of three kinds of building materials. One is wise building materials. The other is foolish building materials.

Paul suggests gold, silver and costly stones as the first set of building materials. If you use these materials, known for their holding their value and going up over time: gold for sure in the markets. Gold's value goes up as world security and economic confidence goes down. Gold lasts. Use that to build your spiritual house. Silver, although not as costly, is still a good investment. Silver trays, tea services and cutlery are perhaps some of the most highly valued everyday items in a person's house. Costly stones, or precious or semi-precious stones are also a good investment. They mightn't hold their value like gold or silver, but they are beautiful and it is likely they will always be considered as such.

May I suggest that you build your spiritual house with your time, your energy and your sense of urgency in spiritual matters. The gold standard of your life is your time. You only have so much. You don't know how much you have. Use it wisely. Build on the spiritual foundation of Jesus Christ. Get to know Him with your time. Get to know with your children and friends. Beat down the doors of places like this to make sure you get the small groups that help you know Him better. I can't be in every small group, but I can make sure you get into one. Let's trust Him together with our time.

The silver standard of your life is your energy. How much longing do you have to mature in your faith? What activities are you pursuing to make sure you are giving away your faith, serving others and making sure you have input into others' lives and into your own through Bible Study and Prayer groups? With seven hundred churches in Greater Ottawa, you have a lot available. We would love to serve you. We also know there are many other churches which may do better than we do to serve your needs. We believe there is one church. Make sure you devote a significant amount of energy beyond your work, beyond your recreation, beyond your routine to getting to know Jesus better, and giving yourself more completely to His mission.

Finally, the precious stones is your sense of urgency. Urgency is required for your participation in Jesus' mission. Otherwise, it is put off indefinitely. Yes? Urgency is required in knowing your identity and influence. Who are you? Why is your life so uniquely important in God's plan? Answer these questions from a Scriptural point of view. Know why God has you in the strategic place He has you, for His mission purposes, for your best. Do you understand your influence on those around you? Are you seeking Jesus' influence through you, as you work, play, study, communicate, relate, and spend your life in the direction you spend it?

Your building plan is building on Jesus Christ with Scripture, prayer and His mission. Your building plan is God forming you into the person you are meant to be. Your building plan includes sound doctrine, kind truth telling, reception and giving of encouragement. Build with the gold, the silver and the precious stones of your life. Give yourself fully to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Don't ever give up on that project. Talk to others you trust about making these things the huge priorities of your life. Otherwise, everything else comes in.

They aren't necessarily bad things, but they can be. You can build with wood, hay and straw. Builders use these materials all the time. But Paul says when you build with these materials in your spiritual house, you are opening yourself to your house burning in the end. When you build your house with rebellion, apathy, and self-fulfillment as the main building blocks, you may find that the Lord will burn them in the end. How can I please me? How can I ignore or be distracted away from God? How can I simply not care about what God cares about?

It is an easy time to say the Church is just another place of politics. It's a hard place to spend time. It's a place that isn't fun or satisfying. I understand that. It's not just some youth who are saying that. When we take our eyes off Jesus, this place becomes a burdensome place. When we place our eyes back on Jesus, we see the beautiful bride He sees. We can be shown the wonder of what Jesus is doing world-wide and right here. Yes, there are challenges. Yes, we have hard decisions. Yes, we may not agree with one another on every issue facing us. But the Church is Jesus' home, our house, Jesus' body. And we are a part of one another.

Paul introduces the concept of us being God's Temple. We are the place where God dwells, in us, by the Holy Spirit. That's why we need to take care

of ourselves, take care of each other, as Jesus directs us to take care of the place He dwells. We are not talking about the building and grounds, although it is good in Canada to have a place to meet and enough parking. Jesus is talking to us about the wisdom of taking care of each other. We are members of the same body. His body. Jesus' body. Get to know His wisdom, so we don't become confused with the world's wisdom that has all kinds of priorities that go against Jesus' priorities. How do we learn Jesus' wisdom?

Back to the Matthew 17 passage. Here we find Jesus with his three inner followers, Peter, James and John. All of a sudden, Jesus is shown as the glorified individual He is, "white as light." Then the three followers see Moses and Elijah, key representatives of the priestly and prophetic offices of the Old Testament, Moses the Deliverer, Elijah the Healer and Miracle Worker and Jesus the King, greater in all these offices than those two.

Peter decides on a short-term building project, unlike the longer term building project we were talking about above. You know, Jesus, it's great being here with you and these wonderful men from the past, I think we should build three tents: One for each of you. Commentators note that Peter was just talking without thinking. Really? Would you want Jesus' tent to be just like the others? Don't you remember who Jesus is, who you proclaimed Him to be? Moses and Elijah are just being cheerleaders for Jesus. Well, we don't know what they talked about, but that's my guess. And there is One who is a much greater pointer to Jesus the Messiah. It is God the Father, who speaks from the clouds.

It is God the Father who tells us the way to build wisely on the costly foundation Jesus has provided and Paul has laid. He invites us all to turn to Jesus, hearing God say, "This is my Son. This is whom I love. With Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"

Know that Jesus is God's Son, God Himself, paying the price for our sins. Know that Jesus is the love of God, infinitely loved, wonderfully loved. Love Him.

Know that God is pleased with everything about Jesus. God showers His pleasure on Jesus.

And here is the critical phrase in Matthew 17:5: Listen to Him! That's the way we build our spiritual house. That's the way we waste our lives in

God's direction, rather than our own. That's the way we get God's wisdom and reject the foolishness of the world; rather than the other way around.

And as I've said before, we don't need to be terrified and face down. We too can receive the love of God, the pleasure of God, the affirmation of God as we listen to Jesus. For as you have trusted Jesus, you do know the love of the Father, the direction of the Spirit, all you need for life.

Five have joined us as members today. We celebrate with them. We look forward to the time in eternity with them, and in the coming days, trusting Jesus, listening to Jesus, experiencing the pleasure of the Father, the love of God and the guiding, protecting, teaching presence of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray.