



The Gift of Worship

This week's Gospel reading is challenging. When I can't seem to get anywhere with my go-to translation (NRSV) I often turn to Eugene Peterson's "The Message" translation for a change from the familiar voice of the Gospel. Mark 13:2 "Jesus said, 'You're impressed by this grandiose architecture? There's not a stone in the whole works that is not going to end up in a heap of rubble. '"

During our long COVID-19 absence from our buildings many of us learned how many people's faith is inextricably bound to the building in which they usually worship. It took the whole way we worship to topple into a heap of rubble for us to think about the role our buildings play in our worship life. Often stewardship campaigns speak of the need (desire?) to maintain our buildings.

Over the years, I've heard parishioners say, "I don't pledge because I want my money to go to mission, not fixing the roof" as often as I've heard, "I'll only pledge if the money will go to the care of this gorgeous building that my great-grandparents helped build." Often one of the many disagreements in the life of a congregation pits these two sides against one another: The care of the church building and the mission field that lies just beyond the building's doors.

What COVID taught me is that it isn't "an either or" but "a yes and"... the beautiful, familiar, and memory-laden windows and walls of our church buildings fuels many for their work in the mission field. When out doing the difficult work of the gospel it's glorious to have a brick-and-mortar place to gather in thanksgiving, in lament and in everything that lies between.

Yes, just as we, one day will return to the dust, so our buildings will, one day, be a heap of rubble. But the time in between is not nothing—indeed it may be everything. For we live in a world of those with whom we worship and those to whom we minister, strengthened by our worship.

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