

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany, Epistle, Year C

BUILDERS, WISDOM, AND TEMPLE: ALL BELONG TO GOD

1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

Analysis by Mark Marius

10According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. 11For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. [12Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – 13the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. 14If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.]

16Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 17If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

18Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. 19For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written,

"He catches the wise in their craftiness,"

20and again,

"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

21So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, 22whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all belong to you, 23and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

DIAGNOSIS: Building New Additions

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Builders

God has given us the power to build. We empower others to build on our behalf. There is a lot of competition in our world for the construction of our buildings. But what do those buildings look like? Do they reflect the foundation that Christ laid? Or does it reflect what looks good to us—power, might, riches, fortresses...things that might come to us at the expense of others. When the fire comes, what will be revealed? What will be left standing?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Out Smarted

We deceive ourselves when we think we know better than God. We ignore the Christ that dwells in our hearts to give greater importance to the selfish thoughts of our head. When we rely on our own knowledge to make us superior then we have made Christ inferior. Christ becoming our pawn might not be our smartest move.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Without God

When we fail to recognize God in the other or even submit to God within ourselves, we end up without God. When we make policies more important than people, when we let law evict our love for God we profane God's temple. God will destroy us for not respecting that, both we and others, are God's temple. It is inevitable.

PROGNOSIS- Exposing the Original Foundation

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): God Within

The good news is that God rebuilt his destroyed temple – in just 3 days (John 2:19-22). Even when we became enemies of God's temple, Jesus chose to love and forgive (Matthew 5:38-48). The foundation of God's law was revealed through Christ—all belong to God. All have a place in his kingdom. Jesus' death and resurrection brings us all back to God and to one another allowing God's Spirit to dwell within us. All because Christ put it there.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Fools for Christ
We have no fear of becoming foolish—drowning in the waters of baptism, trusting Christ with, in, and under the bread and wine. We embrace loving our enemies. We are bold in finding God's perfection in our imperfection. We trust Christ to be our wisdom which allows us to embrace our inferiority. We place more emphasis on the Christ we trust than our own knowledge.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Exposing the Foundation

And with Christ as our wisdom and God's Spirit with in us, God sets us on fire to expose God's love and grace for the world. The foundation of the world is found in Christ. Our lives and actions help uncover Christ in questionable buildings—ornate or dilapidated. We use our tools of love, mercy and forgiveness to restore God's holy temple in our world, understanding that everyone is God's temple.