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1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

We Offer Ourselves

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1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23 New Revised Standard Version

According 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. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple. Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

I don’t know if you are aware of this, but it is Girl Scout cookie season. I am the Girl Scout cookie mom for my daughter’s troop which means that I am the crazy one who at this very moment has every kind of Girl Scout cookie in my car. I also am the one responsible for counting all of the money and depositing it into our Girl Scout troop bank account. A few years ago I had a deposit ready complete with lots of cash. I was nervous carrying all of this cash that was not mine, but I arrived at the bank without any problems. I filled out the deposit slip and waited in the line. When the teller tried to make the deposit, she could not find the bank account. I called the troop leader, and verified that I had the correct bank account number. I did. We tried to look under the name of the account or under the troop leader’s name, but the teller could not find the account. I was so confused. I did not think that the troop leader had taken all of the money and fled to Barbados but I was beginning to doubt. So, I left the bank, not quite sure what my next steps were. I started to walk towards my car and I saw another bank across the street. And realization struck. That was the bank that I was supposed to be at. I was at the wrong bank. I had just spent twenty minutes of the kind bank teller’s time, and I was at the wrong bank.

I was so sure that I was correct, but I was all wrong. Our scripture today is about wisdom and about having our foundation as Jesus. We have this comparison between the wisdom of the world versus the wisdom of God. I think about how sure I was in that bank. I knew that I was in the right place. The bank teller was wrong, I was right. It seems to me that if we are going to have the wisdom of God and not the wisdom of the world, we have to be open to the idea that we might be wrong. And we have to become more patient and more patient with people who are different than us. We have to open ourselves to the people that Jesus opened himself up to, the marginalized, the forgotten, the last, the lost, the least, the immigrant, the widow.

There is this imagery of people as the body of Christ in our scripture today. We are the temple of God. We are united in Christ, and we are not to be divided. We are not to be divided over earthly leaders because it is God who leads us, it is Jesus whom we follow. Our common foundation is Jesus. We build our lives and community on that foundation so that we become together the temple of God’s Holy Spirit. We don’t need human wisdom to do that, we don’t need to follow particular leaders to do that, all we must do is recognize that God has given us all things in Christ.

When I was a teenager my favorite Bible verse was Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” When I think about the times in my life when I was stressed or overwhelmed, I forgot that Christ is my strength. I reverted to fear. I held on tight and I didn’t see how God was all around me. I closed my eyes to the wonder of God. When life was stressful at work, or when I had friends I was really worried about, I would close my eyes to the wonder of God. Instead of going on a morning walk and praying and thanking God for the gift of this day, I would self-sabotage and push the snooze button. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” But, I self-sabotage and instead of focusing on gratitude, I get frustrated and focus on the negative. By 6 pm when it is time to sit down for dinner, the prayer I say often is “Dear God, thank you for this day. Thank you for loving us. Help us to be patient. Help us to be kind to one another. Amen.” It reminds me of God’s words in the movie *Evan Almighty*. From the amazing voice of Morgan Freeman who plays God, “Let me ask you something. If someone prays for patience, you think God gives them patience? Or does God give them the opportunity to be patient? If someone prayed for courage, does God give that person courage, or does God give that person opportunities to be courageous? If someone prayed for their family to be closer, do you think God zaps them with warm fuzzy feelings, or does God give them opportunities to love each other?”

The wisdom of the world versus the wisdom of God. Wisdom is a funny thing. There is a story about an angel who appeared at a faculty meeting and tells the dean that in return for his unselfish and exemplary behavior, the Lord will reward him with his choice of infinite wealth, wisdom or beauty. Without hesitating, the dean selects infinite wisdom. "Done!" says the angel, and disappears in a cloud of smoke and a bolt of lightning. Now, all heads turn toward the dean, who sits surrounded by a faint halo of light. One of his colleagues whispers, "Say something." The dean looks at them and says, "I should have taken the money."[[1]](#footnote-2) Jesus the Christ is God’s wisdom. And Christ gives himself away for others. He exhibited this self-giving love. The world says that self-giving love is foolish, but it is the wisdom of God.

This is a difficult time for our country. We have ICE raids on neighborhoods around us. We have other things happening that lead us and the press to question the wisdom of our president and his advisors. It is so important at this time to examine the wisdom of the world versus the wisdom of God. There are no easy answers here. No ten second sound bites. It is a time we must seek the wisdom of God. We must read our Bibles. We must pray for all our leaders. We must love those around us, no matter what their political views.

Have you ever noticed that the more you hold on, you get less than if you let it go? With sand, the more you hold on, the more you squeeze, the more sand trickles through your fingers? You would keep more sand if you held your hands open. As Christians we want to err on the side of grace. To open ourselves up to others. In the original Star Wars movie, *A New Hope*, Governor Tarkin has captured Princess Leia and he tells her the battle station is operational and no star system will dare oppose the Emperor now. Princess Leia tells him, “The more you tighten your grip, the more star systems will slip through your fingers.” That is the wisdom of God. We can’t hold on tight to the way that things always have been. We can’t get so set in our ways that we don’t see those who are hurting all around us. When Jesus is our foundation, we see all things and all people as children of God deserving of love, grace, forgiveness, kindness. We are God’s people who have been called, fed, and sent for the sake of the world (2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

In the Great Thanksgiving prayer that we share together before Communion, we say, “in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.” We offer ourselves. We offer our time, our bodies, our heart, our passion, we offer our money, our energy, our attention, our love. We offer it all because we are a temple to God. Seriously, every time I say it, it chokes me up. We offer ourselves to God. We are God’s people called, fed, and sent out for the sake of the world.

So I wonder, how we will spend today? Will we spend today growing more in love with God and our neighbor? Having the wisdom of God? We have received God’s redeeming love and that love is the shape of the temple we are called to be, fitted to the foundation of Jesus. Biblical wisdom, sophia in the Greek, is figuring out how best to think and act in specific situations of daily life so we may conform to the character of God. It is like those WWJD bracelets of the 90s. It means we need a world-wide “no-enemy” campaign, a global movement of people who refuse to view anyone else as an enemy, irrespective of religion, race, sexuality, language, economic status or even action. We offer ourselves to Christ so we can learn to love those who drive us crazy or who we think are our enemy. Being faithful in the building of the Temple of God means continuing to make it a Christ-place, built in the name and manner of Christ’s own work. That is what we are called to be.

The Apostle Paul says the fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control in Galatians 5:22. May we spend today loving, sharing joy, sharing peace, sharing patience, sharing kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and living a life of self-control. May we offer all of ourselves and ask God to mold us, make us. It is like that wonderful hymn, “Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will, While I am waiting, yielded and still.” The last verse says, “Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Hold o’er my being absolute sway! Fill with Thy Spirit ’till all shall see Christ only, always, living in me.” May it be so today and every day, Amen.

1. <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/w/wisdom.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)