



A number of years ago I had the privilege of visiting Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. It is, perhaps, the most stunningly beautiful building I have ever been in. Built over the course of 200 years, the cathedral's architecture and its sheer size inspire awe as soon as you approach it, and even more when you walk through the front door. The acoustics are amazing, especially when you hear the pipe organ which includes over 7900 pipes. Some of the most incredible stained glass windows I've ever seen grace the walls of the cathedral. It's filled with unbelievable works of art and its treasury, located below the cathedral, holds what is believed to be Jesus' crown of thorns, a fragment of Jesus' cross and one of the nails used in Jesus' crucifixion. It's amazing! Thousands of tourists from around the world visit the cathedral each year.

One the people I was touring with asked our tour guide what the seating capacity of the cathedral is. We were told it seats 9,000. Someone else asked how many worshiped there on an average Sunday. The tour guide, responded, "A few hundred, and many of them are tourists." I was stunned. How ironic. Such a magnificent building, but so few fill it to worship the One it was built to honor.

I've been thinking about that experience as we've worked our way through this ONE Church Campaign. As excited as I am about this building process (and I am excited), and as much sense as I think this process makes for our present and future ministry, I don't want us to forget that this building is not an end; it's a means. It's a tool to facilitate the vision that God has given us to collaboratively provide hope and wholeness for people in Jesus' name. At the end of the day a building made of brick and mortar – whether it's a cathedral or our own campus - won't matter much if we are not also building up the people within that building, a people who are moving UP with God, IN through Community and OUT for the world.

And that's what today's Scripture reading is all about. So please open your bible to 1 Peter 2:1-6 and let's read it together.

There's a radio advertisement for a financial company that talks about home buying. The ad says something like this, "It isn't the number of bedrooms, but the number of sleepovers that matters. It's isn't how many square feet the house is, but how many memories are made within it. It isn't the size of the backyard, but how many barbeque parties you'll host there." If I could write a similar ad for Prince of Peace today it would say, "It isn't the size or the beauty of the physical building that matters, but the size of the hearts and the faith of those who worship and serve within it." And that's what Peter is getting at in the passage we just read. It's a reminder to us today of how important it is that we build up this body of Christ while we're also building this building. And to make that point Peter uses two metaphors that I think are helpful for us. Let's look at them more closely.

First, Peter refers to us as "newborn babies" who crave and cry out for nourishment. What a great image. Have you ever seen baby birds screeching for food? [picture]. Or puppies that nearly knock over their mother to feed? [picture]? Have you ever heard an infant wailing with every ounce of their strength to be fed? [picture]. They need nourishment to grow. They crave it and cry out for it, and their growth only increases their craving and crying.

That's the image that Peter wants in our minds. He's saying that no matter how old we get, no matter how long we've been walking this journey of following Jesus, we need to constantly return to the basics of our faith – to crave and cry out for that which feeds our faith so that we might continue to grow. We never outgrow our need for the basics, for what Peter calls "pure spiritual milk".

As some of you know I'm a Green Bay Packer fan. Don't hate me! And so, I'm a big fan of Vince Lombardi, one of the greatest coaches in the history of professional football. One of the things that made Lombardi so effective as a coach is that he pushed his teams to master the basics over and over again. One year, on the first day of training camp Lombardi gathered his team around him and said, "Gentlemen," holding a pigskin in his right hand, "This is a football." And from there a relentlessly drilled his players with the fundamentals of blocking and tackling. Some of his players were insulted that as professionals they should have to endure such basics, but after winning a couple of Super Bowls, no one argued with Lombardi. He proved the value of sticking with the basics.

If we're going to thrive as a church, each of us will need to stick to the basics – to crave and cry out for the essentials that help us to grow. And what are those essentials? What are those basics? Regular worship in which God is the recipient of our praise. [picture] Daily time in scripture and in prayer. [picture] Practicing our faith in community with other believers. [picture] Finding a place to serve others. [picture] Giving generously of our resources. [picture] UP with God, IN through Community, OUT for the World is the balanced spiritual diet that helps us grow strong. I hope the walls of our building are strong, but more important is the strength of the growing faith of those who worship and serve here. We are all newborns. Make sure you're staying well-nourished. Crave it and cry out for it. We need it because of the next metaphor.

The second metaphor that Peter uses is "living stones". Peter says that God is using us to build his spiritual temple, with Christ as the cornerstone. That's an amazing metaphor, and let me tell you why. In Peter's day people believed that God dwelled in the temple. By saying that we are living stones with which God is building a spiritual temple, he's saying that God dwells in us and so rather than people needing to come to the temple to experience God, God sends us out into the world so that people might encounter God through us. Or, as Pastor Paul reminded us a few weeks ago – we are the Body of Christ, the hands, feet and heart of Christ in the world. That's who we are and that's what we do. No brick and mortar building can do that; only the temple of God made of your flesh and mine.

And that's why Peter began our scripture reading today with these words, "So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech." Peter isn't calling us to be good for goodness' sake. He's calling us to tend carefully to how we live because God has chosen to dwell in and reveal himself through us to the world. And that's why we need to continually need to crave and cry out for the basics – so that we might be strengthened for the work that God is calling us to do in the world.

I pray that what we build will inspire awe in everyone who enters this place, an awe that points them to the One we love and worship. But the building doesn't matter much if the people who dwell in it aren't growing and thriving. So, before we whole-heartedly commit our resources to build a temple for the Lord, let's commit to being a temple of the Lord. Let's commit to being disciples who crave and cry out for the basic that build our faith. Let's commit to being living stones, a living temple in whom the Spirit of the Lord dwells. To live into that commitment, I'm going to pray, and then I'm going to invite you to move to one of the tables around

the sanctuary where you'll find stones and markers. I want to invite you to write your name on a stone and then take it with you as you leave. Take it beyond these walls where you will be a living temple through whom people can encounter the living God. Building a new house of worship will be awesome, but none of it matters if we are not being built up as the body of Christ, the living temple of our living God.