

So it seems that our desire and ability to "build" is in our DNA. Abraham built an altar by the oaks of Mamre and Jacob built one and called the place El-bethel. These were small structures built to remember and celebrate God's revelation.

In the place where Abraham and Jacob had encountered the very presence of God they stacked stones upon one another to create an altar...something they and others could see and touch in order to remember God's presence in that place.

Later it was Solomon who decided to build a templea structure much grander than a stack of stones....a building with walls and pillars and curtains where God could dwell on earth, and where the people could gather to mingle in the mystery of God's moving and breathing and living and speaking.

Indeed the journey of faith involves building....from a simple stack of stones to elaborate edifices adorned with the finest.

We build to remember God behind us, beside us and before us.

We build to create common spaces for people to gather to worship and do ministry.

We build....and these structures we design.....symbolize what we understand about God and also define the purpose of our common life of faith.

Building, creating, molding, stacking, fitting, piecing together, re-arranging, re-making it's all part of God's DNA....and we, made in God's image, inherit this "building" gene.

We build. In our particular expression of faith we build sanctuaries.... often with steeples reaching up into the sky symbolizing our desire to reach up and out to God....to stretch our thinking and loving..... beyond the space we have easy access too. And sometimes we get carried away with our desire to build bigger and taller as if we could actually build our way into God's personal space. Nashville seems to have gotten a healthy dose of the steeple building gene.

I served a church in San Antonio without a steeple, it was their choice. Instead they built a box shaped, windowed cupola on top of their sanctuary roof as a way of imagining God reaching down into their lives.

Buildings and their designs are fascinating. I don't think I have to tell you this. For we gather in a space pregnant with symbolism and beauty.

And you all did this....built this because building is in God's DNA and we.....created in God's image.... in turn create and build.

We build and sometimes in the process of building we get so caught up in the tangible, practical issues we get lost and pour our energy and emotion and faith into stuff that has little to do with the worship of God.

For instance.....the carpet eventually wears out....and the moment arises when new carpet must be selected. But what color should the carpet be? Should it be the color the largest donor in the church prefer.... or should it remain the color it has always been....because to change it would be offensive to those who chose the original carpet in 1952, and though all of those people are no longer part of the church, we still don't want to offend them...it simply comes down to the fact that we've always had red carpet and we should do what we've always done.

Or, perhaps we should allow several of the new members who are interior designers select the appropriate carpet? Oh my word....what color should the carpet be? What color?

Eventually a decision was made and the carpet was installed, and though the new carpet made a huge improvement several long time members of the church did not approve of the carpets new color and left the church.

They left the church because of carpet...because they could not see past the decisions and actions of the leaders who chose the color of the carpet....they left the church failing to recognize God's continued presence despite the color of the carpet.

We build and sometimes when we get lost in the details of the tangible.....we limit God..... believing the bricks and shutters and pews and windows and furniture and doors and how we arrange all these things define God. And yet none of these things in themselves define God.

We build because it is part of our DNA and we are made in the image of God whose DNA is full to over flowing with creating, re-creating power. In all our building, God knows us through and through.

God knows how our focus can get so caught up in the colors and arrangement of our buildings that we forget why we were called together in the first place. God knows us....and God spoke to us in Jesus.....and Jesus stood inside the Temple....inside the building built with the hands of the faithful and said.

"I tell you, something greater than the temple is here....I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands."

In three days? I will re-build and what I build will not be made with hands? How does this happen? How can a temple....how can a sanctuary like the one we are sitting in be built in only three days without hands? If this were possible I'm sure you all would have been the first congregation to sign up for such a fantastic building option!

But, obviously it cannot happen in this way....and obviously Jesus is talking about something all together different.

The three days are those very words we utter in the Apostles' Creed.... "and on the third day he rose"on the third day death no longer had power, no longer had the last word.....on the third day God created the reality of new life....on the third day God accomplished what you and I cannot ever accomplish.

On the third day God's presence....revelation....took up residence....not in a wood and stone building....but in the very body God created....your body, my body, your heart, my heart, your mind, my mind, your life, my life. We are the body....created and recreated by the power and grace of God alone.

The book of Revelation says it this way.....:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. God will dwell with them; they will be God's peoples, and God will be with them, 'See, I am making all things new.

See God is here with you and with me busy building within us the very covenant established with the first builders of our family.....like Abraham and Jacob.....God is busy stacking up stones....piecing together wisdom and grace...

building in you and in me tangible evidence of life.....real life.....life pregnant with beauty and joy....life overflowing with promise and hope. Right here inside you and inside me....inside us....God creates and re-creates.

God creates fully aware that disasters happen...fully cognoscente that sometimes stacked stones tumble down and pieces fall apart and beauty gets tarnished and joy is forgotten and promise and hope fade.....and just as disasters happen to the buildings we build with our hands....our lives have and will be challenged and even knocked down.

Sometimes the breath gets knocked out of us and we don't even know what to ask, what to want, where to turn, what to do.

But there is a temple within....God breathed into us this life....and in Christ, God has power to recreate. This my friends is what we call the Good News. God does not leave us standing vulnerable after the storm.

Instead, God has created a home right in the core of our being so that we might not ever be lost....so that we might not ever lose touch with beauty, joy, promise, hope. Sometimes we run away and sometimes we lose our way.....

Not that long ago the breath was knocked out of me.....and much of what I knew about life changedyou could say fell it apart.....and I didn't quite know what to do or think or feel. What I did do was write....I wrote a lot....and slowly the words pouring forth from the core of my being showed me a new way....one morning I wrote these words...

Finding Home:

I knew where I was,
I understood all the voices speaking...
though the words no longer make sense...
I am in a foreign land, but not.

Two...drinking coffee, tucked behind laptops,
spoke of their weekend.
Life is good they confirm,
travel...
children...
family...
homecoming...
and yet it all seems so foreign, this land I find myself.

Nothing seems typical.
Everything is different,
familiar
but
different.

I am home
but
I am
not....
it is
as if
I am in a foreign land.

And
yet
a
dear
friend from the past
sits with me...
drinks strong coffee with me...
remembers with me...
shares deeply with me.

Our eyes well with tears,

the stories so
powerful...
meaningful...
and real.

Though I find myself in a foreign land -
clarity...
depth...
meaning...
love...
new perspective...
begin to surface.

Slowly...
very,
very,
v e r y,
s l o w l y . . .
I imagine myself
at
home.

I am in a foreign land,
and yet...
I am strangely
finding my way
home.

So it is my prayer...
that the edges of my life
be folded into the middle of
God's grace....
God's presence....
where life is
restored.

I am in a foreign land
And yet I am at home.

I am *finding* my way home...
And have a need to mark this new place
As Abraham marked
that place near the trees of Mamre.

I am in a foreign land
And yet I am at home
I have a home...
A God breathed life created home.

Dear friends, God has created a temple....it's not these walls and roof...it's you and me.
Together we are gathered that we might drink strong coffee and talk, that we might share
communion and pray....that we might listen to each other.... not just to the first sentence....but
to the entire novel that is our story.

**God has created and will re-create a temple...not of stones and wood....but of the fine things
found in our hearts and minds that we might continue to hear the Good News....and discover**

again and again....even in the middle of all those things that seem disastrous....God has
breathed beauty, joy, promise, hope.....

For it is in God's DNA to create.....and recreate.