

## You Are The Temple Of God.

Text: 1 Cor 3:16

Suggested Hymns:

131, 130, 124, 848, 122

1) You are dedicated to God

2) We must keep ourselves pure and clean

3) We are to be in the service of God

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Corinthians 3:16, ***“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

A long time ago Pentecost came for a number of people in the city of Jerusalem. It happened fifty days after Christ had risen from the grave and ten days after He had ascended into heaven.

A number of people who were disciples of Jesus were gathered together in a room in Jerusalem, and while they were there, a strong wind began to blow. Perhaps they thought at first that it was a storm, but soon they noticed that it was a strange wind, moving about with a rushing sound all over the room.

Then there were lights. Perhaps they thought at first that some one was lighting candles; but they soon noticed that these were strange lights, without candles or torches, and the lights appeared to be sitting upon the heads of the people.

And then a wonderful thing occurred to them all. Something took hold of their minds and tongues and they became like different people. They felt new powers within their body. They were suddenly able to speak different languages, and they felt themselves urged from within to use this wonderful gift speaking of Jesus and the kingdom of God.

A great many people were deeply moved by the marvellous testimony of the disciples, and three thousand were added to the Church that day. That is how Pentecost came to these people many years ago. The Bible-story explains that it all came about that way because the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and filled their hearts.

Likewise it must also become Pentecost for us today. The Holy Spirit must dwell in us, and we must thereby become temples of God. That is what our text teaches us today. Let us seek to discover the significance of this statement: ***You Are the Temple of God.*** May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. You Are Dedicated To God**

In the first place, let us consider that we are dedicated to God. Temples and churches are constructed of ordinary building materials, the same as are used in the erection of factories, office-buildings, and homes. The stones for the foundation of a church and of a sports centre may be taken from the same quarry. The timber for a mission-chapel and for dance-halls may come from the same forest. There is nothing in the material used for a church that sets it apart definitely and clearly from other buildings in the same community.

But something happens to the church that sets it apart and makes it a building of an entirely different nature and gives it an entirely different purpose. The church in a solemn Worship Service is dedicated to the worship of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is then a different structure. It belongs to God.

It may seem to the eyes of men to be simply another building, constructed of material like other structures in the community, with certain praiseworthy features and also certain noticeable defects; but when the church is dedicated, it has a different aspect in the sight of God. He owns it. He dwells in it, and it is His holy temple.

And when we Christians are called temples of God, it is indicated that we are dedicated to God. As a church-building is in material and structure much like the buildings surrounding it; so we Christians are by nature like all other people in the world. We are of flesh and blood and therefore sinful. There is nothing about us that makes us essentially different or better than the people of this world.

People may see in us many praiseworthy parts, but they can also see many imperfections. We were conceived and born in sin, like all people in this world. Our nature is corrupt, and we incline toward wrong-doing. There is no difference; ***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***<sup>1</sup> We were all the children of wrath, just like other people. By nature we were doomed to destruction.

But something took place in us that changed our entire aspect in the sight of God. Just as a building is dedicated to the Triune God and becomes a holy temple, so we became dedicated to God when we were converted and became believers in Christ. Then we became temples of God.

It is not to our credit that this change came about. A finished building has no power to dedicate itself as a temple. The dedication comes from the hands of those who built the structure. And so it was God Himself who, after creating us, exerted His almighty power and converted us.

The Bible makes this very clear to us. We see again and again that it is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, who changes and converts a person and makes him a child of God, a believer in Jesus, and an heir of salvation.

We read in 1 Corinthians 12:3 that *no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*. In 2 Timothy 1:9 we are told that God *has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began*.

Finally, we read in Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*. Thus it is emphasised again and again that the Christian is converted and made a believer through the work of the Holy Spirit.

In this way it became Pentecost for us, and we, though by nature in no way different or better than the rest of humanity, were dedicated to God and became temples of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us.

For this reason we confess in Luther's explanation of the Third Article, *I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith*.

It is for this same reason we sang before,<sup>2</sup>

*O enter, Lord, Thy temple,  
Be Thou my spirit's guest,  
Who gavest me, the earth-born,*

*A second birth more blest.*

## **2. We Must Keep Ourselves Pure And Clean**

In the second place, we should consider that, being called temples of God, we must keep ourselves pure and clean, as temples should be. A building that is dedicated to the Triune God and that has thus become a temple of God is henceforth not used for any profane purposes. We regard it as a holy and sacred place. We shudder at every desecration of a holy temple.

It is said that Emperor Napoleon once marched his troops into a German city and, being unable to find a building large enough to use as a stable for his horses, forced the people to let him use the city's great cathedral for this dishonourable purpose. The magnificent building, dedicated to God, was desecrated to be a stable. That was a terrible deed, and we can hardly conceive the audacity of this ruthless man.

We also remember the story told to us in the gospels that Jesus came into the Temple at Jerusalem and found money-changers and merchants in the sanctuary. The Saviour's anger was justly kindled at this dreadful desecration of His Father's house that He overturned the tables of these merchants and drove them out of the Temple.

We all feel the justice of the Saviour's resentment. We believe it to be wrong to use a place once dedicated to the service of God for profane purposes. But should not this very thought, urge us to strive to keep ourselves pure and free from sin?

We are temples of God, dedicated to our Lord. Can we continue to use our body and mind, our speech and thoughts, for profane and sinful purposes? Would that not be a greater desecration than the one perpetrated by the ruthless Emperor or the money-changers in the Temple? We must think more often of what we are in God's sight, of what He has made us to be.

We are constantly tempted to commit sin. The devil is busy with his wiles and deceit. The world about us urges us to travel with it the path of sin. Our own flesh is leaning toward evil. Sin is so inviting. It promises something so pleasant. Little or no harm seems to be threatened when evil deeds are done.

But the Christian must keep in mind that every sin, every transgression of God's Law, is actually filth that is thrust into the temple of God, the Christian's

body and mind. When we became believers in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, we were cleansed of all sin and made pure and spotless in God's sight, a holy temple of the Most High. We dare not sully this holy place with wilful sin. If we could only think of this every time we are tempted to sin!

A child who is wearing every-day clothing may not care much if dirt splashes against it; but if that same child has been washed and is wearing its best clothes, it will try to avoid getting dirty. This means that we Christians should often think of what Jesus has done for us, that He has cleansed us from sin by His holy blood; and then we will more readily strive to keep ourselves pure. We will make more earnest efforts to keep God's temple unprofaned.

Think often of this, dear Christian friends, you men and women, when in your various vocations in life you are tempted to anger and hatred, to idolatry and disobedience, to slander and dishonesty; think of this, you young people, when your temptations urge you to forget chastity in mind or word or deed; think of this, you children, when you do not feel like obeying your parents and masters. You are all the temple of God; keep the temple from desecration through sin!

And let it give you comfort and strength to remember that you are not alone in your battle against sin. The Holy Spirit will help you to keep yourself clean. He who made you a temple of God will help you to keep it for His use. He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Make diligent use of the Word and Sacraments; then you will be in constant contact with the Holy Spirit, and then He will keep you in the true faith and give you strength for a Christian life.

### **3. We Are To Be In The Service Of God.**

Finally, since we are temples of God, we should understand that we are to be in the service of God. Temples do not stand idle. It is not enough that they remain pure and unprofaned. They must be put to active and constant use in the worship and service of God.

As we read in the Old Testament about the worship in the Temple, we see that the sacred building was in constant use for the glory of God. There were many sacrifices brought to the Temple, and other activities were in constant service.

And we, as temples of God, dedicated and kept pure by the Holy Spirit, should be in constant service to God. We must look upon our life and all its moments and its days as an opportunity to serve our Lord. There is much that God expects of us for His glory, such as prayer and praise, bold confession of His name, the building of His Church, the blessed work of missions, charitable endeavours, and many other things.

God expects these things of us and has told us so in His Word. But our selfish nature and the unbelief still lurking in our hearts rebels against the service of God. We would often rather serve ourselves, think of our own comfort and convenience, seek our own pleasure and advancement.

But we dare not forget that we do not belong to ourselves; we cannot do as we please; we are temples of God and must be found in use in the service of God.

What a different Church it would be, and what a different world it would be, and how much happier we ourselves would be, if we could always keep foremost in our mind that our whole life and being should be a service of God!

Never would there be a misuse of God's earthly gifts; much poverty and distress would disappear; economic ills would not threaten the tranquillity of the world; no one would ask in black despair what he is living for; no one would become tired of life and end it all.

Life would have a reason and a point, and no matter what one's condition would be, in sickness or in health, in poverty or in riches, in happiness or in anxiety, if the one absorbing thought filling the heart would be, *I am serving my God in all that I do. I am the temple of God, and whatever occurs in my life is all for the glory of God.*

Thus, it will be Pentecost for us if we keep in mind that we are temples of God, that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Dedicated to God, unsullied by sin, in the service of God, then indeed we are dwelling-places of God.

Therefore let this be our prayer,<sup>3</sup>

*O Holy Spirit, enter Thou  
And with Thy gifts our hearts endow,  
Thy temple deign to make us.  
Our soul's true sun, Thou light divine,*

*Around and in us brightly shine,  
To joy and gladness wake us. Amen*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>2</sup> Hymn 130

<sup>3</sup> Hymn 124