

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who destroyed and rebuilt the temple in three short days, Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Today is not only Reformation Sunday, but also Reformation Day! On this day in the year 1517, 504 years ago, Martin Luther and Catholic Monk in Wittenberg Germany nailed 95 debating points to the town church door. This sparked what has become known as the Protestant Reformation. In today's scripture reading Solomon believes he is fulfilling the promise God made to Solomon's father, King David, by constructing a marvelous temple on the same site where Abraham nearly sacrificed the first heir to God's promise of a great dynasty and a land flowing with milk and honey to go along with it. Trouble is, Solomon wasn't listening to God and instead followed his own wishes and desires. The excerpt we read from this epic saga this morning tells the tale of King Hiram of Tyre who had heard of the death of his BFF David and the crowning of David's son Solomon to King David's thrown. He wanted to send a gesture of good will and love to David's son in hopes that they could also become BFFs.

Do you remember the song, "That's What Friends Are For?" It was a big hit back in 1986, earning a Grammy and many other awards. Here's a few lines from that song: For good times and bad times, I'll be on your side forever more, That's what friends are for... We see in today's scripture a king from a foreign nation who was a good friend of David. He then also became a good friend of David's

son Solomon. When Solomon calls on King Hiram of Tyre, he will kindly fulfill all of Solomon's requests. Solomon had desired to build a great temple for the Lord God, but was that what God really wanted from Solomon? Solomon's desire to build this house for God wasn't based on God's call in his life, but on a misunderstanding of the promise God made to his father, King David. Solomon really wanted the glory and splendor as shown in the building of a Temple to YHWH to reflect on himself, not on the glory of God. Despite God's lack of enthusiasm for the project, He was at the same time allowing it with reservations. Underneath all the splendor God already saw the cracks appearing.

The house that YHWH had really wanted Solomon to build had been a spiritual house made up of his sons and daughters, not a house of wood and stone. God desired David and then in turn Solomon to raise up sons and daughters who would be faithful and follow God's commandments. This temple building project had its start back in the book of Second Samuel, Chapter 7 where David intended to build the temple in Jerusalem, but God, through the prophet Nathan, stopped him. God told David that instead of David building a house for God that God would build a house for him. The concentration throughout this story should not be on the building of a brick and mortar Temple, but on the building of a dynasty which would result finally in the arrival of the Coming King. 'YHWH tells David that he will make him a house (dynasty) -- your seed – God will make a dynasty

for God's Name and God will establish the throne of his kingship forever -- and David's house, his kingship, will be established forever, through his dynasty...

YHWH's emphasis was thus on the promise of the foundation of a dynasty which would finally result in the everlasting King, the one we call Jesus who is the Messiah and our Savior and our Lord forever and forever. The truth is that in building the physical house and being satisfied with it and putting too much emphasis on it, Solomon did in fact miss out on the need to build a spiritual house. It would only be because of God's activity that the spiritual house would come to a reality in our Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, God did in His graciousness accept the physical house from their hands, simply because He knew they were bringing it to Him from a right attitude of heart. He recognized and made allowance for our human weakness.

YHWH's allowing of the building of the Temple would have caused no problem if only Israel (and later the Jews) had recognized the physical Temple was only a symbol of the 'spiritual house' that YHWH would establish in the Coming King. How different history would have been in that case. They did partly grasp it in the idea of the coming of the Messiah, they had totally wrong ideas about Him, and overall both failed to recognize Him when He came, or to recognize that His coming signaled the demise of the Temple which had lost its significance with His coming. They had become wedded to the Temple. To them the Temple had

become more important than the Messiah. Similar blindness to some extent pervades much of the church today. We too tend to make our Church Buildings into idols. In the Temple Solomon built the Hebrew people established elaborate procedures for animal sacrifice in order to have their sins washed away by the spilling of the blood of the sacrifice. I certainly hope none of you believe that your sins are forgiven based on the amount of money that you put in the offering plate. To the extent we look to our physical Temple as the only place to worship the living God or the place where non-Scriptural sacrifices of our time. Talents, and treasures provide for our forgiveness, then we also have failed to recognize that the physical Temple as well as the entire sacrificial system has outlived its usefulness. Sacrificial giving as a way to rid ourselves of our sin is no longer a valid option. That system has been fully replaced by Jesus Christ Himself and our own bodies have become the spiritual Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3.16).

I say all of this to show you how the Church has been in need of constant reforming since it first began. David needed Nathan to remind him of God's Word and God's will. Unfortunately, Solomon either didn't have a Nathan to bring him back to God or, if he did Solomon ignored him. In our day, I've heard the saying many times that we don't go to Church, we are the Church. That saying has been uttered so many times it's become just another slogan or platitude, but it is still true.

In the book of First Peter, Chapter 2 Peter writes: “³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (1 Pet. 2:3-6 NRS)

Today God's House has added a new living stone, Helena Proffitt. Helena, as you will in just a few minutes make your promises before this congregation and before your God, you will take your place in God's Spiritual Temple. Today, you become part of the Spiritual Church in your own right. At your Baptism others made promises for you, but today you stand on your own and those promises are now yours to keep, with God's help and the help of all of us as well. Jesus has called your name and you now have your opportunity to respond. My prayer for you and for all those here in this congregation is that we continue to ask for God's leadership and for God's Holy Spirit to guide us. The Church today is in need of reform just as much as in David's time, in Solomon's time, in Martin Luther's time. Maybe even more. Today we're faced with issues and divisions that seem to defy human understanding. We're divided on everything from politics, to wearing of masks during Worship. How do we know God's true will for us in this kind of

divided culture? I don't have every answer. I wish I did. I do know one thing to be true that we can all count on. Through Jesus, God has revealed his intentions for us and for all mankind. God became human to show us that He doesn't desire our eternal punishment for our sin, but rather God's only desire is to save us from our sin. I also know that when we pray and ask for God's help and guidance, even if we make mistakes and do the wrong thing, God is gracious and merciful. God forgives our every mistake and our every sin. So, with nothing to lose and everything to gain, why not act boldly and do our best to follow what we believe to be God's lead. Luther put it this way, "Sin boldly, but love the Lord Jesus Christ even more boldly.

The question for all of us today comes down to this: are you willing to follow the leading of God's Holy Spirit even if you're not 100 percent certain of the call? May you hear and listen to that still small voice of God whispering in your ear. May you use the teachings of the one universal catholic Church and the wise council and advice of your sisters and brothers in Christ here at Trinity to help you discern God's voice from all the others that demand your attention. May you willingly join in as one of the living stones that make up God's Spiritual Temple, the one God intended to build all along. I for one am blessed to be a small part in that temple and I pray you are too. Amen.