

2 Chronicles 2:1, 4-5

Matt 12:46-50

Matt 24:1-2

When I was a kid a traveling exhibit came to the museum center downtown and one of the things they brought was a stone from the outside wall of the temple grounds. It was positioned about halfway through the exhibit. You could touch it, and I did and we moved on. Just before we left the exhibit, I ran all the way back and touched it again. Even then I figured it was probably as close as I would ever get to something that close to God's physical presence on earth.

The temple that Jesus visited was the most holy site in all Israel, in all the world to the Jewish people. This was the structure where God literally dwelled. It was where you brought your newborn baby to complete the customs of the day. It's where you went when you messed up and needed forgiveness. It was where you went to find God, to hear God, to be close to God. Keeping the temple pure and standing was of the utmost important to any observant Jew of the day, and was important to God also, as we see Jesus twice cleanses the temple and drives away the moneychangers.

And yet Jesus tells his disciples that this, the most holy site of Israel, would be reduced to rubble, that not one stone would be left upon another. Indeed, in April of 70 AD, the Roman siege of Jerusalem began, and on August 30 of that same year, romans set fire to the temple. There is nothing left. If you look at pictures of the temple mound, these walls you see are not part of the temple, but outer walls. The most well-known remnant is the wailing wall, where jews still go to be close to God for prayer, which is the outer western wall of the temple courtyard. It would be comparable to the monument out front of Trinity. The most holy place in all Israel to the jewish people was destroyed.

Jesus could very well have stopped this. God can do anything, after all. But Jesus was not in the business of saving buildings, Jesus was in the business of saving souls.

In the most holy of holies within the temple, there was a curtain that separated it from the rest of the temple. No one was permitted to go into this place unless expressly trained and permitted once a year. Yet once the atoning work of Christ was accomplished and our sin was no longer an infinite chasm between us and God, the curtain was ripped in two. God would no longer found in one tiny room in Israel, but wherever God's people were. The spirit of God no longer dwells in a closet, but within us. Wherever our feet may travel is holy ground. Wherever we gather, God is present, and wherever we stand, so stands the temple.

That is not to say the temple passed into to history without grief. Indeed, even today there is grief among the Jewish people about the temple. This is human. Imagine if our homes were destroyed. Even years later would we not be grieved? Consider major attacks on our country, such as Pearl Harbor or September 11th. Consider when places we love close down. My husband and I had our very first date in a restaurant over on Mason Montgomery. IT closed a couple years ago and as silly as it sounds, that made me a little sad. How much more would the grief of the temple falling be? And yet, Jesus did not save the temple. Jesus saved us.

Someone recently posed the question, what makes you a church, aside from the obvious being that we're a collection of believers who worship together. Better said, would be what makes you Trinity? What makes you different from a non-profit or any other church out there. What makes Trinity, Trinity? I might say our diverse collection of believers. I've learned so much from all of you. Some of the most impactful spiritual moments of my life to date took place in this sanctuary. My miracle daughter was baptized here. Christmas Day service last year was very meaningful for me personally. What else might we say?

Would we still be able to church if the building burned down? Would we still be a church if we moved up the street? Would we still be a church if we welcomed new faces, faces that might be different from ours? Would we still choose to be a church?

Because being a church is a choice. It is choosing to be in fellowship with one another. It is choosing love and forgiveness daily. It is choosing to be a family of believers. That's not always easy. We squabble. We fight. We misunderstand. We take out frustrations on each other.

I remember once I had a spat with my old partner at work. I told my dad about it and he had some wisdom to share. He told me that if you spend enough time with anyone and you'll have disagreements. You just have to work through them. He told me how he, as a police officer, had spats with his partner. Oh really, I said, knowing how close they are still to this day. Oh yeah, I used pepper-spray on him once in an argument. Let's not do that.

But of course, if we are together enough, we will argue. Yet Jesus said these, these very people are our bothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. Jesus chose to be with them over others. So I wonder, would we still choose to be with each other, even when things look hard, when we disagree, when we navigate the storms of life. Would we still choose each other.

I can honestly say that there is no other church in the world I would rather be worshipping with, and I've worshiped a lot of places.

*****I'll be walking around the sanctuary talking to people*****

Friends, Jesus reminds us what matters most. It was never buildings or things, it was never treasures or money. It was, and has always been, people. Jesus came to save souls, not material goods. Strip away everything we have, and we would still be the church. We would still be brothers and sisters. We would, I hope, still choose one another, knowing that wherever our feet fall, so goes the spirit of God within us. The church is not this building, or stained glass windows, or pews or pianos, the church is when not one stone remains on the other we still choose to be a family of believers, the church is when choose to be the church wherever we go, and the church is when we choose to love one another and welcome the stranger. That is the church. May you be the church today, and forever more.