

Conley Memorial Presbyterian Church, 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost, July 19, 2015

**Being a Construction Manager**

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July 19, 2015

2 Samuel 7:1-17 Ephesians 2:11-22

As you know, for much of my life I was an engineer. I worked primarily on big construction projects. I didn't do the construction work myself. Rather I was involved in some management aspects of construction. In a way I was a construction manager. I examined projects and tried to see where the pitfalls were in the construction plan. When I found a problem area, I tried to redirect the project to a more successful outcome.

That is what God was doing in our scripture reading from 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, he was trying to redirect David's project to a more successful outcome but David really didn't understand what his project was.

He was appointed by God as the King of Israel. He was living in an opulent palace and he was musing about the Ark of the Covenant remaining in a tent. God's home was a tent while David was living in splendor. That wasn't right so David decided to build a magnificent temple for God, a temple made of cedar. That would be his project and he planned out the design of the temple in great detail. He told the prophet Nathan about it and Nathan said, "*Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.*" (NIV).

David heard the words he wanted to hear from Nathan but his construction manager, God, said hold on. Your project isn't a temple. That can wait for a future time. Someone else can build it when the time comes. Instead of a temple, your project is to build a house for my people. That is your project. Rule Israel effectively and with love. Get rid of evil and oppression. Do this and you will be building a house for my Name and your descendants will rule forever.

David's project was far greater than building a temple; it was to build a nation. David was the hope of Israel and God gave him the task to build the nation.

Was David successful? Yes and no. Some things went right and some didn't because David and his successors were sinful humans, as we all are. They didn't do everything right.

David's son Solomon, in time, built the Temple instead of David doing it. The Jews believed that the Temple was where heaven and earth met and it was truly magnificent, but it didn't last. N. T. Wright (Simply Christian, Harper San Francisco, 2006) said that by all accounts the so-called Second Temple built by Herod after the Israelites return from Babylon couldn't hold a candle to Solomon's Temple.

Weak, ineffective and sinful rulers who followed Solomon contributed greatly to the downfall of Israel and to the exile of the Israelites to Babylon. David and Solomon laid the foundation for the nation of Israel but the mortar, their descendants, was weak leading to the downfall of the nation.

I have a young friend, the Rev. Joseph Taber, who recently was ordained and installed as the pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Lowell. I got to know Joseph as a construction worker when he and his uncle rebuilt the deck on our home a number of years ago.

Joseph subsequently entered seminary and occasionally, as a student, would preach locally, much as we have had students like Jason Myers preach here from time to time.

One of Joseph's sermons on the same passages of scripture as our readings today was titled "Wood Putty" referring to the use of wood putty to hide errors in carpentry. When things don't fit together as they should or when things are cracked or chipped, wood putty is often used to close the gaps and fill in the chips and cracks. Often wood putty can turn a failed carpentry project into a successful one --- if you know what you are doing. But counting on wood putty is not being a good construction manager --- errors should be avoided if possible and not be hidden.

But in the case of the house that David built, there were a lot of errors, a lot of settling cracks if you will; a lot of broken relationships. People were growing apart because of sin. Big gaps were being built up between God and humanity. God needed to step in and close those gaps. But how? Certainly not with wood putty.

The answer is in our second scripture reading from Ephesians 2 and that answer comes from the House of David, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.

The biggest gap was probably between the Jews and the non-Jews. God had brought the Jews back from exile and, as an effective construction manager would do, he saw the need for a new house, not a temple, but a house for the entire family of God, Jew and Gentile alike.

He abolished the law of the Torah and its seemingly endless list of commandments and ordinances and sent Christ to reconcile Jew and Gentile into one body, one house, through the cross. Our Daily Bread (September 29, 2011) said, *When the early church experienced tension between believers of Jewish and non-Jewish birth, Paul told them [in our reading from Ephesians] that, through Christ, they stood equally in the family of God. 'For He Himself is our peace, who made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation ... so as to create in Himself one new (person) from the two, thus making peace ... For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.'*

*"One of the most beautiful aspects of the Christian faith is unity among those who follow Jesus. Through His death on the cross, Christ has removed the barriers that so often separate people and has drawn us together in true friendship and love."*

Our Daily Bread (April 19, 2011) also says, *"But sadly, Christians often re-erect walls between one another. That is why Paul urges us to 'walk worthy of the calling ..., bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' Rather than building walls, let's work to dismantle what separates us. Let the world see that we are indeed the same household."*

That is what a good construction manager would do.

God sent Jesus the Christ to show us the way. We are built into "...a holy temple ... built together spiritually" (NRSV) into God's dwelling place.

Sin leads us to build dividing walls in the dwelling place. Christ is the way to tear down those walls.

**Amen.**