



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Church: The Temple of God

Speaker: Sherin Swift, Pastor

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NRSV)

Sermon Outline:

The church is not an event, a location, a product or an experience. The Church is God's passion, His Beloved. The Church is the Temple of God.

The Church as the Temple of God is an image that is easily understood. The temple is the center of religious life for a community, a place where people practice their faith. The temple in Jerusalem is different and more than this – it is the veil where God's presence rested.

In the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis, Adam and Even lived there in presence of the Lord, having unrestricted access to God. With the fall in the garden, three key relationships were broken: our relationship with God, our relationship with each other and our relationship with the rest of creation.

God wanted to continue being in relationship with us after the fall in Genesis. He could no longer be in direct contact with people, as his holiness was too much as to cause us damage. How can God's presence harm us if He is good? God's holy presence after the Garden is still good and we still need Him.

God wanted to start again and dwell with Israel in order to show the world potential when God and humanity collaborate. After the Exodus, God had the people build a tabernacle, where God would dwell. The tabernacle was replaced by a permanent temple in Jerusalem. What made the temple distinct is that it was the place of worship, it was the place where the mediated presence of God rested among his people. Israel had special access to meet with Him in the temple. This is what made them unique among all the people of the world. The temple is a sign of God's great love that shows He desires to dwell with all humanity.

The temple is no longer about a place or person, but it is about a people, a movement of people. The church is now the temple, surviving throughout history against all odds – through famine, plagues, persecution and times of isolation. The physical temple could be destroyed but the Church can and will continue to survive.

God wants to dwell with you so much he sent his Son to repair the damage done in the garden, to be closer to us. When Jesus went to the cross it was to fulfill all the requirements one last time. Jesus repaired that broken connection between God and his people.

Matthew 27:50-51 Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom.

We are all the Temple of God, all of us together. This is a movement, a living organism. We are living stones that make up the temple. Each one of us is a masterpiece crafted by our Creator with a purpose, being lifted up by others to make a living temple for God. Each Christian is a sign and wonder, carrying God's presence to the world through our gifts. We are showing that God is real and active in the world and in our midst.

We are actually in a unique touch point between God and the world. Although this pandemic has us socially distant from one another, God is not socially distant from you. He is dwelling in you because we are his temple.

What would it look like to dream and imagine about what becomes possible in this moment? About making space for new connections during this time that couldn't have happened before? What does it look like for you to dream about being more connected? Dream again because we are his temple.

Sermon Summary:

This Sunday Pastor Sherin Swift closes out our summer sermon series Church: Being a Community of Jesus Followers. Today Pastor Sherin's sermon focuses on the church as the Temple of God and what it means for us to be able to dream and imagine again because we are His temple.

Sermon Questions:

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. In your family of origin, if you grew up in a religious household what were the lessons taught about the importance of physically going to church? What were those values based on? Tradition, dogma, legalism or on the Bible? If you weren't brought up in a religious household what were the views or thoughts of people who did go to church? How did that form your view of what the Church was?
3. Today what connection do you feel with the church, with God? In this time of separation, how are you connecting to the body of Christ in order to manifest the presence of God?
4. What have you most missed throughout these last few months during the pandemic? What have you lamented? What dreams can you bring to God for what is next and what is possible? How can you begin to make space for that dream in your life?
5. God has created you for a purpose with different and unique gifts. How are you bringing, or can you bring, those gifts to the body to help and uplift His Church and others?