

**Loving and Renewing the Lord's House***Introduction*

- This is day Lord made...rejoice – because this is day finally return to refurb sanc! Look around: up, lights (can see in church again!); down, floor (old/worn carpet, stains – gone); ahead, cross (detail carved front); here, me (couldn't see; 18 spots!). Been awhile since worshiped here! Back on July 16, cong work day; many mems/you: took up pews, pulled up carpet, emptied room. For 14 wks, as const, instl taking place, we worshiped in gym (S), mtg rm (M); but wasn't same as being here, Lord's house.
- Today, after 3 mos of loving/renewing Lord's house (LRLH), back in Lord's house. Theme for renov project, LRLH; based on theme passage, Ps 26:8, a Scripture I'd like us consider carefully: **Ps 26:8**.

*The Tabernacle and the Temple*

- To start, we have to ask simple question: where is this house where Lord lives, this place where his glory dwells? Where find? Here, in this church? What about millions other Christian churches in world? Where is Lord's dwelling place? And, in building at all?
- Whenever think about the place where Lord's glory dwelt, imm have to think back to OT tabernacle. Basically tent, but by God's design. Moses; ex-Egypt; Sinai; 10 Coms; also, detailed instructions for building house of worship. **Ex 25, "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you" (vs. 8-9)**. Just what did. Made a tent, portable building, that carried throughout years wandering wilderness, right up until settled in promised land. This tabernacle was no tent could buy at Cabelas. Made with gold, silver, exotic wood, costly fabrics. Contained precious furnishings: ark of covenant, great altar of sacrifice, 7-branched lampstand (menorah). Most imp, God was there. You could actually see him. **Ex 40, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (vs. 34-35)**. Surely this tabernacle was the house where Lord lived, place where glory dwelt!
- Or was it? Once Israelites made it to Promised Land, David was king, he said: not right that I should live in beautiful palace of cedar, stone, while Lord's house is old, worn out tent. So decided to build house for Lord, place for glory to dwell. In fact, was David himself penned words **today's passage**. So drew up architectural plans for a temple structure, based on floorplan of tabernacle. In end, God gave task of building temple to David's son Solomon. But there on Mt. Zion, in city of Jerusalem, Solomon build temple of Lord. Magnificent! **"Solomon covered the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold. So he overlaid the whole interior with gold. He also overlaid with gold the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary" (1 Kgs 6:21-22)**. And here in this magnificent structure, sacrifices offered, God's glory resided; and Psalms composed about this temple: **"How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty. My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord" (84:1-2)**; and **"I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (122:1)**. Surely Solomon's temple was the house where Lord lived, place where glory dwelt!

*The Church*

- Or was it? Even Solomon, at ded of temple in 1<sup>st</sup> lesson, recognized, **"Will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (1 Kgs 8:27)**. And in Isa, God: **"Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things" (66:1-2)**. So today we sing, *"Surely in temples made with hands God the Most High, is not dwelling" (CW 529:2)*, because we know: God cannot be confined to brick/mortal building, constructed by hands of men, like temple, or this church. Know what happened to temple,

right? Destroyed by Israel's enemies. Then rebuilt; destroyed again! This beautiful church reded today: what call it? Still call it new church, because remember old church (original St. John's) downtown at corner Madison/Pine. What happened? Torn down; replaced with this new church. But this new church, someday (hopefully long in future), torn down, too. So again we ask: where is this house where Lord lives, this place where glory dwells?

- Jesus, in our gospel, told woman at well, **“A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem;”** (IOW, God doesn't dwell in mnt, building, temple, church); **“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth”** (Jn 4:21, 24). Truth is: when God sends Spirit to work faith in hearts of his people, there in their hearts LJ dwells. **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”** (Jn 1:14a). And Jesus: **“Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them”** (Mt 18:20) – in hearts of Christians who believe in Jesus as crucified, risen Savior. And when HS works that faith in our hearts – that Son God left home in heaven to live sinless live in our place, to suffer/die on cross as our substitute to pay for our sins, and to rise from dead as firstfruits of our res to eternal life in heaven, all of which lost w/o Jesus, but all of which God freely gives us by his grace – when our hearts cling to that truth by faith: God dwells among us. That means you are God's dwelling place; house where he lives; Church (don't mean building; mean people). God takes Christian people, builds his Church. Eph 2: **“In [Jesus] you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”** (2:22). And in Ezekiel, Lord: **“I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people”** (Ek 37:26-27). So where is this place where God dwells? It's in hearts of believers in Jesus; in hearts of you, his people, his Church.

#### *Our Church – St. John's*

- And because we love Church, also love the church, this church. **Ps 26:8**. We love our church, St. John's. I love this place! Some remember when this church being built in 1979. I've heard stories re constr of this building (delay in project, steel workers in PA on strike; problem with bricks, shipped wrong kind). Plenty of stories from this refurb project could share (light fixtures delayed, cookies; electrician leaning dangerously far over railing, for living, funerals). Plenty stories. We love this church! I know you love this church! Whether member 5 or 75 yrs, this sanctuary is sacred place – because this is where God comes to us; where, in word/sac, Jesus makes dwelling among us – right here, in this room.
- Font: you, children, will. Pews: you'll spend 1000s hours life worshipping Lord with fellow Luth Christians. Pulpit: from pastors decades ago to pastors you've not yet met, you'll hear countless sermons, all pointing you to Jesus as Savior. Altar: body/blood of Christ given/shed for your forgiveness has fed your hungry soul time & again. Rail: confirmed, children, soon will be, in Luth faith. Steps: you were married; children. Here on floor, spot: casket of loved one rested; someday yours will be set. And all these sacred events happen under cross, single most dominant feature of this sanctuary, single most important symbol of our faith. Here in this sanctuary, in this sacred place, where happiest & saddest moments of our life are shared with God and one another, here Lord comes to us, makes dwelling among us. And that's why we love this church.
- And why we refurb/renewed this church. Theme: LRLH, because needed repair. Look what God has done! He's moved hearts of his people to give him their best and make Lord's house new again!
- And so we as cong will worship here, in this refurbished sanctuary, until it needs refurbishing again, or until we make it to the sanctuary that needs no refurbishment committee, the holy, heavenly dwelling of Most High God, where Jesus will someday bring us, to live with him for eternity, and where we will forever say, **Ps 26:8**.

#### **Psalm 26:8**

Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.