

**Eyes to See Sermon Series**  
**“Building a House”**  
**1 Peter 2:2-10, John 14:1-14**  
**May 7, 2023**  
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Something that I’ve noticed as I drive around Jacksonville is that there are a lot of building projects going on. Specifically, it seems like everywhere I go, they are building new apartments. On Hendrix Ave. as you approach downtown; on AC Skinner between Salisbury Road and Southside Blvd.; on Powers Ave. across from Wolfson High School; further south on Racetrack Road going toward Nocatee. I see all these buildings going up and every time I do I ask myself, “how many apartment buildings does this city need?” and “who are all the people that are going to live in these buildings?” and “is anyone going to be able to afford to rent the apartments in these buildings when they’re finished?” I’m sure you see all the new building everywhere as you drive around too, and maybe you ask yourself some of those same questions, too.

One thing that I usually never think about when I see all the new construction around town is the fact that Jesus was the son of a carpenter and that he learned the trade himself. That’s an association that we could make when we see the builders out there building, because he was a builder, and our Scriptures today remind us that he still *is* a builder. He is working on two of God’s very important building projects, and I don’t know if you’re excited about all the new apartment buildings when you see them, but God’s building projects are definitely ones that we can be grateful for and excited about. The two buildings that Jesus is working on are homes. One is a home that is being built for us in heaven. The other is a home that is being built for God here on earth. We’re going to talk about both of these this morning, starting with the home that is being built for us in heaven.

On the night that Jesus shared the last supper with his disciples, he told them that he was going to prepare a place for them. You may have most often heard this Scripture read at funerals, and that’s because in those times when death seems to have gotten the last word, Jesus promises that there is something more waiting for us beyond the grave. In my last church there was a couple that was building a dream home in Hawaii. They would go and spend weeks at a time working on it. Those who can build a dream home in Hawaii that can become a place of rest and refuge are fortunate for sure, but for the rest of us who don’t have a home under construction in Hawaii that will be waiting for us someday, we do have the home waiting for us that Jesus is building in heaven- and it will be even better than a dream home in Hawaii. This passage of Scripture is the one that sparks our imaginations with visions of luxury dream homes in heaven with chandeliers, and marble floors, and grand staircases, and indoor pools, and outdoor gardens and tennis courts because the King James translation says “in my father’s house are many *mansions*.” In the original Greek, the word translated as mansions just means a dwelling place or room, and isn’t meant to denote luxurious accommodations necessarily. Even if we have to let go of our visions of grandeur, though, Jesus was talking about a very good place. For one thing, it is completely indestructible. No storm can tear the roof off, there’s no risk of termite damage. It’s a place that can never be destroyed. In Matthew 6:19-20, Jesus cautioned people about storing up treasures on earth, “where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal.” Instead, he said, “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume and where thieves do not break in and steal.” Paul also reminds us of the lasting and secure nature of this heavenly home in 2 Corinthians 5:1 when he says, “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Peter, also, in the opening to his first letter, offers encouragement by reminding the believers in 1 Peter 1:3-4, that God has “given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,<sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that is

imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” It is an eternal home, and even better than that, it is God’s house and we will live with God there forever.

When Jesus was talking to the disciples about the eternal home that he was going to go and build for them, he was talking to them at a time when they were about to go through what was probably the worst experience of their lives. In a matter of hours, Jesus would be arrested, and then crucified. They were going to be scared for their own lives, and confused, and tempted to doubt the truth of anything that Jesus had said to them. Peter was also writing to a group of people who were going through difficulties when he reminded them about the imperishable inheritance that was being kept in heaven for them. Peter was writing to believers who had left Jerusalem and scattered all over the Roman Empire to escape persecution. They were experiencing resistance and rejection because of their faith in Jesus, but Peter encouraged them to stand firm by reminding them about the eternal home that had been built and was awaiting them. We know that just because we are believers and followers of Jesus that it doesn’t mean that we are promised an easy life. We know that bad things can and do happen to us. Just like the disciples and the Christians in the early church experienced losses, and hardships, and suffering, we will experience those things, too. We will experience losses, and tragedies, and we may even be rejected or suffer in some way because of our faith in Jesus. In those time we might wish that we could be whisked away to a safe and comfortable place in Hawaii where we could escape our problems, but Jesus comforts us with the promise of the home that is being built for us in heaven that is even better. This promise have hope to those who went before us, and in it we can find strength, and courage, and hope, too. No matter what may happen to us, we can be confident that we will end up with Jesus in the place of refuge and eternal safety that God is building. That is one of God’s construction projects that Jesus is working, and now let’s think about the other one that we heard about in the reading from I Peter.

The home that is being built in heaven is a home that is being built for us, but here on earth, there is a different building that Jesus is working on. It is also a home, and as the people of God, there is a place for us in the home, but it’s a little different than the place that is being prepared for us in heaven. The home that is being built on earth is a dwelling place for God and in this building, our place is not a room. Instead, in this building, we are each stones that Jesus has put together to create the walls and structure of God’s home here on earth. It’s not a completed project. Jesus is still adding stones to the structure and expanding the house all the time, but it is already a functional building that exists as a visible sign of God’s presence and as source of hope for the world. It is *not* a building like the unfinished building on I-4 that is a joke to everyone who lives in Orlando. That building is known as “the eyesore on I-4.” Construction on the building began in 2001. For various reasons it has still never been completed, and it just stands there towering over the interstate with no purpose or function. That is the exact opposite of the building that Jesus is building out of us and out of everyone who belongs to him through faith.

Jesus is building us into a community, or a building, and we exist as this building so that when the world sees us, they see evidence that God is real, and near, and concerned about their needs. It’s true, that sometimes the church has a reputation for appearing in the world as more of an eyesore than as a safe and attractive building where God lives, but it is possible for us to fulfill our purpose and many times and in many ways we do. When we allow the life of Jesus to flow through us, and we keep in step with the Holy Spirit, God becomes visible through us. When we live together in unity and peace even though we have differences and disagreements about things, we are a living testimony to God’s power at work in us. When we give of ourselves and put our talents and resources together using them in service to others, God works through us to bring hope, and salvation, and restoration to the earth. We are the building that Jesus is building here and now.

Sometimes we may be prone to selfishness. We may not really want to be a stone in the wall, because we would rather do our own thing. Or there may be times when we get tired of doing our part, whatever it is, and we want to give up, but when those times come, that’s when we call to mind the building that Jesus is building for us in heaven. It’s that building in heaven and our heavenly hope that

keeps us going and keeps us inspired to stick to the purpose that Jesus has for us here as we wait for the hope that is being held for us. It is good for us to stick to that purpose. It gives our lives meaning and we find fulfillment as we work together and do the ministry that Jesus gives us to do, but it is also good for the people around us. There are people around us who don't have hope in this world or hope for life in the next. They don't see the evidence of God's presence or love. They don't know where to turn for comfort, or where to find a secure foundation for their lives, and they don't know that they are truly and deeply loved, but it's possible that they can find those things in and through God's building that is alive with the life of Christ and actively sharing in his ministry.

Now as you drive around Jacksonville and see all of the new construction and new buildings everywhere, maybe you will be prompted to remember God's building projects that Jesus is actively working on right now. He is building a home that is waiting for us in heaven, and he is building us into a building where God lives and through which God brings hope and good news to the world. As we gather at Jesus's table this morning, he confirms the word that has been proclaimed this morning about God's building projects. We do have a home and a building from God waiting for us, and we anticipate with joy the homecoming that we will one day experience. Even as we anticipate the future, we are also bound together with Christ and with each other – a collection of living stones – placed in the world as a witness to and a sign of God's living presence. We need his life to flow through us. We need his grace to help us in our weakness. He offers those things and more to us now. Amen.