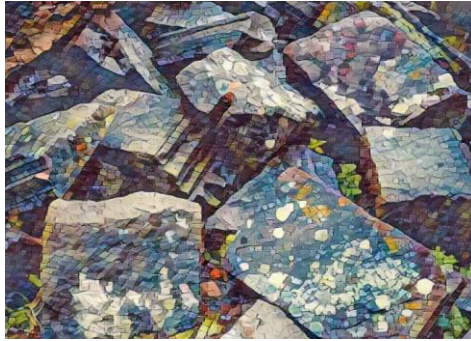


Building the Temple...Take Courage



Roughly 2500 years ago, a small crowd of Jewish people who had returned to Jerusalem from years of captivity in Babylon, stood at the site of what had once been the Magnificent Temple of Solomon.

They shook their heads.

Some of them wept.

They had made the first faltering efforts to clear away the rubble of 70 plus years of desolation and to build a new temple where Solomon's temple once stood.

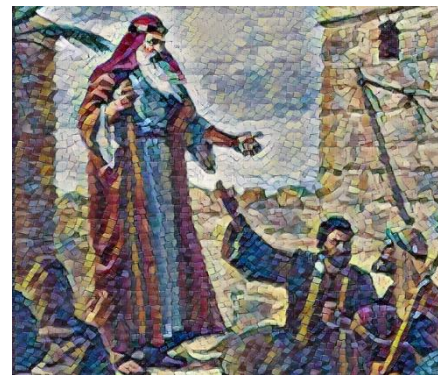
It didn't look like much. The people were poor.

Where were they going to get the resources and the strength to build this new temple?

Zerubbabel, the man who would be king if they ever became a nation again, was there. Joshua, the high priest, was there. And they, along with all the people assembled were discouraged, demoralized, whipped,

.... until this weird looking man with fiery eyes and hair flying in all directions stepped out from the crowd and began to speak,

“Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; Work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts, according to the promise that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit abides among you; fear not. For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give Shalom, says the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:3-9)



On the strength of that word which they knew was from God,

Zerubbabel took courage,
Joshua took courage,
the people took courage.

And as the months passed a temple began to rise from the rubble.

A sign of God's presence among them.

What the people needed that day and what they got was a vision of what God intended.

God intended a temple to be built,

***"...take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord;
work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts..."***

There will be a temple here.

With that vision, their hearts caught fire.

They believed that God was with them.

All they had to do was fit into his program and his house would be built.

And it was built.

Today, we are that remnant.

What we're looking at now - our present temple - is a far cry from what we're going to see down the road.

What we see with our eyes at this moment and the vision that God is now imparting to us are so far apart it's difficult for us to grasp the idea that this struggling flock we are now could ever become the magnificent temple God intends to build here.

Never mind.

Grab hold of the vision and hang on.

Of course, the magnificent temple God intends is **not** built of wood, or brick, or stone.

This temple is built of

living stones,

human lives,

people whose hearts have come alive...

“Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 2:4-5

We are talking about a growing, vibrant fellowship of men and women and young people who have come alive with the life of God.

That’s the vision...

God’s banquet hall filled with people who have found grace at the foot of the cross and have given themselves up to it.

A fellowship that’s alive.

A fellowship that’s joyful. People just glad to be here.

A fellowship that’s growing.

“...take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts...”

So how do we work?

What do we do so that the vision can be fulfilled?

Jesus tells us how with his **“principle of the banquet”**.

He’s not just describing how to put on a dinner...

He’s explaining how to build the temple - his Body, the Church.

“When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Luke 14:12b-14



The principle of the banquet.

Go out there and find the people everybody else forgot about but God.

Don't just bring them to your soup kitchen.

Bring them to church!

Into your fellowship!

Open your heart and make them a part of your family.

There is not a soul reading this who doesn't know at least one person who's been falling through the cracks.

Maybe they're poor.

Maybe they're just hard to get along with.

Maybe they're slow of mind.

That's how you build this temple.

One at a time.

You go find them.

You spend time with them.

You share your money - you share a meal (before you share Jesus with them).

You pray for them every day.

And all the while, the Spirit of the Lord himself is working *through you*.

Something holy is beginning to flow out of you.



Now you bring them to the banquet - and they come - you'll be amazed.

They'll come.

And now, to change the metaphor, you fit this living stone into the temple.

You're their sponsor.

You're their servant.

If they call you at one o'clock in the morning with a question,

you listen

you answer

you pray with them.

"Oh, but that's the minister's job. I'm not equipped; I've never been to seminary. We're paying the preacher - let the preacher do it!"

If it had been left to Zerubbabel, the prince, and Joshua, the priest, to build the temple, it would **never** have been built.

And this temple isn't built by clergy - thank God.

This temple is built by all of us.

We're going to go out and find those forgotten ones...

and by the power of God's Spirit,

.... we're going to turn them into living stones.

And we are going to see a temple arise that truly will be a habitation of God through the Spirit.

We're going to see new faces.

And we're going to see those faces and our own faces *transfigured by the presence of Christ* among us... **as** we give ourselves to this vision.

When the people gathered on the Temple Mount that day,

.... and saw how little progress had been made and how much more needed to be done...

They were overwhelmed.

They were discouraged.

Then came the Word of the Lord - a vision of what God intended!

***"I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land –
and I will fill this house with splendor..."***

They took hold of the vision ---

--- made it theirs---

--- and it was fulfilled ---

The same Spirit of God is giving us a vision.

The vision of a temple built of living stones - people.

A fellowship inhabited by the redemptive power of God.

A place where people find forgiveness, healing, new life,

...as the Lord Jesus manifests himself among us.

The living stones that belong in this temple are out there, waiting to be found by us.

The forgotten ones.

The ones nobody wants but God.

We're going to find them.

We're going to build.



And the glory of this temple will far outshine anything we've seen in the past.

“Take courage! Work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts!”

Message: Richard E, Bieber 2001

Featured Art: First two pieces a photo and art edited with GoArt. Other art all by Ramone Romero: The Harvest Accepted and Loved, Heartstrings, and Carry Each Other

Prayer- Thank you Lord, that you call us to courage. Courage to face the rubble before us. Courage to do what seems impossible. May we take hold of that courage and the vision to rebuild what is broken. May we ever know that you are with us as we face the rubble, the impossible. Help us to become the living stones you call us to be so that we can help rebuild your holy temple. We will reach out to the forgotten ones you choose to build your temple with. Help us to find them, love them, spend time with them, and as we do so, may your holy, healing power flow through us, so they may find a place overflowing with your redemptive power and, find forgiveness, healing and new life in this temple where we lift our hearts and lives to you. Amen. Maranatha Mirror