



Waiting for a Footstool
Hebrews 10:11-25; Mark 13:1-8
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Magnificent stones: some churches were built over the span of centuries and are a marvel of beauty, engineering, artistry, dedication, motivation, and devotion. It took centuries to finish them, and some were left unfinished, and some can be destroyed in a blink of an eye.

Disciples of all time have amazed with pride at the beauty of their churches. Jesus responded then and his response is valid for us today: enjoy them as you can, but the real beauty is the Temple of the Body of Christ. Structures may and will fall. But the Church is not the structure.

One positive outcome of the covid pandemic has been the continued stress on the importance of the saints that make up the living Church. Walls are good to offer us shelter from the elements and for gathering us visibly in one place. We know what it means to be able to come together even when there is heavy rain or scorching heat. A Sunday without AC in our Florida Summer can be unbearable. The equipment we also have added on (video, sound, musical instruments and so on) also facilitates and enhances our worship experience. Our Property Committee and Church Council do their best to keep our facilities functioning and accessible. I want to thank them officially for the faithful administrative job they fulfill. That is true stewardship and accountability of the gifts of the people.

But again, Jesus tells us all that is secondary. Marvel at the Body of Christ, the true Temple. The Bible teaches us that we are the Body of Christ whose head is Christ.¹ We are all called to follow in Jesus' footsteps, employing the talents God has gifted us with to fulfil our

¹ Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18

vocation and have an active role in the mission God has given to the Church. It's our privilege and our duty to become aware of those gifts and to use them for our personal and collective growth.

This does not mean a smooth and incremental growth towards the reality which we call the Kingdom of God. There will be conflicts, violence, and mistakes made, as today's gospel clearly predicts. The way Jesus is talking sounds as if he were moving into the direction of predicting once again his crucifixion.² Instead, he is alerting his disciples of what is ahead for them. But it won't be the end for the Church: struggles are only the birth pangs of new life. The gospel joy is ahead of us. Do not fear but live out God's call.

God has loved us into creation, continues to sustain us in life, and gives us all that we need. God never stops providing for us. In our gratitude, we praise, love, and serve God. And we love and serve our neighbor. Our mission at Nativity is to offer opportunities for all to explore and express their gratitude to God at whatever faith stage they might be. We want to foster an environment where people may "approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith"³ and raise their hands and voices in gratitude to our awesome God. God Himself provides the resources for us not to come to the altar. We have gifts to offer which God has provided. So, can we honestly present ourselves to God unaware of God's gifts? Unwilling to use them? Hide them? Ignore them? Or, even worse, claim them as ours?

The love of Christ for us, the forgiveness and reconciliation that he has provided move us with grateful hearts to give back to God. What honor to be found worthy and acceptable by God. Can you believe it? God has given us the pleasant offering to offer back. In so doing, we grow individually and as a Church. Some ministries for your consideration:

Altar Guild: members of this committee feel privileged to be called to such ministry where they can show their love for the Lord as they

² Three times in Mark between chapters 8-10 and precisely, 8:31; 9:30f; 10:33f)

³ Hebrews 10:22

prepare the altar and the sanctuary for the weekly worship service and the special services during Lent or for weddings and funerals.

Quilts: quilting ladies enjoy the weekly work and fellowship time; it gives them hope to know that their ministry provides a warm quilt for refugees to cover themselves with during cold nights or use them as sacks to gather and carry their belongings.

Days for Girls: those participating in this ministry are aware of the vital contribution of their kindness to girls around the globe: the sawing and distribution of washable pads promotes health and dignity.

May our generous God bless us abundantly with trust in God's care and providence. Amen.