

Advent Midweek 1 – 2025

Will God Really Dwell on Earth – The Temple

1 Kings 8:22-30

1 Corinthians 3:10-17

John 2:13-22

God locates Himself. What do you think of that statement? Is it true? To be sure, God is omnipresent. The Lord God Almighty fills heaven and earth, His majesty is uncontained, He invades every quarter to time and space, and He is subject to no external limit. You are not like that at all. You are finite. You are subject to all the limitations of your creaturely nature. You can only be in one place at one time. You must eat and drink to sustain your biology. Your body is subject to fatigue, sickness, and age. Your whole life has been lived within the boundaries of the physical world.

This physical world – the Scriptures say that God created it. Do you believe that? It's a principal tenet of Christianity but do you believe it? I do. Almighty God, by the power of His Word, brought forth this physical creation. Time and space were His innovations, the desire of His will. It is a gift, this physical universe. Humanity was created in His image and was given the delights of a physical realm. God remained outside of creation even as He created it. God is above His creation, beyond His creation, separate from His creation. It is a mystery to our finite minds, but God is simultaneously within this creation and outside of it. He is not at the mercy of His creation but the author of it, the architect, the builder, and the sustainer of all that is.

Have you ever felt small and closely held at the same time? Not many of you remember your infancy, but is there any more secure feeling than as a newborn being held by your mother, your father? The family and I were on a trip north on the 1. It was winter, late, and the roads were mostly deserted. We were drawing near to our destination, Monterey, and we pulled over and turned off the lights. It was amazing. Stars – bright, luminous, innumerable, against a pitch black, moonless sky – it was musical and humbling and warm – a complex merging of feeling so small but yet being held so close. Who could possibly rule this vast cosmos? Who could govern its intricacies and its enormous scope?

God called Solomon to build Him a house. The tabernacle had performed its purpose. The tabernacle was the portable structure which Israel carted with them on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. The tabernacle was to give way to the temple. God's presence resided with the Israelites. He caused His glory to be manifest in their midst. God located Himself for the benefit of His people in the temple. And Solomon prayed. It was a prayer of dedication. The temple was complete, and the worship life of Israel was now prepared for a fuller, richer chapter. But Solomon was baffled. He saw the construction. He knew the "humanness" of what he had built. He asked a question that cuts to the core of our faith: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built?" (1 Kings 8:27).

How would you define humility? It's a common word, a well-used word, a virtue, a critical component of Christian decorum; how would you define it? Is God humble? What is the essence of humility? The online dictionary defined humility as the quality of having a modest

view of one's value or importance. Do you like that definition? My Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language said pretty much the same thing. Something's missing. The Author of all Creation lowered Himself and came into this physical world, took up residence in our human flesh. He rules time and space and He became subject to time and space. He gave the law, the ordinances of virtue and righteousness and goodness – and then He placed Himself *under* the law, becoming obedient to it. That's humility. But isn't that also love? He humbled Himself and took up residence in the Virgin's womb. Why? Because He loves us and was determined to manifest that love up close. The Son of God is located in the lowliness of man's flesh to save us. God *must* dwell on earth to save us.

Solomon's question was answered by angels, first to Mary and then to the shepherds. Will God really dwell on earth? Yes! God dwelling on earth is the movement that defines our humanity. The temple was a prelude to that which God ultimately intended. The Creator comes into His creation as a creature. Love and humility and salvation are wrapped in the flesh of the Virgin's Son. We have access to His holiness, we have access to His life, we have access to His love because God locates Himself among us. He wills to hold us with His sacrifice, with His humility, with His presence. In the OT, the tabernacle and then the temple was the only place where God had promised to make Himself available and accessible for His people. He had located Himself there *for* them. He revealed His glory *there*. He shared His holiness with His people *there*. He enacted their forgiveness *there*. It all points to Jesus. It all points to God being made man and dwelling among us.

Lots of people want to go to the Holy Land. It is understandable. To see the places where Jesus walked. To visualize the scenes from the bible while walking in the very locations where it happened, there's a strong pull to see such things with our own eyes. It is a historical reality. It is verifiable geographically. The guides are no doubt adept at capturing the movement, the drama, the critical places where salvation history unfolded. On one occasion, the Lord engaged a woman who drawing water from a well and the conversation turned to worship and location. She was a Samaritan and they believed that Mt. Gerizim was the proper location for worship while the Israelites built the temple in Jerusalem (Mt. Zion). Jesus said this: "Woman, believe me, the time is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:21, 23-24).

God is located in the flesh of Jesus. He is our place of worship. He is the truth. Where He is, where He has located Himself, there is a holy place, a very holy place. God has located Himself in the Word and the Sacraments. Through these means of grace we have access to the Father. Through these means of grace Jesus ministers to us, shares His holiness with us, and sustains our faith. God dwells on earth. God holds you with His love at this altar. Our altar, and countless others, are the throne of God's grace and the gate to heaven. Jesus' body is the Temple par excellence. He suffered in that body. He manifested His glory in that body. He saved you by that body. And now He gives it to you to eat. God locates Himself physically in this physical realm that you might receive all that He is and all that He has done. The body of Jesus is the temple of the living God. He tabernacled among us, He dwelt among us in order to hold us with His love, His forgiveness, and His divine humility.

When He was made man, the Son of God laid aside His divine prerogatives and took up the form of a servant. That is humility bonded to love. He is no longer bound by the limits of time and space. He is present with us because that is what He has always willed. The universe was made for no other reason.