



Family Service 15th November 2009 – Talk

As he was leaving the temple one of his disciples said to him, "look teacher what massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

The disciples of Jesus thought that the temple buildings were magnificent. As do we, most of us think that church buildings are wonderful great places to be in, the centre of our faith and the centre of the community.

But we need to look at the context: The temple of Jerusalem was extensively remodeled about 15 years before Jesus was born the original temple having stood for some 500 years

Why did Herod remodel the temple? He didn't actually do it to honour God but rather to appease the Jews who he ruled. So the magnificent temple that they were worshiping in wasn't there as a place of worship and respect but rather as an act to increase Herod's popularity.

So this got me thinking. How important are the church buildings and the cathedrals that we worship in to our worship? Do we really need them? If the buildings go does the church remain?

To assess this I need to do a little experiment and I need some little builders to make some church buildings out of building blocks and Lego.

Invite children to front to build church buildings

We'll come back to that later but first, in exploring what it all means, we need to review the technical definition. So what does the dictionary say?

Unhelpfully it comes up with two definitions:-

- 1) a building for Christian religious activities
- 2) an official Christian religious organization



And as I like using new technologies I had a look at what Wikipedia says. Again it defines a **church building** and its details but it then goes onto describe a **Christian Church** as *"thing belonging to the Lord"*; denoting both a Christian association of people and a place of worship.

The most important part of the definition to me is the Christian association and the belonging to the lord. It isn't the building, or as the oxford dictionary says being official or an organisation.

Of course we also have to look at what the bible says about church. In Ephesians 2 it is set out that whilst a church building is sometimes called God's House in reality God's household is not a building but a group of people. He lives in us and shows himself to a watching world through us

"and in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit."

Are people who never come into a formal church settling and worship elsewhere any less worthy than us?

- If we leave the church and go outside or go somewhere else are we a part of the church
- If we leave the church building and have church service elsewhere is it still church
- If we worship in a house group is it still church and if we simply enjoy time together as Christians is it still church?

Of course it is - so long as we still act as the church and act as good Christian people we will be shining lights and people are then more likely to be intrigued and may be more inclined to join us.

A Jesus said in Matthew 18 Verse 20 *"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."* So we don't have to be in church to be church. We just have to be together as Christians in Jesus' name. And who are those two or three people it is you and me!



- Oh and church services

So lets go back to our modeling what have we built? We have built some fantastic models with some model people in them but if I do this **knock models over** ... what remains. The building has gone but the people remain the people are still there. We can take the building away but the people remains the people are the most important factor.

The reading we heard earlier went onto say - "*do you see all these great buildings? replied Jesus. Not one stone here will be left on another every one will be thrown down.* And that prophesy became true! The way in which Jesus says this doesn't indicate to me he was sad or upset, or angry that this would happen. I think this tells us something about the value that he put on these magnificent building in comparison to the compassion with which he spoke about and treated people.

We could build more churches and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem but we need to recognize that to build our '**church**' it doesn't necessarily mean more people through the doors on a Sunday morning, but bringing more people to meet and come to know Jesus in which ever format that is.

SO ... is a fantastic church building dressing up in cassocks and formal worship necessary to be a church **NO**

does it help some people **YES**

and that is fine but we also need to recognize that it is not necessary to be true children of God.

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