

“God’s House”

Third Sunday in Lent

John 2:13-22 (23-25)

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” John 2:19

ABC’s *Extreme Makeover Home Edition* is an American reality television series that aired for nine seasons from 2003-2012. The goal of the show is to provide home improvements for less fortunate families and community schools. The show is hosted by former model, carpenter and veteran television personality Ty Pennington.

Each episode features a family that has faced some sort of recent or ongoing hardship such as a natural disaster or a family member with a life-threatening illness, in need of *new hope*. The show’s producers coordinate with a local construction contractor, which then coordinates with various companies in the building trades for a makeover of the family’s home including interior, exterior and landscaping. The makeover is performed in seven days while the family is on an all-expenses paid vacation. If the house is beyond repair, it is replaced entirely with donated materials and labor. Many skilled and unskilled volunteers also assist in the rapid construction of the house (Wikipedia, “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition”). The gift of a home makeover.

In our reading this morning we read about a house and a makeover of sorts. The house we read about is God’s house, the Temple. God gives it. The Temple, according to the Bible, is God’s means of establishing his relationship with his people. It holds the Tabernacle as God’s dwelling place where he meets his people. In the Temple the people worshipped God. In the Temple sacrifices were made on behalf of the people to maintain a right relationship with him. But throughout the Bible and in our Gospel reading we see evidence of God’s people corrupting and perverting God’s house. It is in need of a cleaning. It is in need of a makeover.

In our Gospel reading we see Jesus as the one who claims authority over God’s house, the temple. And so he cleanses it. With a whip of cords he goes about his extreme makeover. As God in the flesh he assumes authority over his house. He determines who is welcome. He is zealous for God’s truth and the true teaching of it.

We might also look around us and remember that we are God’s house, the Church. We are in a building where we meet as the Church to hear the true teaching of the Gospel and to receive the true presence of God and his eternal gifts as we live in this temporal world in the Holy Sacraments. But the Church is primarily the people. We are the Church, “the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” as the Apostle Paul declares to the

Ephesian Christians (Eph 2:19-20). The Church is the people gathered around God's Word and Sacraments, "being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph 2:22).

So we remember that just as God gave the temple and it was his house, so also God gives the Church. It is his church, not ours. It is his means of delivering grace to his people and keeping his people in Christ. Sometimes, though, we insist on having the Church on our own terms. We might struggle to believe Jesus' authoritative word. We might treat God's true teaching much like we would a buffet, picking and choosing what teachings we will believe and which ones to toss aside because they might be too inconvenient and too hard to swallow or too difficult to digest. We might try to manipulate the Church to meet our agendas and ideas. We might too heavily impose business models on its operation. And we are in need daily of God's cleansing Word. We are in need of God's home makeover we call the Law. It is God's Word of judgment that shows our Sin. It is God's true Word that convicts us and exposes the foundation of our body and soul for what it is—rotting, decaying, in need of an extreme makeover and transformation.

This is why God reveals to us his Christ. He is the true house of God in the flesh. He is the one who was born in Bethlehem, "the House of Bread." He is the one who is the Word who has become flesh and tabernacle or dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). God's house: the Christ. Jesus is God's final and full self-revelation. He is the temple. In Jesus God and man meet . . . literally. In his body, suspended between heaven and earth on the cross, all human beings find an eternal dwelling place. In him we receive God's extreme makeover. We are made anew in Christ. We become new creations. Bought with the price of God's holy and precious blood we are transformed (Rom 12:1-2).

Unlike the television show, God's transformation and extreme makeover is not just for the less fortunate or for the ones who seemingly deserve it from our human perspective. God's extreme makeover of our bodies and souls is for all people. It is for all people who come admitting their unworthiness, confessing their sins. It is for those who admit they are poor in Spirit, separated from the household of God, living as orphans with no eternal Father and home to call their own.

And through his Word and Sacrament he fills us with his Gospel. He fills us with his Christ. He rebuilds us into the shape and image of the true temple. God does this through means of the church. And it happens on his terms. He gives and we receive. He speaks and we hear and believe. "I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." "Take and eat; take and drink, for the forgiveness of all of your sins." We receive his grace. And it makes us over anew as his creatures. New in Christ. Dwelling with Christ now and forever.

I want to return to the show, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. The show aims to give *new hope* to a family recently knocked down by financial hardship, a chronic, life-threatening illness, or a natural disaster. The producers and cast of the show team up with a local contractor and volunteers to either build a completely new home or give an existing home an extreme makeover. And the goal, as the producers say, is to give *new hope*.

A new home and a way out of financial hardship can certainly reduce some stress and anxiety in this life. But that is not where our hope rests. We pray for the Holy Spirit to produce godly contentment within us regarding the wealth and blessings that the Lord has given or not given to us in this life. And while struggling to remain content with the measure of physical and material blessings with which the Lord has blessed us, we hold fast to a hope that far surpasses what this world can give. As St. Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4). As those who have been reborn through God's House: the Christ we have this hope and live in this hope as members of God's House: the Church. Amen.