

Rev. Seth D Bode + Sermon 286 + Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

"Lord God, You have appointed me as a bishop and pastor in Your Church, but You see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked Your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon Your Word. Use me as Your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all."

"Sir, we would see Jesus."

THE BUILDER OF EVERYTHING IS GOD

Gospel – Hebrews 3

¹Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, focus your attention on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. ²He was faithful to the one who appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in God's whole house. ³In fact, Jesus is worthy of greater glory than Moses, in the same way that the builder of a house has more honor than the house. ⁴For every house is built by someone, and God is the one who built everything.

⁵Moses was faithful as a servant within God's whole house by testifying to the things that would be spoken. ⁶But Christ is faithful as a Son over God's house. We are his house, if we hold on firmly to our confidence and the hope about which we boast until the end.

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Holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling,

- How nice to have another day with purpose!
- By purpose, I mean things just fall together on their own, right?

You woke up without any ill will toward the morning. You stretched and smiled and you didn't even need any coffee. Your clothes put themselves on you without you trying. The children listened to every word their parents said. A few eggs rolled up onto the stovetop, jumped into a pan, and the stove surface turned itself on, cooking to perfection. Toast hopped into the toaster on its own. A few oranges rolled in from trees that sprang up just yesterday. They squeezed themselves into your cup and knew exactly how much pulp to allow. Tires and metal parts just threw themselves together and became your car. It drove itself today, opening its own doors and avoiding every bump and pothole in the road on the way to church. Things just go well on their own, don't they?

- No, instead we have good reason to believe otherwise.

Things don't just happen without someone making them happen. Mornings aren't always happy, eggs don't cook themselves, cars don't drive themselves, and children generally don't obey their parents without some practice and discipline. In fact, if things knew how to improve on their own, we often wouldn't have any trouble at all. On the contrary, there's actually a law that says if anything can go wrong, it will. There is a lack of order in the universe, and a gradual decline into disorder. It is known as 'entropy.' A very common conclusion that leads people to is that for things to have order, Something or Someone had to put them together. That Something had to be outside of laws and nature, Something very powerful, very intelligent, and beyond time and space. It also would have to be very caring and understanding of the human experience, so we prefer to say 'Someone' instead of 'Something.' In the same way you don't happen upon a house in the woods and presume it was built by chance or by probability, but by intelligent strength and ingenuity, so we can look around at the universe and say,

The Builder Is God

That's what the Spirit tells us in Hebrews 3.

➤ Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians at a specific church who esteemed Moses highly. And why wouldn't they? Moses was known for bringing their ancestors out of bondage of slavery in Egypt. Moses was known for the plagues God worked through him. Moses was known for dividing the Red Sea with his staff. Moses was known for going between God and God's people, even praying for them when they seemed so rebellious and so against God. Moses was known for laying down the first five books of the Bible in writing. Moses was known for bringing the children of Israel through the wilderness, often telling them not what they wanted to hear but what God knew they needed to hear. Moses was esteemed by the Jews even in Christian times as being greater even than the angels. Verse 2 is almost a quotation of Numbers 12:7, "My servant Moses is faithful in all my / my whole house." He was faithful in every aspect of this house.

Yet as great as Moses was,

- Moses was not 'over' the house, but 'in' the house.

Hebrews is known for comparing Jesus in power to the most powerful entities, like angels, Moses, and even the Law of God, and Hebrews shows how Jesus is superior. Jesus is not "in" the house, but "over" the house.

Verse 3 clarifies that while both Moses and Jesus are faithful, Jesus is the more prominent, more faithful. Moses was not faulty in some way, nor did he neglect the house. But he was only 'in' the house. The house's parts, a doorknob or a kitchen sink, didn't do the building.

Here we are speaking in principle of God's household, the house composed of God's spiritual people. Moses' role was great, but God was the Builder.

- To make this point, the writer to the Hebrews says something in principle, that the Builder of everything is God.

The verb *paraskeuazw* does not mean to "furnish" or "decorate" or "retro-fit" the house, but to "construct" the house. One praises a grand house, yet praises far more the person who planned it and erected it. (Psalm 19:1, "The skies proclaim the works of His hands." 2 Cor. 5:1, "eternal house in heaven not built by human hands.")

All the inner workings of the body, the weather and skies, plants and animals and order in creation, each points to a Supreme Being. This is true self-evidently. If a person looks at the world through a microscope and also through a telescope, there is no other conclusion than that there is a Creator.

- Did the old house in the woods build itself?

Did thousands of notes hop together and produce Beethoven's sonatas? Did heaps of stone, concrete and rebar roll together to erect Lucas Oil Stadium? Did the gears and filaments in a wristwatch affix themselves together? Did your clothes fold themselves at the end of their drying cycle so you could just pull them out and distribute them to the linen closets and dressers? No.

So when you see a house that is on its own in the woods, you don't just imagine it came together on its own. You imagine there was intelligence behind the house, able to craft and stylize the house according to its needs.

The architect is not part of the house. The passage doesn't say the Builder IS everything. He is not contingent, or He is not the Builder. Instead, we call Him necessary. He is the explanation for it all.

- So we learn that Jesus was given greater glory than Moses.

One reason we would expect Jesus to be given glory is that He is Builder and Creator. We can find that truth throughout the Bible, that the Son of God, the preincarnate Christ, was active in creation. (John 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; He was with God in the beginning. All things were made by Him, without Him nothing was made that has been made." Heb. 1:2, "in these last days, God has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, and through Whom He made the universe.") But His care did not stop with creation.

- Jesus was given not only the glory of Builder, but of faithfulness to what is good.

A person doesn't call a line crooked unless that person knows a straight line. Jesus is able, as the Builder of everything, to view what is right and what is wrong. He can then bring the right and correct the wrong.

Jesus takes sides, and He has taken the side of good over evil.

To say that God is beyond taking sides is pantheism, that all creation has a point of view, since God would then be everything. Some people prefer their God to be what can be seen and heard, every tree and flower, every ocean and thing, whether living or inanimate. But that would miss the point of having a Builder. Think about it; if God were in cancer, to remove it would be wrong. We also don't call cancer good, even though that's true from the cancer's point of view. If God didn't take sides, the cancer surgeon would be a murderer, and the cancer would be heroic with every death it brings. Cancer instead is bad, and we can't look at it from any other point of view. We can't get away from a God who takes sides. As such,

- The Lord wants us on the side of faithfulness to good.

That's right. He wants us to say with Joshua (Josh. 24:15), "Choose you this day whom you will serve ... As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

What if we haven't been as faithful as Moses and Joshua? This is the fact. Because of who we are by sinful nature, we don't want to build after the blueprints of God. We don't want an eternal architect. Then we are a broken board in the house or an errant nail, a rough edge or a creaking floor that will fall in.

The moral law binds us. We love good, but we know when we've been bad. So we can't live with God, but we can't live without Him.

- So it is a good thing Jesus is the Builder.

It is also good that the Builder is faithful, enough to go to the cross. He built our salvation on that wood of the tree. The master Builder and Carpenter went the way of a common crook. He built a master plan that culminated in an open rock, an empty tomb. Since then, Jesus has built our salvation with faith. He sent His Spirit into our hearts, building on the foundation of prophets and apostles. The cornerstone is Christ Jesus Himself, with more promises than we could expect.

That is how we are built into His house. Like living stones, He places us together on the foundation, one onto another. We enter through a narrow door. Wide is the path to destruction. This narrow door is a personal place where we confess our sins, drowning our inner sinner in the waters of our baptism day after day so a new life may arise.

So our text says, "We are God's house, if we hold on firmly to our confidence and the hope about which we boast until the end."

- God is an artist,

and He paints in sunsets and mountains and oceans and medicines. He has a purpose as a builder. (Eccl. 3:11, "He has set eternity on the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.")

If the whole world has no meaning, we would have never found that out, that it has no meaning. But instead we have found out about a Builder. And our time is coming. It's a day when the Builder pulls away the curtain, when the Author appears onstage. When the Author appears onstage, the play is over. When it is all over, we shall view how glorious He really is; and we will know fully, even as we are fully known.

Amen.