

“Rebuilding”

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*First Presbyterian Church
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Acts 15:1-21
Amos 9:11-12*

Have you ever broken something? Have you ever rebuilt something?

Sometimes we can fix it! Rebuild it! Sometimes we can't! But, our faith declares – God can always fix it, repair it, rebuild it. God is in the rebuilding business –

- Just look at Jesus.
- Just look at Jesus.

So often in our lives things get broken. Isn't that the case? And they need to be fixed – rebuilt.

Some rebuilding needs to take place in our personal lives. You know what I'm talking about.

- A broken relationship
- A broken promise
- A broken vision
- A broken plan
- A broken...(you add the description.)

But, my friends – in faith – it doesn't end there. By no means. Hold on! We have some journeying to go.

I believe it was at the Jersey shore. I saw on the news that a very talented Sculptor had built a huge sandcastle. It stood several feet tall and probably 12 feet in diameter. But, I could not see all of this magnificent castle, because someone had, under the cover of night, done his worst to destroy this work of art. The artist had worked for days sculpting this eye-catching, sand structure – and it took only minutes for someone to tear it down. For a brief moment, as I heard the story, I wondered, “What will the artist do?” Before I could cogitate any further, there he was on screen, rebuilding his sandcastle.

Frustrated? You bet!

Angry? Probably!

Defeated? No way!

It appeared that it did not take him very long to rebuild what he had created, what he had constructed.

You've all seen the little boy on the beach. Well there was this “boy” on his knees scooping up sand into his red plastic bucket, pressing it down, getting it ready. Once the moist sand is patted down sufficiently, he ever so carefully turns over the bucket, exactly in the right spot, taps the top and the sand-brick lets loose of the bucket. He does this time, after time, after time, after time, after...(you get the point). He has a vision and is

working that vision, bucket after bucket, after bucket, after (you know the drill). He'll add some extras, such as pebbles and shells for decoration, and Popsicle sticks for bridges.

Now this little fellow has done this before. And he has learned something. Later in the day, the tide will come in, and his sand castle will be no more. He knows the waves will finally take his castle. Amazingly, he's okay with it. Why? Because he knows he'll be back tomorrow, and once again rebuild his castle from the sand on the beach. He somehow intuits – rebuilding is part of life.

Rebuilding is necessary in our lives – on so many levels; personal, family, community, and national!

We are creatures, Children of God, created in God's image to be future oriented – to go into the future – to pick up the pieces, to build from the pieces of life, to create beauty and express joy!

My friends, I've had the blessed opportunity twice, to stand at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem on Mt Zion; to stand and touch the wall. To place written prayers between the huge stones was inspiring, and emotionally moving. As I stepped back and looked up at the wall, I called Shawn back here in the States to share this moment (although it was 4:00 a.m. in Wilkes-Barre). That Wall was a rebuilt wall. It was rebuilt 2,000 years ago. Today, it is a powerful reminder to our Jewish friends, of their people, their land and their God. (I know there are complications today. A sacred site for Muslims the "Dome of the Rock" stands just up the hill and around the corner, less than 50 yards away.) We hope for a future where Jewish and Muslim peoples will live together respectfully in Israel and Palestine.

The Judeo-Christian tradition is linear, not cyclical. We are not on an ever-circling wheel of nature, but history has a trajectory, a purpose! Back in King David's time (circa 1,000 B.C.) Israel wanted a temple, a beautiful, inspiring architectural wonder to worship in and to take pride in. To identify them-selves, King Solomon (David's son) was the one to have the Temple built, and it was magnificent.

Located up on Mt. Zion, it symbolized God's presence with the people. But, centuries later, the Neo Babylonians destroyed their beloved Temple, burned it to the ground! The Jews were defeated, dispersed. Time and time and time and time (you get the point) again and again the Jews were defeated, stripped of their freedoms and their land. But, their prophets, their scriptures, never gave up hope of rebuilding their place in the sun!! They continuously decreed, "We will rebuild!"

Fifty years after the Neo Babylonian defeat and destruction, returning exiles to Jerusalem sought to rebuild the temple. Ezra and Nehemiah speak of such a rebuilding! Never give up! Keep the vision!

During the time of Jesus, several centuries later, Roman leader Herod, rebuilds, totally rebuilds the temple! Again, a magnificent structure! Again, near the end of the first century CE the Roman General Titus, burns it to the ground. And yet the Wall (Wailing Wall) remained – a reminder!! A glimmer of hope!

When evil, when unforeseen events, when circumstances beyond your control, when time itself – tears down at what you have built in your life, your very life, Rebuild!! Rebuild!!

- When a relationship ends, don't give up - Rebuild!
- When your job ends, or your boss disparages what you've done, don't just kick sand in the air - Rebuild!
- When life is thrown into confusion, don't dismiss your life – Rebuild!
- That's how you're created!!
- Our God is a rebuilding God!

Thankfully, we humans, created in the image of God have the capacity to recreate, to rebuild our lives!

From the fallen rubble of sandcastles, or broken promises, or lost opportunities – God has a plan – and it includes you rebuilding your life!

Thank God for the opportunity of rebuilding! For they are there! For the conference in Jerusalem in the 50's of the CE came to understand, from their remembering from Amos and others, hundreds of years earlier, that in rebuilding from the ruins, all people – Jew and non-Jew – will be and are included in God's plan.

I love this ancient declaration! The Lord declares: "I will rebuild its ruins!!"

Now there is a belief to take hold of and act on!! You see there is no denial of ruins. They are out there!

They are in here!?

They are in here!?

Christ doesn't deny the cross, but he focuses elsewhere! The future can be different! Christ says it must be different!

Whatever is going on in your life, whatever will go on in your life; tuck this phrase into your mind,

“ With the help of God, in Christ,”

“I will rebuild!”

“I will rebuild!”

Amen.