

May the words of my mouth and the mediations of my heart be acceptable to you oh God, my strength and my joy... Amen

The Notre Dame Cathedral in France was erected in 1163, and it has been a popular destination for many Christians, historians, and tourists.

Making the date, April 15 2019, a day to remember, as that was the day when the famous Notre Dame Cathedral caught fire.

The fire burned for 15 hours. While firefighters did their best to contain the blaze and worked to keep as much of the building in tact as possible.

I remember the shock that many people shared when they heard of this devastating news...

The world united in prayer vigils and people came together in song. World leaders spoke out on multiple platforms on the devastation and extended their thoughts and prayers.

Pope Francis reported his shock and sadness noting that "The Cathedral of Notre Dame, (is a) symbol of Christianity in France and in the world.¹"

A symbol of Christianity... Now, I think that is an accurate description.

As us humans like our symbols, our buildings, and physical things. As they are something that we can cling to. Something that we can embody and experience in the flesh.

Which is important when it comes to faith... As so much of faith is about what is not seen and not known.

But sometimes, symbols or places can take on too much value... And the original meaning can become lost. Especially when it comes to faith.

¹ <https://news.wttw.com/2019/04/15/shock-prayers-around-world-notre-dame-cathedral>

Because when a place becomes more important than the faith that is to be cultivated there, we risk succumbing to idolatry.

Which makes me wonder if that is what Jesus was getting at today... That faith is more than a worship space.

And maybe Jesus chose to use this apocalyptic and doom filled gospel to not only share his insights of the future...

Maybe Jesus spoke these words to shake his disciples up, to illustrate to them that faith is more than a worship space.

Because I can only imagine, hearing what Jesus had to say about the sacred temple would have been quite shocking.

As the temple had been around for over 500 years. And not only that, it had recently undergone an extensive and impressive renovation by Herod. And according to historians Herod was quite the builder and spared no expenses.

In fact, the renovations took 80 years to complete. The renovations included ample white marble, Babylonian tapestries made from fine linen dyed deep blue, scarlet, and purple, with gold and silver-plated gates and gold-plated doors throughout.

Which makes me think that when the disciples heard of this utter destruction, that they must have had similar emotions to those of us who witnessed the fire at the Notre Dame Cathedral...

But the bad news didn't stop there in the gospel today. Jesus continued on by sharing his predictions of earthquakes, famines, and plagues...

And if we change out the word plague for pandemic, it really makes one wonder, what century was Jesus really speaking to?

Yet, throughout this turbulent gospel, filled with doom and hard to stomach thoughts... The good news still shines through at the end...

That with all earthy structures crumbling, with death and disease abounding, Jesus boldly claims that “not a hair of your head will perish.”

And the only way that Jesus could boldly claim this, is because of what he was about to do.

Because shortly after this conversation took place, Jesus died on the cross and went to the place of ultimate destruction...

But, as we all know, that space was not able to contain him... Allowing him to come back from that place... Eradicating the finality of death's grip... And by doing so, creating a new creation.

A creation where not even a hair on your head can perish.

A creation where there is no disease, death, or famine.

A creation where there is no fear or worry.

Where God's love conquers all.

A creation that you were born into through your baptism.

Where you were united with Christ in both his death, and in his resurrected life.

And today we will be baptizing Jackson Edward Mueller, into this creation, into this community, and into the greater community of faith.

Because faith is more than a single worship place.

Faith lives, because of the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Faith lives, because of the sacrifice of Christ.

Faith lives, because God is always creating all things new...

And as important as it is, to have places to worship.... So that we can come together in prayer and in song. To receive the word of God, and the body and blood of Christ...

It is just as important to take that same faith... The faith that we cultivate here together... Out into the world.

And if you are worried about how to do that... Remember what Jesus said in the midst of this chaotic gospel...

That he will give you words and wisdom.

Because faith lives in you, not in a building.

And the Christian faith has been around for over 2000 years... With the roots of our faith extending to well over 10,000 years ago. When the words of the Old Testament were passed on through word of mouth.

Because the thing about faith, is that it will always find a space to breathe.

God will always find a way to cultivate faith... God will always bring people together in worship, prayer, and song.

Because even when symbols of the Christian faith are destroyed, like the temple, or when they are threatened with destruction, like the Notre Dame Cathedral, history shows, that faith prevails and that people come together.

Because that is how the Holy Spirit works. The Holy Spirit provides.

And it is my prayer that in this space the Holy Spirit will provide you with what you need for the week ahead.

That this space is a place where you can come to be fueled up for the week.

So that when you leave, and enter the turbulent mission field of life, you can share the love of Christ with others.

The love of Christ that lives in you.

For nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ... Amen