

## **“BUILDING AN ETERNAL KINGDOM.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

**August 1, 2021, 9 and 10:30 AM**

**Text for the Sermon: Acts 18:18-28**

**Prayer:** Holy Father, what we know not, teach us, what we have not, give us, what we are not, make us, for Your Son's sake, Amen.

### **Introduction.**

What a blessed two weekends of Serve we have had. Around 80 members of all ages served at about 7 sites over two weekends and accomplished a huge amount of work. I am proud of First Church and thankful for the Serve Team of Molly, Cal and Laura, Len and Steve. I am grateful for all the labor, all the effort, all the planning and organizing. And most importantly, all of the prayer over the last year. God blessed the weather, the work, the right people in the right places.

When we were out at Telos Camp in Ferndale, Tim Lewis, the former missionary who runs and directs the camp spoke to us before we started our work and he told a story.

A man walked on to a construction site and asked a worker what he was doing and he said he was laying brick. He saw another man doing the same thing and asked him what he was doing and he said he was building a wall. There was another man doing the same thing and he asked him what he was doing and he said he was building a cathedral.  
Perspective.

Tim said we were not there to pull weeds, and rake, and cut tree limbs, and split wood, and put in a window. We were there to reach the least reached lost souls on earth with the Gospel and to build the kingdom of God. How is that?

Tim and his wife Becky are the ones who developed the new focus in missions on Frontier people groups, the most least reached of the least reached people groups. They are using Telos as a base for reaching these least reached groups of people in the world, representing hundreds of millions of souls who have never heard the Gospel.

Perspective changes everything. What are we doing with our lives? Are we laying brick or are we building a cathedral?

**What is the kingdom of God?**

The kingdom of God was ushered in with the birth, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. It will be consummated when He returns as Judge and King.

The kingdom of God is about reconciling a fallen humanity with the living God through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Mark 1:15** Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

The kingdom is a relational reality, the kingdom has a king, the kingdom is wherever the Lordship of Jesus Christ is acknowledged in repentance, faith, and new obedience.

The church of Jesus Christ is the visible manifestation of the kingdom of God in the lives of believers on earth. In and through the gathered assembly of the saints God manifests His presence and power, His gifts and His glory to the world.

Christians are ambassadors for the King and His kingdom. But let’s be clear. The foundation we are building on is Jesus Christ, without Him there is no building. The power and strength is the Holy Spirit. The glory and the grace is all God’s.

### ***What does this have to do with Acts 18:18-28?***

In the perfect providence of God this text comes on this Sunday at the conclusion of Serve and as we start preparing for the fall. This text helps us see how to be transformed from brick layers to cathedral builders, not just on Serve weekends, but everyday of our lives.

What is Paul doing in our text?

If we have a brick layers perspective we would say he is taking a road trip, racking up frequent flyer miles. If we have a wall builders perspective we might say Paul is an itinerate preacher making his way across the Roman Empire, one Jewish convert trying to convert other Jews and Gentiles. But no, Paul is a master-builder laying a foundation for the eternal kingdom of God that spreads across the world, to every tribe, tongue, language and people.

**I Corinthians 3:10-11** According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Perspective changes everything.

## **How do you build for the kingdom of God?**

*You start by getting a haircut, vs. 18.*

18:18 At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow.

All we know is that Paul had made a vow to God and he faithfully kept it. He put devotion and obedience to God first. He is working for a great kingdom and a great God.

*You join with others who are of the same perspective, vs. 18-19.*

Remember back in Acts 13 the church set apart and sent out Paul and Barnabas on the first kingdom building missionary journey. On the second missionary journey Paul and Silas went one way and Barnabas and John Mark went another way, God doubled down on the kingdom building. On Paul's second journey they were joined by Timothy, then Luke, and now in Corinth Aquila and Priscilla.

When God goes about building His kingdom He does it through His Church, through Christians He has called us out of the world and into His Church. Our being together is crucial. We don't build as well when we are lonely and isolated. The world is full of brick layers. Spend time around people with a kingdom building perspective. That's why God has called you here.

*You think strategically and look for open doors, vs. 19.*

Paul does that in every city, going first to the synagogue, as he does again in Ephesus. And this time God opens the door wide and he is welcomed and invited to stay.

Think about the open doors for the Gospel in your life. Think about the open doors where you can let your light shine in our words or actions or attitude. Where do you see the Spirit at work?

*You pray for God's kingdom to come and for His will to be done, vs. 21.*

I will return God willing. If it pleases the Lord.

This is a kingdom of God mentality when we want God's will to be done, not ours.

It is spiritual wisdom on our part to submit our purposes to the will of God and His eternal providence. We cannot lift a single finger without the will of the Lord. It is only in Him that we live and move and have our being.

Let us confess our pride and arrogance in presuming on God and thinking we are in control of our lives, our accomplishments, our destinies.

**James 4:13-15** Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

When you wake up each morning adopt a kingdom of God perspective and say, “Thy will be done, and make me an instrument of your will.” And don’t just pray this for yourself, pray it for your family and your church.

*You don’t forget home and where you came from, vs. 22.*

18:22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.

Paul goes back to his roots, first up to Jerusalem and then down to Antioch in Syria. He reports back all that God did in Asia and Europe, how God protected and delivered him, how God defeated Satan, how God built His kingdom.

Home is sometimes the hardest place to be a Christian. Relatives can be some of the hardest to shine our light and live out the difference our faith makes. Pray for a kingdom perspective at home. Tell stories of God’s grace and goodness, of seeing the kingdom being built.

Make your marriage kingdom building. It is an earthly picture of the relationship that exists between Jesus and His bride the church. So how we do our marriages paints that picture, points to that spiritual reality, builds on earth a manifestation of Jesus and His church.

Make your parenting kingdom building. God desires a godly seed, having children is a reflection of the fruitfulness of God, and a godly seed is how His kingdom is being built. Do you change diapers to the glory of God and for the sake of His kingdom? Do you discipline with a kingdom goal and purpose?

You are building the kingdom in your devotions and in your family devotions. You are sowing the seed for a great harvest.

You are building the kingdom in your business practices, in what you do, how you do it, how you show integrity and honest, how you keep your word, how you treat others, in what your ultimate goal or aim is.

***You build up the brothers, encourage the saints, vs. 23.***

18:23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

What does strengthening the disciples sound like? You can read it in all Paul's letters. Listen to these simple kingdom building instructions found in Romans 12.

**Romans 12:9-21** Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ... 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ... 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Here's a specific application of this text. Don't shame someone for getting the vaccine or for not getting the vaccine. Honor each other and respect others decisions. When you shame someone you are not building the kingdom you are tearing it down. Practice the Golden Rule.

***You use the gifts you have to the best of your God-enabled ability.***

18:24-25 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

He didn't hid his light under a bushel. He didn't hid behind his inadequacy. He didn't focus on his weaknesses. He didn't think there were others who were better so he would just let them do it. God delights to use what is weak and foolish, impotent and ignorant for His glory.

Don't listen to Satan's lies and don't listen to your own lies. Don't give into the imposter syndrome that says you are a fraud and if you try to do anything you will fail.

You've been saved by grace and not your performance. You are created in Christ Jesus for good works and there is work to be done. Just go for it. God can draw straight lines with crooked sticks. He'll work through your imperfect efforts, as He did with Apollos.

How many of us today with a better knowledge of the Gospel than Apollos, are still less willing to speak up and promote the Kingdom of Christ?

***You mentor those who need help, vs. 26.***

18:26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

He knew only the baptism of John, which means he knew Christ was the Messiah, the Redeemer who had come to bring reconciliation to the Father through repentance and faith in Jesus.

He accurately preached concerning Jesus. It wasn't that Apollos was saying anything wrong, but he wasn't hitting on all eight cylinders, he didn't know Jesus in all His fullness and didn't know the Christian baptism as the sign and seal of his relationship with Jesus.

What Aquila and Priscilla did was kingdom building, coming along side someone else, as a mentor, as a teacher, as a helper and encourager. This is older wiser people helping younger ones. Whose future can you invest in?

We have a need for this in our flock, we need some cathedral perspective people to invest in the lives of our young people in GEMS, in the senior high youth group, in teaching children. Will you pray God will raise up and send.

By the way, why are Aquila and Priscilla there in Ephesus? Remember they had been forced to flee their home in Rome by the Emperor Claudius. So what did they do? They turned adversity into opportunity for building the kingdom, for advancing the Gospel.

You can build the kingdom just as effectively out of how you handle hardship and difficulty differently than how the world does.

If God wills for a change in direction, a change in ministry are we open to what He is doing even if we can't see what it is. I am not a big fan of change, but then I don't think I know anyone who really is. Sometimes God has to use a big stick to get us to follow His leading in new ways.

*You write letters, send cards, vs. 27.*

27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him.

This is a good reminder that you can be part of building a cathedral even if you can do physical labor, even if you aren't in some spotlight role.

Writing letters, sending cards, writing emails are kingdom building when you are building up the saints or sowing seed with unbelievers. Send someone a card. John Mead told me how much he appreciated it.

In just a few summary verses of Paul's travel diary see how God accomplishes His redemptive mission on earth to build His kingdom through the lives and experiences and actions of His servants, actions as simple as writing a letter and as bold as preaching to Jews.

### **Conclusion and application.**

Are you a brick layer, a wall builder or a cathedral maker? Do you have a kingdom perspective?

*How do you build a cathedral? How do you build the Kingdom of God?*

Think about that question for a moment. How do you go about building the Kingdom of God?

It sounds huge, daunting, even overwhelming, it could sound like a job better left for professionals.

John Calvin said it is the task of the church to make the invisible kingdom visible. We do that by living in such a way that we bear witness to the reality of the kingship of Christ in our jobs, our families, our schools, and even our checkbooks, because God in Christ is King over every one of these spheres of life. The only way the kingdom of God is going to be manifest in this world before Christ comes is if we manifest it by the way we live as citizens of heaven and subjects of the King.

Here is how an Olympic athlete builds the kingdom of God. Sydney McLaughlin, USA track world record holder, proclaims her faith boldly, “Records come and go, the glory of God is eternal. I no longer run for self-recognition, but to reflect His perfect will that is already set in stone. I don't deserve anything. But by grace, through faith, Jesus has given me everything.”

When you volunteer at church to bring cookies or serve in the nursery or make a meal, don't do it as a brick layer, but as a kingdom builder.

Offer to drive John Mead to dialysis in Bellingham on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5 pm.

Make your retirement kingdom building. Be a kingdom builder by being a faithful Christian in whatever your calling and vocation, at work, at home, at school. By being a light in this dark world to your family, friends, boss, co-workers, clients, customers, and even strangers.

Begin each day with humble submission praying that God's name would be hallowed through you, that God would make you an instrument in His hand to build and bring about His kingdom, that He would do His will in your life for His glory.

Do whatever we do as unto the Lord, in a way that bears witness to Jesus, in a way that shows our lives have been changed and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, in ways that is a manifestation of the grace of God in our lives.

**Prayer:** Jesus, teach us to pray and when you teach us to pray, teach us what it means to ask for your kingdom to come, for your will to be done on earth as in heaven, in our church and in our homes and in our hearts as it is in heaven.