

# "Temples of the Holy Spirit"

Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior from sin, death, and eternal torment in hell. Amen.

Dear Fellow Inhabitants of the temple of God:

Certain words just don't sound good, no matter how you say them. "Slimy," "Creepy," "pus." There's just no way to make those words sound good. Think back to the early days here on the prairie. What would you want to be called if you moved onto some land that didn't necessarily belong to you and just started living there? The folks who first moved to this area and began living off the land were given rather dashing titles like "trail blazers," "explorers," "mountain men," or "pioneers." After the *pioneers* came the *settlers*. Still not bad. After the *settlers* came the *ranchers* and *farmers*. All good. But somewhere along the line there came another category of those who came west looking for a place to call their own. They pretty much did what everyone before them had done – settled into a place they hadn't necessary paid for – but by the time they came on the scene the land was pretty much all claimed, legally or otherwise. That's why this last group were commonly known as *squatters*. Even if you didn't know anything about the name, the word itself just doesn't sound good. Who would ever want to boldly proclaim at a family reunion, "*Why, yes. My wife and I are squatters!*"?

The problem with squatters was that they were often seen as ingrates who tried to live off the hard work of others, but who seemed to show little or no gratitude for the hard work that had been done by someone else to make their newly acquired home what it was. Historians tell us that some had little regard or respect for the land, since they were always in doubt as to whether or not they would be able to keep it, and therefore reluctant to give it their all. In fact they often proved to be the bane of the rightful landowner and a source of constant friction and strife.

It makes you wonder just how our God sees us. Our text for this morning tells us that we are living in dwellings that are not our own and benefitting from the work of Another. Yet we tend not only to act as if our lives are ours, but to routinely misuse and disrespect what we have been given. Does God see us as tenants, settlers, or just "no-account squatters"? This is one of the questions that we will seek to answer on the basis of our text for this morning, found in the Sixth Chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Church in Corinth:

ESV **1 Corinthians 6:12-20** *"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. <sup>13</sup> "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"--and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup> And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. <sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." <sup>17</sup> But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. <sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

So far the very words of our God. Confident that God will keep his promise to visit us with his power, comfort, strength, and wisdom whenever we come to him in his Word, so we pray, "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.**" Amen.

The greatest and perhaps most difficult lesson of this text with which we must first come to grips is the fact that you and I don't own ourselves. Hear that again and allow it to sink in: *You and I don't own ourselves*. We are, in fact, as our text put it, "**bought with a price.**"

The unbelieving world around us really, really doesn't want to hear that. In fact the very fabric of who they are and what they do is woven from the brain-threads of humanism and self-ownership. Think for a moment of the great and ongoing sins of our society and you will find that in each case the evil is justified on the basis of self-ownership. Abortion jumps out as the most obvious example. Society's promotion and defense of what is unquestionably the most barbaric offense of our times – the ongoing slaughter of the sweetest and most helpless among us – that heinous evil is predicated and justified on the basis of the misguided notion that a woman owns her own body and therefore should be allowed to do whatever she wants with it. Plug in other great sins that our society seeks to justify and behind them all you will find the notion that man owns himself and therefore can do what he wants

"as long as he doesn't infringe on the rights of another" - others who, in their minds, are also self-owned.

Into that darkness shines the divine brilliance of our text: **"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."**

This will actually serve as a life-changer, *if we let it*. It can serve as a touchstone or centering point all throughout our lives. How so? Because it permanently alters our entire worldview. It forever changes how we look at everything that we do, all the decisions that we make, every direction that we take in life. Truly understanding these words from our God means that nothing will ever be the same again, because suddenly it isn't all about me; it's all about God. The question then is not *"What makes me happy?"* but *"How can I best serve and glorify God with the gifts or tools that he's given me?"* Not *"How will this please or benefit me?"* but *"Will this please the Holy Spirit that lives within me?"* The renter or occupant doesn't get to decide, the Owner does.

It also therefore radically alters our definition or perception of "success," doesn't it? The test is not then defined according to money, power, pleasure, fame, and the accumulation of "stuff," but according to how well you serve the One who actually owns the body that you inhabit.

Does this mean then that everyone has to be a pastor or teacher to please God? Of course not. In fact this is the foundation of the oft-neglected Doctrine of Vocation. It is God who calls some to be pastors, teachers, missionaries, etc., and obviously he neither equips nor calls *everyone* for that work. Those that God does call into the public ministry are simply called to equip other Christians for kingdom work. That means that God's plan is that *everyone* will be active and faithful in their church and faith-life, regardless of occupation. It means God has called you (no matter who you are) to serve him in whatever station of life you find yourself. Since we all serve the same God with the same goal, all will need the Word of God to be the unbroken thread that runs through every single day.

That's sort of the picture of the perfect world in which you and I ought to live. But then we are dragged back to the image of the squatter, and we begin to wonder if that is really how God sees us. We have established the fact that our bodies and lives are not our own. They belong to God. You and I do not therefore have the option of "home ownership." We can be devoted and conscientious tenants in the temple of God that is our body,

or we can be loathsome squatters. The difference was spelled out for us in our text.

Evidently some of the souls in Corinth were using and abusing what had become a popular expression of the day: **"All things are lawful for me!"** That's squatter talk. It's the sort of thing you say to try to convince yourself that your immoral behavior is somehow acceptable. Paul went on to put it all into perspective in our text when he said: **"All things are lawful for me,' but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be enslaved by anything."**

Some of the Corinthians were evidently trying to justify their shoddy behavior by claiming that since Jesus paid for all sins, their actions didn't really matter. Jesus certainly did pay the penalty for every single sin, and man is not saved by his actions but through faith in Jesus Christ. But sin does not advance the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, it diminishes, erodes, and eventually destroys saving faith. Yet somehow in the minds of some of the Christians in Corinth, they came to the conclusion that they could do pretty much whatever they wanted with impunity – that their actions somehow didn't matter and that God somehow didn't care.

Christians experience an internal change of heart at conversion. The true Christian is no longer a helpless slave to his passions – which is exactly why Paul said what he did in our text: **"All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be enslaved by anything."** He then went on to address one particular area of sin – the sewer that is sexual immorality – pointing out just why sexual immorality is so terrible: **"Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"**

How repulsed each of us ought to be at the thought of allowing any sort of sexual immorality "inside the walls." Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who since conversion has been living within us. How appalling, how profoundly *wrong*, to introduce anything so unholy into the temple of the Holy Spirit that is now your body and life. Though our society is awash in such filth, how repulsive to allow anything at all that is so unholy into the habitations of our Holy God.

Do you ever imagine that the godless have it better than you in that they live their lives with no constraints? Focus instead on these words in our text: **"For you were bought with a price."** That purchase price

was, of course, the life-blood of Jesus Christ. Yet understand this well: every single human being has only two options – *neither of which is self-ownership*. The alternative to being owned and inhabited by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ is ownership by sin and Satan. The hard cold fact is that *you and I can never really own ourselves*. We are owned by our God or we are owned by the devil. We are never – and can never be – the independent operators so many imagine.

Therefore far from existing as an ongoing sense of deprivation or injustice, the fact that *God* owns and lives within us is our greatest joy and comfort – a constant source of amazement. Our text assures us that it was Jesus Christ who saved us from the eternal torment we had both earned and deserved. It is therefore only that old Adam in us that bristles at the thought of being owned, inhabited, and controlled by our Holy God. That new man in us couldn't be more pleased. That new, holy part in us rejoices daily in our inner communion with our God, and the priceless, intimate connection we personally have with him through faith in Jesus Christ as the one who has paid in full the debt we owed for our sins. Our new man understands that the only other alternative is ownership by Satan and an eternity in hell.

How could you and I ever feel burdened or displeased by the fact that God himself is the landlord of our bodies and lives? How could this intimate connection to our God ever be a bad or negative thing? How could we ever be anything but overjoyed at the news that we are indeed bought and paid for by the life and death of Jesus Christ? On the contrary, we pray this morning that that Holy Spirit who lives now within us would never leave. We pray instead that he would reign there without a rival, and that he would give us the wisdom to make the sort of decisions that give honor always and only to our God – in no way ever dishonoring that God who now lives within us. Amen.

## **Scripture Readings**

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Samuel 3:1-10** Now the young man Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision. <sup>2</sup> ¶ At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. <sup>3</sup> The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" <sup>5</sup> and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I

am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." <sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the young man. <sup>9</sup> Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. <sup>10</sup> ¶ And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 1:43-51** The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." <sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." <sup>47</sup> Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." <sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup> And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

# ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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**The Second Sunday after Epiphany – January 17, 2021**

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

## The Opening Hymn – 126 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Arise and Shine in Splendor"

## The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

## The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

**The First Lesson:** (1 Samuel 3:1-10) Our first lesson is the account of how the Lord first spoke to the young Prophet Samuel. One of the great lessons we take from this reading is the reminder to listen to the voice of our God. Though today he does not speak audibly, as he did in Samuel's day, yet he does speak to us clearly and accurately in the Bible. Even there it is necessary to "listen" carefully. God grant that we all do so consistently.

## Psalm 23 (Supplement page 36)

**The Gospel Lesson:** (John 1:43-51) Last week we heard how Jesus began his public ministry at his baptism by John in the Jordan River. Our lesson this morning tells of how he began to gather and train his disciples for the great work that was yet to be done. Though Jesus alone could offer the payment for sin, he chose human beings to spread the news of what he has done. That work is ongoing, and God called *us* to carry on that great work still today.

## The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

## The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 415 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Lo, Many Shall Come from the East and the West"

## The Sermon – Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (Printed on the back of this bulletin)

**"Temples of the Holy Spirit"**

## The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

## The Post-Sermon Hymn – 415 (Stanzas 5-7) (Red Hymnal)

"Lo, Many Shall Come from the East and the West"

## The Prayers

## The Benediction

## The Closing Hymn – 126 (Stanza 5) (Red Hymnal)

"Arise and Shine in Splendor"

## Silent Prayer

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

## Attendance – Sunday (31) Average (30)

### This Week at St. Paul:

<b>Today</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>-6:00 p.m.</b>	– Confirmation Class
	<b>-7:00 p.m.</b>	– Midweek Bible Study
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Women's Fellowship Meeting
<b>Next Sunday</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	–Worship Service w/ Holy Communion
	<b>-11:15 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour

**CLC News** – Pastor Michael Eichstadt has returned the call to Living Savior of Eden Prairie. Pastor David Ude has returned the call to Redeemer of Cheyenne. That congregation has now called Pastor Mark Tiefel.

**Women's Fellowship Meeting** – The Women's Fellowship is scheduled to meet this Saturday, January 23, at 10:00 a.m. The location is Mocha Mommas in the Gateway Mall. For more information, please see Cindy Ollenburger. The men are planning an outing to Donut Daddies.

**Church Council Notes** – All members of the Council, plus the Pastor, were present for the meeting on 1/10. Treasurer Mantz reported that offerings in December were \$1,014 less than budgeted needs, resulting in a 2020 shortfall of \$8,665 (\$4,718 after cost saving measures). [See note from the Council below.] The Council is investigating window treatments for the steeple to replace the current covering that has yellowed over time. A security system for the church has been placed on hold until financially feasible. The 2019 Audit found the church records to be in good order. The next Council meeting is scheduled for February 21.

**From the Church Council** – The Voters approved the 2021 annual operating budget of \$93,593 (a 2.15% **decrease** from 2020) which translates to basic operating needs of about \$7,800 per month or \$1,800 per week. The 2021 budget reduction was possible through various cost saving strategies implemented by the Council. However, our actual offerings in 2020 still fell short of expenses by \$4,718 which drew down our overall cash reserves. The shortfall in 2020 translates to 5% of the new 2021 operating budget. Please prayerfully consider the ongoing needs of our congregation.