

New Building Dedication Service

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] It's our privilege to welcome you to our worship at Grace Fellowship Church this morning. Our presence here today is evidence that the Lord is good, that His love endures forever, that He is faithful to all generations. And so we thank you for gathering with us on this first day that we meet in our new building. A special welcome to all who are visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. I'm glad to have some folks from the Reformed Baptist Church in Holland who have made their way here as representatives to rejoice with us. We welcome each of you and are thankful for your presence here today. Back in March of 1983, a small group of people began meeting who would eventually form the nucleus of Grace Fellowship Church. How many of you were here in 1983 at that first gathering? Well, thank the Lord. And thank the Lord that He's kept us and preserved us and brought us to this point. I was five or six then. That was in March of 83. That group constituted as a church in 1984 in the month of June with 23 members and then moved into the original building in February of 1987. And so here, 20 plus years later, we move into a new building or an additional building and meet for the first time in it. And as we do that, we want to take a few moments this morning to acknowledge those that have been involved in the planning, in the construction, in the building of this facility for which we're so thankful. They're listed there in your bulletin. And we're going to try to note, especially the ones who are present here with us. If I call your name, just stand so that we can see who you are and know that you have our heartfelt thanks for all that you've done. Our architect was

Chet Gamble, and he is here this morning. So would you please stand? Thank you, brother, for your labors. Our builders were ace builders. The beautiful flower arrangement on the table in the foyer is from them. We're thankful for the work that they put in. Larry Martin and his crew, Aaron, Justin, some of you other guys, thank you for your work on the brick that ties in so nicely with our current building.

Dennis Beery worked on the drywall finishing in the old part of the building. Thank you. Our sister, Jo Sini, did a marvelous job of decorating, and we're very thankful. And then many from our church, you don't all have to stand, worked and putting in the landscaping, doing the exterior concrete, I'd like to also take a special note, somewhat against his wishes of our pastor, John Heaney, who served as the primary contact for all of these people who spent old and untold hours down here answering questions coming in. He also put in hours working for his wife, decorating, working on the concrete on the outside, and at the same time continuing to faithfully feed the flock. And so we're thankful very much for your labors.

Our deacons were heavily involved at every turn. Humanly speaking, without any of these people, none of this would have come to pass. And so we're very thankful. All of that labor is by human hands, and it's well and good, and we're very grateful for it. But Psalm 127 says, unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. And that's why we've prayed to the Lord, that He would bless us, that He would build this house. And again, our presence here today is evidence that the Lord answers prayer. We prayed that He would give us wisdom and guidance, and He has.

We've prayed for the right architect and the right builder, and He provided. We prayed that God would grant us unity throughout the process, and He's guarded us. He's kept us from division. We've prayed that He would grant safety to those working on the project, and He has. We prayed that God would give us a suitable place to meet, and He's met and exceeded our prayers, our expectations. And so we want to begin this morning with hymn number 50, acknowledging God's goodness to us by singing His praise in hymn number 50.

[4:42] Here in hymn 50, we sing that, and we'll see indeed, that our desires have been granted in what He has ordained. God has prospered our work. He has defended us. Goodness and mercy have daily attended us. Fitting that it concludes with, let the amen sound from His people again.

That's what the church is. It's not the building. It's His people.

And please turn with me in your Bibles to the Old Testament, to the Psalms in Psalm 84. The dwelling place of God is lovely, not because of the place itself, but because of what goes on in that place. It's there that God meets with His people, blesses them as they seek His face.

And that is what this psalm speaks of. Follow as I read the 84th Psalm. This is God's Word. How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young, a place near Your altar. O Lord Almighty, my King and my God.

Blessed are those who dwell in Your house. They are ever praising You. Blessed are those whose strength is in You, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs.

[6:09] The autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God and Zion. Hear my prayer, O Lord God Almighty. Listen to me, O God of Jacob. Look upon our shield, O God. Look with favor on Your anointed one.

Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the Lord is a sun and shield. The Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless. O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in You. May God bless the reading of His Word. Let's take our hymnals and turn to Hymn 302. Hymn 302, which sets the 84th Psalm to music, states our love of being in God's house on His holy day.

I trust that you're able to sing this and affirm that it is pleasant and fair to be in God's house. It's our desire to use the building that God has given us for the building up of His people, for the extension of His kingdom, and for His glory.

And so it's our aim this day to dedicate the building to that end. And Pastor Bob has come to lead us in a prayer, dedicating our building. Now let us all pray.

[7:32] Almighty God, our Father, it's with deep humility and yet with great joy that we would echo the words of Your servant David when he said, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name. Worship the Lord in the beauty of His holiness. You have created all things by Your word and by Your power.

And so every one of us is subject to You. You have absolute claim on every one of our lives. And Father, we confess that Your word is true, that every one of Your promises are being fulfilled, that there is not a purpose that will be thwarted, that there is not a child of Yours, a saint, who will not reach heaven safely in the end.

And for these things, we give You praise in the name of our blessed Lord Jesus. And so we come in His name, the head of the church, to dedicate this building this morning.

He's the one who said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it. And we know from the scriptures that He is building His church not with bricks and mortar, not with wood and glass, but He's building it with men and women and boys and girls who have turned to God in repentance and who believe and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

[9:04] But by Your grace, You have given us this building. And so we come to dedicate it to the worship of the living God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in our preaching and in our praying, in our singing and in our giving.

May You be lifted up and be glorified. We dedicate it to the holiness and love of every saint and to the salvation and obedience of every sinner so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. Help us to do this, laboring to do it by Your energy, even as You have taught us in Your Word. We dedicate this building to proclaiming God's law and God's gospel in our families and in our community, in our nation and to the ends of the earth, even as You have taught us before You ascended back into heaven.

Lord, grant us grace to that end. And we dedicate this building first and foremost, last and always, to the glory of God.

And we plead those words of Haggai the prophet, where we read in the Old Testament, the glory of this house will be greater than the glory of the former house, says the Lord Almighty.

[10:33] And in this place I will grant peace, declares the Lord Almighty. So, begging the forgiveness of our many and our foolish sins and pleading Your mercies upon us in days to come, we dedicate this building that Christ may be exalted in every one of our lives, in every one of our homes, to this community and to the world at large.

We ask in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our living Lord and our soon-coming King. Amen. Let's take our hymnals now and turn to hymn 271.

Amen. Amen. Let's take the Word our God has given us and turn now to the New Testament. 1 Peter 2. I'll read the first ten verses in your hearing.

Please stand together with me for the reading of God's Holy Word. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to Him, the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood and offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[12:11] For in Scripture it says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a choice and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. Now to you who believe, this stone is precious.

But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and a stone that causes men to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. I would like to add my own words of thanks to our God for this completion of our building.

It's He who gives us favor with men, and He's done that, and giving us favor with those who have worked on this building, and I praise Him for that. I thank those men who have labored with us.

[13:24] I want to say thank you to my fellow elders and to our deacons. Thank you for your working together toward this common goal, for your willingness to express a contrary opinion with graciousness, to work through things in unity, and a common commitment to glorify Christ.

It's been a wonderful thing to me. And I've had to say that I think the building in one sense was a secondary thing. I think the first thing to me was that God was teaching me just how weak my faith is and teaching me more of how faithful He is and how I need to grow in faith and trust in Him.

And this whole building project worked to that end. I want to thank you members and friends of Grace Fellowship Church for your prayers, your patience, for your unity, and for your trust.

And it did my heart good Wednesday night to see the flock of folks bringing the things over into the new building to see the willingness of the work ethic here at Grace Fellowship Church.

So all this, faithful reminders to me of what a great privilege it is to be laboring together with you in this place for the glory of God. 1 Peter chapter 2.

[14:53] For over the last six months, we have been engaged in this building project. But I want to speak this morning about a grand building project unlike any other in history.

And I speak of the Lord Jesus Christ building His church. As we've already heard mentioned, I will build my church, he said, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

I submit that that is the most important thing that's happening in the world today. Newsweek and Time Magazine miss it every week. The evening news hasn't figured it out.

The most newsworthy event of the ages. And they miss it altogether. The Son of God is building His church.

You know, it is because of His church that this old world just keeps on going. That this present age continues. For as soon as the Lord Jesus completes this building project, as soon as the last sinner, the last stone is added to His church, it will be the end of this age.

[16:07] Christ will return. And He will create a new heavens and a new earth to be the home of His new creation, His church. And forever and ever, Jesus will reign in a world of righteousness where His church will reign with Him.

The church then, the building of it, is the most significant thing happening in the world today. And it's fitting for us then, on a day like this, to consider this building project of our Lord Jesus as we move into our new building.

Because the legitimacy of this building depends upon its usefulness in the building of Christ's church. Our building project must further the aims of Christ's building project.

This church building must be used to build Christ's church. And that's what we're dedicating it for today. So we come to look at the church that Christ is building.

And I suppose that the thing that we notice first is that the building materials are different. Pastor Bob mentioned it in his prayer. There's no concrete. There's no bricks. There's no shingles or drywall in His church.

[17 : 25] Instead, the building materials are people. What Peter calls here in verse 5 living stones. Those who have come to Christ in faith and have become attached to Christ the living stone.

But we'll come more to that later. We need to back up a bit because building projects begin in the first place with a plan. A plan. Before one spade of dirt is turned, one yard of concrete poured, or one nail pounded, a plan is first drawn up.

An architect envisions in his mind what the church will look like, what the building will look like, and puts it on paper and then we stick it up on the bulletin board and everyone sees what we plan to build.

And so it is with Christ's church. The building begins in the mind of God. Its architect and builder is God.

And long before one sinner was converted and added to this living temple, the Father planned the church.

[18 : 39] It's not built on the fly. It's not left to chance. Even before he created the world, he had the whole church laid out in his mind.

Every detail in it. Every stone. Every individual member of it. Notice how Peter puts it as he writes in verse 9.

But you, but you, in contrast with those in verse 8 who stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation of people belonging to God.

That's the church of people belonging to God. And they are a chosen people of all the fallen human race of sinners. God made a choice of what sinners he would magnify his mercy on and bring into his church, bring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

many choices were made as to what would be brought into this church building. God the Father made a choice as to who, what sinners would be brought in. We are a chosen people.

[19 : 56] And that means, dear believer, that you're a part of the church of Jesus Christ because God chose to put you in his church. So then where is boasting?

It is excluded. There is no room for boasting. He planned that you in particular would be part of this glorious building project of the ages.

The Apostle Paul writes the same as Peter in Ephesians 1. He says, for he, God the Father, chose us in him, in Christ, before the creation of the world that we should be holy and blameless in his sight.

And as we see the church being built in the book of Acts and we see the gospel coming not only to Jews but also to Gentiles, we read in Acts 13 that when the Gentiles heard the gospel of the Lord, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and all who were appointed to eternal life believed.

Who believed? All that had been appointed, ordained, chosen to eternal life. That speaks of planning ahead of time. God. And so the church was first of all an idea in the mind of God.

[21 : 11] He planned each one who would be a living stone in his spiritual house. But after the planning comes the foundation, the digging down, the pouring of the concrete, a most important part of the construction, the laying of the foundation.

It must be sufficient to hold all the weight of the building that will rest upon it. It must be in the right place. It must be laid out right because everything else will follow the layout of that foundation.

The right elevation must be set. Shortcuts on the foundation are disastrous. It's critical that you get the foundation right.

And the same is true in the church that Jesus Christ is building. Do you know that there is only one foundation that will hold you up through the storms of life and for that final storm of God's wrath? That decisive day when every one of you stand before your maker and he judges you according to his own holy, righteous commandments, what will hold you up then, my friend?

[22:25] The church is one foundation, his Jesus Christ, her Lord. That's it. The foundation.

No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 3.11. Now the most important stone in the whole foundation is the cornerstone.

stone. It's the first stone that's laid and all other stones are laid attached to it and upon it. If the stone is bad or wrong, the whole building will be bad or wrong.

And God the Father has given critical attention to the cornerstone in this building project of the church. He himself has chosen it and he himself has laid it.

you see it in verse six. Peter's quoting from Isaiah. See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

[23:39] It's God the Father who made Jesus Christ the cornerstone. It's his activity. He chose him to be his cornerstone. And we're not surprised.

Everything in the church remember is planned. Every stone added on is planned and chosen. So with this cornerstone, the most important stone, God does not leave it to man to choose the stone. He chooses him. He not only chooses him, but he's precious to him. A chosen and precious cornerstone.

Listen to him at his baptism. The heavens, the Father says, this is my son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased.

He's a chosen and precious cornerstone. There's no blemish in him, no sin, absolute perfection. And he's precious to the Father. So here's this chosen and precious cornerstone handpicked by God the Father, perfectly suited for his task of holding up and supporting all that will be placed upon him.

[24:51] He's able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him. But he was rejected by men, we read in verse 4.

Rejected by men. And verse 7, he was the stone, the builders rejected. Quoting from Psalm 118. Who are these builders that rejected him?

Well, they were the spiritual leaders of Israel. Those who had the leadership in Israel in the day when Jesus walked the earth. The scribes, the chief priests, the Pharisees, they were the builders. And like masons building this stone house, they're selecting the cornerstone. And they look Jesus over and they size him up and they think of the house of God and what it's to be.

And they reject him. He doesn't fit their idea of what the cornerstone should be. And so he's thrown into the clunker pile, the clinker pile, the reject pile, and they crucified him.

[26:07] And they set him aside as just another one of those false messiahs who didn't fit into their idea of messiah.

They wanted a messiah to deliver them from bondage to Rome. He came to deliver them from the bondage of sin. They loved their sin. They hated Jesus. And Jesus says the reason the world hates me is because I testify that what they do is evil.

John 7, 7. We will not have this man to rule over us. And so they thought that their Christless religion was good enough for them.

They thought their attachment to Abraham was good enough for them, that their own obedience to the commands was good enough for them. And they rejected God's chosen and precious cornerstone.

Rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him. What an indictment upon us unbelievers, upon us all of us sinners who were born rejecting Jesus.

[27:13] That we would reject the very one that the Father in heaven holds as precious and is selected to be the cornerstone.

What twisted and warped minds and affections and wills we had. And so in their wicked rejection they crucified him and dismissed him to his grave.

The pile of rejects. There, we're done with him. One less false messiah to worry about. Let's get on with building the building. But God the Father went over to the reject pile and raised his son from the dead and made him to be the corner, the cornerstone of his church.

The Lord has done this. It is marvelous in our eyes. The stone that the builders rejected has been made, the capstone, the head of the corner.

See, I lay in Zion a stone. This is our Savior, rejected, crucified, and all of that was part of his qualification to be the cornerstone.

[28:27] You see, it was all fulfilling the plan of God.