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THE OASIS

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Building

BY REV. CHUCK MIZE

The word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day... Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. -II Samuel 7:4b-6, 11b-13

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. -Ephesians 4:15-16

A hundred years ago, the richest man in the United States was John D. Rockefeller. His perch on that golden throne has never been toppled. Rockefeller's money came from his company's exploding fortunes – Standard Oil. And Rockefeller's morality came from his devout Baptist faith.

In 1925, the most famous preacher in the United States was the Baptist minister Harry Emerson Fosdick. He was a firebrand of liberal modernism who stirred action and antagonism with his magnetic sermons. Rockefeller's church – Park Avenue Baptist in New York City – needed a new pastor, and he was determined to secure Fosdick for that pulpit. The problem was, Fosdick wasn't interested. As he put it, I don't want to be known as the pastor of the richest man in the country. But Rockefeller was determined. Fosdick insisted that the church move to Morningside Heights, that it follow a policy of religious liberalism, that it not require baptism for membership, and that it become nondenominational. Rockefeller agreed. Park Avenue Baptist Church elected Fosdick as its pastor with an 85% affirmative vote, and Rockefeller built the Riverside Church for his trophy preacher. The Riverside Church was dedicated in February of 1931 at a service that began with a hymn that Fosdick wrote for the occasion: God of Grace and God of Glory. It has been the unofficial cathedral of American mainline Protestantism ever since. (cont. p 2)

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Building cont.

In the 1920s Rockefeller built the church with stone, wood, and glass so that Fosdick could build it with a prophetic voice and a progressive spirit. Riverside Church is complicated. It's both a witness to God and a testimony to two giants of industry and religion. What's the church that we will build in the 2020s?

The story of King David gives us a clue. After David had finished his own palatial house in Jerusalem, he turned his architectural aspirations toward a temple to house Israel's God. But God, through the Prophet Nathan, intervened. Don't build me a house! said God. I like my old tent of meeting! Then God said this: I will build you a house...What God promised to build was the house that God most desires: a people of faith, hope and love who are a blessing for all of creation.

The Apostle Paul gives us a complimentary image to the house of God's people. For Paul, we are built by God's love into the body of Christ in the world. We are Christ's hands and feet. We are Christ's mind and heart.

The other name for God's love that builds us up is the Holy Spirit...the Spirit that is so dynamically living and active at Southminster today. Like a tree beside the waters, we draw our life from the ever-flowing streams of the Spirit. We are not striving to rebuild what once was. Nor are we striving to renovate what presently is. We are striving to be open to God's Spirit that will make us just what God needs us to be, together, as Christ's body in this world for today and tomorrow.

On page 4 you'll find the words of Dr. Purd Dietz's great hymn, We Would Be Building. This phrase gives me pause and, at the same time, urges me on: Waiting till love can raise the broken stone, and hearts creative bridge the human rift. May we keep building, even as God builds us into the body of Christ with the power and persuasion of the Holy Spirit...the Spirit of Love!

Start With A Stone

Abraham Maslow points out in his hierarchy of needs that you cannot meet higher needs at any level of depth if the lesser needs are not first tended to. You cannot do an end-run to levels of communion and compassion, for example, when your basic security and survival needs have not been met. As Jesus might put it, when you are "worried about many things" (Luke 10:41), you cannot have faith. When you cannot enjoy the lilies of the field or the sparrows in the sky, don't waste time thinking you can enjoy God or respect people at any depth. So, start at the bottom, if you can, and try to love a rock! If you can do that, it only gets bigger, wider, higher, deeper, and better.

History tells of too many people who have tried to be spiritual before they have learned how to be human! It is a major problem. Maybe this is why Jesus came to model humanity for us - much more than divinity. Once you get the simplest human parts down (stop slamming doors and start loving rocks), God will most assuredly take it all from there. Get the ordinary human thing down and you will have all the spirituality you can handle.

Richard Rohr, Yes, and...Daily Meditations (Franciscan Media, ©2013, p 139)

"If God is Trinity and Jesus is the face of God, then it is a benevolent universe. God is not someone to be afraid of, but is the Ground of being and on our side."

- Richard Rohr





How Good to Center Down

By Howard Thurman

How good it is to center down!
 To sit quietly and see one's self pass by!
 The streets of our minds seethe with endless traffic;
 Our spirits resound with clashing, with noisy silences,
 While something deep within hungers and thirsts for the still
 moment and the resting lull.
 With full intensity we seek, ere the quiet passes, a fresh sense
 of order in our living;
 A direction, a strong sure purpose that will structure our confusion
 and bring meaning in our chaos.
 We look at ourselves in this waiting moment –
 the kinds of people we are.
 The questions persist: what are we doing with our lives? –
 what are the motives that order our days?
 What is the end of our doings?
 Where are we trying to go?
 Where do we put the emphasis and where are our values focused?
 For what end do we make sacrifices?
 Where is my treasure and what do I love most in life?
 What do I hate most in life and to what am I true?
 Over and over the questions beat in upon the waiting moment.
 As we listen, floating up through all the jangling echoes of our
 turbulence, there is a sound of another kind –
 A deeper note which only the stillness of the heart makes clear.
 It moves directly to the core of our being.
 Our questions are answered,
 Our spirits refreshed, and we move back into the traffic of our
 daily round
 With the peace of the Eternal in our step.
 How good it is to center down!

Howard Thurman, Meditations of the Heart (Beacon Press, 2014, #9)

Adult Books

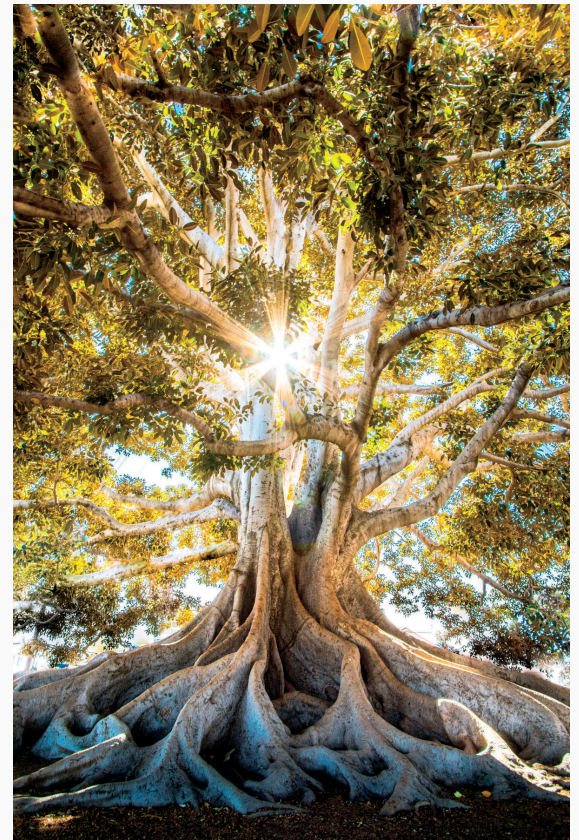
"Yes, And...Daily Meditations" by Richard Rohr

"Wholehearted Faith" by Rachel Held Evans

"Till we Have Faces" by C. S. Lewis

"Ground of Being: Neglected Essays of Paul Tillich" by Paul Tillich

"Meditations of the Heart" by Howard Thurman



Children's Books

"Duck, Duck, Tiger" by Brittany Jacobs

"Building Faith Block by Block: [An Unofficial Minecraft Guide] 60 A-to-Z Survival Secrets" by Michael & Christopher Ross

"Near: Psalm 139" by Sally Loyd-Jones, illustrated by Jago

"God's Dream" by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams, illustrated by Leuyen Pham



We Would Be Building

By Purd E. Deitz

We would be building; temples still undone
O'er crumbling walls their crosses scarcely lift,
Waiting till love can raise the broken stone,
And hearts creative bridge the human rift.
We would be building, Architect Divine,
reveal the shape of life in your design.

Teach us to build; upon the solid rock
we set the dream that hardens into deed,
ribbed with fine steel, both time and change to mock,
the unfailing purpose of our noblest creed.
Teach us to build; O Maker, lend us sight
to see the towers gleaming in the light.

O keep us building, Savior; may our hands
ne'er falter when the dream is in our hearts,
when to our ears there come divine commands
and all the pride of sinful will departs.
We build with you; O grant enduring worth
until your promised realm shall come to earth.



Prayers of Steel

By Carl Sandburg

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.
Let me pry loose old walls.
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.
Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.
Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through
blue nights into white stars.

**“Consequently, you are no
longer foreigners and
strangers, but fellow
citizens with God’s people
and also members of his
household, built on the
foundation of the
apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself
as the chief cornerstone.”
- Ephesians 2:19-20**

