

**Built to Last**

*“... but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you” 1 Peter 1:25.*

This week as I was pondering the readings we have this weekend, I was struck by a couple of verses in our second reading. The verses that stood out to me were verses twenty-four and twenty-five of this second reading. In these verses, the author, Peter, one of Jesus’ apostles, quotes the prophet Isaiah, saying, **“All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.”** These words kept bringing a phrase to mind for me – built to last.

Built to last. This phrase seemed to capture some of the message of these verses and really forced me to consider what in this world is built to last. I don’t know if you’ve considered this question lately, but I’d invite you to ponder it now, what in this world is built to last? I don’t know about you, but I struggled to come up with something that was really built to last. For example, it’s certainly not food. I think most of us have experienced the stench of spoiled food. I mean, everything we consume has some sort of expiration date.

It certainly isn’t technology either! With so many frequent new releases, it’s difficult to keep up with the most recent versions of phones available. It seems that brand new computers and tablets quickly become obsolete the moment they’re purchased. Even cars, while they may run more efficiently and longer than ever, get quickly phased out as the latest safety tech gets updated. Like food and technology, even our country which has been established for many more years has more and more moments that don’t make it seem like this nation is built to last.

It’s a sad reality to think about and yet what we see in the world around us fits those words from our 1 Peter reading. All flesh is as temporary as grass or flowers and everything created by this flesh is just as temporary. Right now, during this in between season of winter and spring, this illustration couldn’t be any clearer. With warm summer-like-days followed by cold winter-like-days, some of the plants have very little chance to last. The early blooming flowers are swiftly stunted and ruined by lingering frosts.

And like the world around us, it doesn’t take very much for us to have to face the momentary nature of our own flesh. When little ones skin their seemingly perfect knees for the first time; when teenagers get into car accidents that alter their future plans; when routine tests uncover unexpected complications; when the impact of age can no longer be ignored; when the stock market crashes; when disasters hit our homes; when jobs are terminated; when spouses set an expiration date on their marriage; when individuals terminate their God-given identities for self-made ones; when truth is relegated to mere opinions, outdated ideals or personal morals; then, yes, we too know intimately that our lives and dreams are so fleeting.

As much as we may not like to come to this realization, this hard truth is what forces us to find something that truly is built to last – something that endures despite all the changes going on in and around us. And Peter tells us what we’re looking for in this second reading, the word of the Lord which remains forever. Unlike our flesh, God’s word isn’t temporary or fleeting. It is built to last. And our other two readings this weekend help us to see this glorious truth at work.

In our Gospel reading from Luke, we are taken back to that first Easter day. As two disciples of Jesus made their way back to Emmaus. Into their dashed hopes and skepticism, Jesus drew near. Jesus, the Word made flesh, opened up the Scriptures to them so that their hearts burned within them and established their hopes on the word of the Lord, on something built to

last. And to this teaching, Jesus attached the familiar breaking of bread so that these two might recognize and share with His other disciples that their hopes were truly built to last on their crucified and risen Savior.

Fifty days following that first-Easter-Emmaus-encounter, the Pentecost pandemonium occurred. From this chaotic scene came Peter's sermon that unpacked the Scriptures for the Israelite crowd pointing them to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Scriptures. As many in this crowd realized their sin and guilt and asked what they should do, Peter again directed them to something built to last, the word of the Lord. He directed them to the work the Lord does through His word leading to repentance and to baptism. Through this word of the Lord that Peter preached, the Lord added 3,000 souls to His family.

Now again this weekend, yes, thousands of years later, this very word of the Lord that is built to last is preached to you. By God's grace, His word has endured generation after generation to this very moment so that you and I might know that same glorious truth as those two Emmaus disciples and that Pentecost crowd. We have been ransomed from our futile ways. We have been bought back from all our sinful ways that we have inherited and even chosen – ways that cause us to live apart from God. And we have been purchased with something that is built to last, not gold or silver, but with the very blood of Jesus. On Jesus' gracious payment, God's word establishes our hope permanently.

Established in the everlasting word of the Lord, we continue to make use of His forgiving and saving word in baptism. Daily we repent of our old sinful nature and by His grace, daily we rise to newness of life in Him. Frequently at this altar, we recognize His Body and Blood given for us by His promise. A gift given to us for our forgiveness, life and salvation so that our faith might be continually be fed and nourished as we await His return. And whenever we are cut to the heart by the reality of our own sin, we seek the forgiving word of the Lord delivered to us through His servants. These are the things we attach our lives too, because these things, these tangible words of the Lord, these powerful promises of the Lord, are built to last.

And as ones who have been born again through this living and abiding word of God, who have been established on something built to last, we get to earnestly and sincerely love our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Our love is shown as we point others to this enduring word of the Lord so that they too might have hope and peace built on something that lasts. Then when those moments of crisis come; when tragedy hits; when diagnoses are grim; when death strikes; when means of providing dry up; when marriages are close to expiring; when self-worth and value are challenged; when truth is in danger of being covered up; we are there for each other not with all the answers and solutions, but with forgiveness and hope anchored in the word of the Lord that remains forever. Yes, even as the world withers away around us may we encourage each other to cling to the word of the Lord that is built to last. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan