

The Building Project

A sermon on 2 Samuel 7

INTRODUCTION

I love to build things. I always have.

My mother will tell you it started early. In fact, she'll be with us next Sunday — some of you will get to meet her — and she still reminds me that there was a time, when I was a boy, that I took my sister's tricycle completely apart. Every piece. Not to wreck it. To build it back. Or at least, that's how the story goes.

I think I got it from my father. He built things — houses, mostly, or at least he managed the crews that did. When I was a kid he had a deck built off the back of our house. A big one. Multiple levels. To me it wasn't a deck; it was a playground. He built commercial buildings too, all over the small town where I grew up. My dad's been gone a little over a year now. But I still carry the thing he gave me: I love to build.

I remember one of my own projects, more than twenty-five years ago now. We had just moved to Georgia, bought a house. And the back door opened onto nothing but a slab of concrete. So you know what I did. I decided to build a back porch and a deck. Did most of it myself. And by the grace of God — it's still standing.

I love to build things. I'm always building something.

And here's the thing: so are you. All of us are building something.

You may not think of it that way, but you are. Some of us are building a career — brick by brick, year by year. Some of us are building a family. A home. A name worth handing down. Some of us are building a life of integrity — the slow, daily work of becoming someone trustworthy.

And here's the thing we need to say: that kind of building is good. It's right. It's the responsible thing to do. God made us to build — to work, to cultivate, to make

something of the life and the gifts we've been handed. There is nothing wrong with being a builder. Don't put your tools down.

But there is one kind of building that always goes wrong. And almost all of us do it.

It's when we try to build something *for God*.

When we set out to do God a favor. To provide for Him. To impress Him. To construct a life devout enough, a record clean enough, a résumé of service impressive enough that surely — surely — He'll have to be pleased with what we've put up. We try to build our way to His approval. And if we're honest, somewhere down underneath, we're trying to put God just a little in our debt.

And here's what makes it so hard to see: it doesn't come from a bad heart. It comes from a devoted one. It feels like the most grateful, godly, natural thing in the world. That is exactly the man in our passage.

Let's look at David — and look at the text with me, because I want you to see this on the page, not just take my word for it. Verse 1: "**Now when the king lived in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies...**" Stop there for a moment. David has arrived. The wars are over; his enemies are quiet at last. He is settled in Jerusalem, in his own house — a house of cedar. Cedar was the marble of the ancient world: imported, expensive, the wood of palaces. David is at the top. He has built, and his building has succeeded. And none of that is the problem. Not one bit of it.

The problem comes with what he says next. Watch David's own reasoning — **verse 2: "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent."** Do you hear it? He says it himself. *I'm in cedar; God's in a tent. That's backwards.* He looks at his beautiful permanent palace, then over at the ark of God — the symbol of God's own presence — still sitting under canvas. And something in him recoils at the imbalance. *Let me fix it. Let me build God a house worthy of Him.*

Let's be honest — doesn't that sound right? Doesn't that sound like exactly the kind of thing a grateful, devoted person should want to do? David thinks so. And so does his prophet. **Verse 3: "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you."** No hesitation. Two godly men, one idea — they're sure it's a good one — and the plan is a go.

So here is David, reaching out to build something *for God*. To provide for Him.

And if you're like me, you came in here this morning standing right next to him. Builders, all of us. Ready to hand God what we've put up.

But that night, everything turns.

Verse 4: "That same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan." And God sends Nathan back — not with a yes, and not even with a flat no, but with a question David never saw coming. **Look at verse 5: "Would you build Me a house to dwell in?"**

And don't miss what God says next, because this is the heart of the correction. Verse 6 — He says He has never lived in a house, that since Egypt He has moved about in a tent. And then **verse 7: "In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word... saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"** Do you hear the question? *Did I ever once ask for this? God isn't refusing a bad gift. He's exposing a wrong assumption. I never needed a house from you. I never asked. You cannot provide for the God who provides everything.*

It's a little like trying to buy a gift for the friend who already owns everything. You know the feeling — the relative whose house is full, who needs nothing, who can buy anything he wants the moment he wants it. What on earth do you get for a person like that? Now multiply that by infinity. David is standing in his cedar palace trying to figure out what to build for the God who spoke the cedar trees into existence. The God who owns the forest. The God who owns the hills the forest grows on. Whatever you build for a God like that, you built with materials He made and handed to you. You cannot give Him anything that wasn't already His.

And then — having cleared away the wrong assumption — God does something David never expected. This is the hinge of the entire chapter, and it turns on a single word. The word is house. In Hebrew it's *bayith*, and it can mean a building, or it can mean a household. A dynasty. A family line. David has been using it one way: *I will build God a house* — a building. A temple.

Now look at the end of verse 11 — this is the turn. God picks up the very same word and flips it: **"The Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house."**

Did you catch what just happened? David said, *I'll build You a house.* God said, *No — I'll build you a house.* The same word — but the builder and the building have traded places. It's as if a child emptied his piggy bank and announced he was going to buy his father a house — and the father knelt down, smiled, and said, *Son, keep your coins. I'm putting*

you in My will. I'm building you an inheritance you could never buy. David came to give. God says: *you don't understand. You're not the builder here. You're not the one doing the giving. I am.* The man who walked in to build for God is told that he is the one God is going to build.

Think about that for a second, because it's disorienting. And it's meant to be. If you walked in here today ready to build something for God, then the word of the Lord that came in the night is saying: *Put those tools down. Not the tools you build your life with – keep those. The ones you brought to build something for Me. You've got the direction backwards.*

And let me tell you exactly what that means, because I'm going to come back to that word – *direction* – throughout this message. You've got it backwards three ways at once. You're trying to *give* to a God who only gives. You're trying to *build* something for the One who builds everything. You're running *uphill* in a relationship that only ever runs downhill. God says, *I am building something – and you are part of what I'm building.*

Now here's where some of you have already gone. The second you hear anything about a building project for God, your mind starts doing the thing minds do. It starts evaluating. *How's my building project going?*

And some of you will run a quick inventory and feel pretty good about it. You've been at this a while. You serve. You give. You show up. From the outside – honestly, from the inside too – you look like a good builder. A skilled one. And a quiet voice says, *I think I'm doing alright on my project for God.*

But hold on. The issue this morning is not how *well* you're building for God.

And some of you will run the same inventory and feel the opposite. You already know the project's a mess. The walls are crooked, the work is half-finished, and you've watched other people build something that looks so much better than yours. And a quiet voice says, *I'm a poor builder. I've barely got anything to show God at all.*

But hold on. The issue this morning is not how *poorly* you're building for God either.

Do you see what both of those types of people are doing? Confident or defeated, assured or doubtful – they are both reaching for the same ruler. Anytime the subject of building for God comes up, they both start measuring their building *skill*. And that is precisely the wrong question. Because the issue today is not how *well* you build, and it is not how *badly* you build.

The issue is whether you should be building anything for God at all.

That's the question David never thought to ask. He was a magnificent builder. His skill was not the problem. His *direction* was. He tried to give what only God can give; he tried to build upward in a relationship that only runs down. And until you see that, you'll keep grading yourself on a test God isn't even giving.

And notice — what God is doing here is not punishment. David hasn't sinned. Chuck Swindoll put his finger on exactly what makes this so hard to feel: "[You may have a great resolve, a great plan, a great ideal, but it may not be God's plan. When you face that, it is tough to bear because you're not dealing with sin.](#)" That's it precisely. This isn't God catching David in a failure. It's God correcting a direction in a man whose heart was after God. Which is why no amount of grading your building skill will ever get you to the real issue.

And if we think about it, something else is true: David's mistake is not just David's. It's actually the oldest religious instinct there is. Strip almost every religion in the world down to its frame, and you'll find the same direction David had — people building their way up to God. Build enough good deeds. Stack up enough devotion. Climb high enough, give enough, perform well enough, and maybe — maybe — you'll reach Him, or satisfy Him, or earn your standing with Him. The details differ from one religion to the next. The direction is almost always the same: from us, upward, to God.

But here is the thing that makes the gospel not one more religion among many: it runs the other way. Every other system says climb. The gospel says He came down. You don't build your way up to God. God builds His way down to you.

But before any of us feels too comfortable — that upward instinct is not just out there, in other religions. It is in this room. It is in me. Because the most common thing in the world is to be handed the gospel of grace, and then quietly, sincerely, devoutly, start rebuilding the very thing it rescued us from — a religion of climbing, dressed in Christian clothes. Remember, David wasn't a pagan. He was a man who loved God. And he still got the direction backwards. So can we.

In fact, I suspect that some of you have a certain objection, that may illustrate this. You're thinking: *Okay — but what's the big deal? What's actually wrong with wanting to build something for God? It seems like a good thing. A devoted thing.*

Let's take a moment to think about that, because it's not a bad question. And the answer is not what you'd expect. The problem was never that David's heart was bad. It wasn't. The problem is that, underneath a good intention, building for God gets three things wrong, quietly wrong – and every one of them is about God.

First, **building for God assumes God has a need you can meet.** Listen to God's own words: "*Did I ever ask anyone to build Me a house?*" The answer is no, He didn't. He never has. He has gotten along just fine. The moment you build *for* God as though you're supplying something He lacks, you've made Him smaller than He is. A God who needs your building project is not the God of the Bible.

Second, **building for God flips the roles** – and that's the one thing a creature must never do. Build for God, and you've made yourself the giver and God the recipient. The provider. The patron. It feels like humility. It is actually the most polite form of pride there is, because it quietly puts you on top. In Acts 17, Paul writes, "*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*" In reality, the whole story runs one way: God gives, we receive. Turn it around, and you haven't honored Him. You've tried to take His place.

And third – here's the deadly one – **building for God turns grace into a transaction.** Because if you build something for God, then somewhere in your heart, God now owes you. And the instant this relationship becomes something you pay into, it stops being a gift. The offer to build is, underneath it all, an attempt to pay. And you do not pay for a gift. You receive it.

So hear this carefully, because it matters. God is not against you building. He's not even against a temple – there will come a day for that, and God will be pleased with it. The problem was never the act of *building*. It was the *direction of the building*. David tried to build *up* – to give first, to initiate, to do God a favor. And God says, No. You've got it *backwards*. I give first. I build first. You receive. The devotion underneath your instinct is right. It just has to be turned around. You don't build for a God who needs nothing. You receive from Him – and then, out of sheer gratitude, you build *from* what He gave. Never to earn. Always because you already have.

And watch this – this truth and reality stopped David cold.

The next thing the text shows us is remarkable. David doesn't argue. He doesn't go ahead with his plan anyway. **Verse 18: "Then King David went in and sat before the LORD"** – the only time in all the Old Testament someone is said to sit in God's presence – and the great builder-king begins to pray. And his prayer is built around two questions.

The first one, right there in **verse 18: and said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?"** There it is – the builder, deflated. But deflated in the best possible way. *Who am I?* All my building, all my success, and the truth is I am the one being carried, not the one constructing.

But don't miss the second question, because David's prayer doesn't stay on David. Down in **verse 23 he asks it again, only now it's turned outward: "Who is like Your people Israel – the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be His people... whom You redeemed for Yourself...?"**

Do you see what David has done, right there in his own prayer? He started with ***Who am I?*** – and he ended with ***Who is like Your people, whom God redeemed to be His own?*** He has moved, all by himself, from *me* to *a people*. From his own building project to a realization. A staggering one – that the real project was never his at all. God was building something far bigger than David. God was building a people, for Himself.

And that is what this chapter is about. Not a man building a house for God. **God is building a people for Himself – a people that will last forever.**

So the question this passage leaves in our hands is no longer the one some of us live with everyday. We live our lives asking, *what should I build for God?, what could I build for God?* The text has quietly taken that question away from us and handed us a better one: *How does God build a people for Himself?*

The chapter gives us the answer. And it comes in four ways.

WAY NUMBER ONE – On His Own Terms (vv. 1-7)

God builds a people for Himself on His own terms.

David had a plan. A good one. And God said no — not because the plan was bad, but because David had the direction backwards. *You will not build for Me. I will build you.* God sets the terms. He always has.

And if you're honest, that's the one thing you've never quite been able to leave alone — the quiet, lifelong project of setting your own terms with God, drawing up the plans for the self you think He'll finally accept. Hold that thought. We'll come back to it.

If the building is on God's terms and not ours, then on what basis does He build? Not our building performance. His grace.

WAY NUMBER TWO — By His Own Grace (vv. 8–11)

God builds a people for Himself by His own grace.

Listen to how God talks to David here in verse 8 and 9. *“Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. 9 And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name . . .”*

I took you from the pasture. I have been with you. I will make your name great. Every verb belongs to God. David contributes nothing but the sheep he was watching. The whole thing runs downhill — from God, to a man who earned none of it.

And yet here we are, still quietly auditioning. Still assembling our résumé, still hoping that if the list of good things gets long enough, maybe outweighs the list of bad things, God will be impressed. Hold that too. We're coming back to it.

God builds on His terms, by His grace. But will it hold when we fail? It will — because of how He builds: in steadfast love.

WAY NUMBER THREE — In His Own Steadfast Love (vv. 14–15)

God builds a people for Himself in His own steadfast love.

God says in verses 14–15, *“14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the*

sons of men, 15 but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.

When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him — but My steadfast love will not depart from him." Not if he sins. When. And the love holds anyway. God disciplines sons. He does not disown them.

And what about us — we've spent so much energy bracing for the day God finally gives up on us. Keeping the slate spotless, hiding the failures, building a record clean enough that He'd have no reason to walk away. Hold onto that. It won't be true much longer.

Held in love through our sin — but held by what? Not by us. By His word.

WAY NUMBER FOUR — On His Own Unbreakable Promise (v. 16)

God builds a people for Himself on His own unbreakable promise.

"Verse 16: And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." God stakes the whole thing not on David's faithfulness, not on the kings who would follow, but on His own word. The people God builds rest on a promise — His promise. And a promise is only ever as good as the One who makes it.

And this is the deepest version of our building project for God, isn't it — not just impressing God, but building something solid enough that we finally feel *safe* before Him. A track record we can lean on when the doubts come. Hold it one more moment. Because the question of whether a promise like His can really hold — whether anything lasts forever — that's where we have to go next.

[BRIDGE — The Son of David Builds His Church]

We skipped something.

All the way through this chapter, I left a thread hanging. On purpose. Because God did too — He buried it right in the middle of the promise, and if you read quickly you'd slide right past it.

Go back to verse 12. God is telling David all the ways He will build a people for Himself — on His terms, by His grace, in His love, on His promise — and right in the center of it He says this: "12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Offspring after you. A son. The whole promise turns on a son. Did you notice it? Everything God says He'll do — the house, the kingdom, the *forever* — He says He'll do it *through* a son of David. The people get built. But they get built through Him.

Now David heard that, and David thought he knew who the son was. His name was Solomon. And for a while it looked right. Solomon came. Solomon built the temple. The house went up.

But Solomon died. And his son was worse. And *his* son was worse than that. And the throne that was supposed to last *forever* started to wobble. Then it split. Then it fell. The line of David got carried off in chains, and the throne sat empty, and it seemed like that beautiful word — *forever* — just hung there over the wreckage. A promise no son could keep.

That's the problem with building a people through a son. The people can only last as long as the son lasts. And every son of David did the same thing that ends every builder.

He sinned. He fell. He died. His body is in the ground.

So, for this kingdom to last forever, the promise needed a son who wouldn't die, but live forever.

And so, a thousand years after David, a son of David stood on a hillside in Galilee. An ordinary-looking man. And He said to the people following Him the same thing that God had said 1000 years before to David: In Matthew 16:18, **Jesus says, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** God's building project.

And don't mishear that word. When Jesus says He will build His *church*, He doesn't mean a building — He means a people. And He doesn't mean a people *that* assemble themselves for Him. He means a people *He* builds. *I* will build. *My* church. Even here, the direction runs downhill.

There it is. There's Jesus, the son from verse twelve of 2 Samuel 7, standing in the flesh, picking up God's building project. When Jesus said He would build His church, He was saying exactly what the Lord had promised David He would do. And he is building his church in exactly the way the Lord promised David he would build it.

Jesus says, I will build My church.

On My own terms — the same terms from that night way back in Jerusalem. You don't draft yourself onto God's building project. He chooses and calls you into it. He builds His church on his own terms.

Jesus says, I will build My church.

By My own grace — and look who He builds with. Fishermen. A tax collector. A thief on a cross. And here's the thing some of you need to hear this morning — *you don't earn your way into this family*. Jesus doesn't recruit the worthy; He pulls in the empty-handed, reaches down to the outcast and makes them His own. He builds His church by his own grace.

Jesus says, I will build My church.

In My own steadfast love — the steadfast love of God would never depart. And it doesn't. What did Paul write in Romans 8, “**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”

Nothing separates the people Jesus builds from the love of God in Christ. Not their failure. Not their sin. Not even death. He builds His church in his own love.

Jesus says, I will build My church.

On My own unbreakable promise. — And it will last forever, and *forever* is the word no son before Him could keep. But we know what happened to this Son. His name was Jesus, and the gates of Hades did come for Him. They closed on Him. They held Him three days in the dark. And on the third day He walked out of His own grave — and the gates of death have not prevailed, and they never will. He builds His church on his own unbreakable promise.

That is how the promise finally becomes forever. The son David was waiting for is a Son who conquered the one thing that ended every other son. Jesus, the son of David bore the cross, beat the grave!

So the people God is building cannot be unbuilt. Not by sin. Not by failure. Not by death itself. David prayed for a house that would last. But he never knew it would be purchased on a cross and secured by an empty tomb.

But we know this good news. And that shapes how we respond.

CONCLUSION — David's Prayer, the Response

Four ways of building. One Builder. And not one of them is us.

Now — what do we do with this? When the word lands on you that you are not the builder but the one being built, that you realize that you wake up everyday with your tools in your hands ready to build something for God, and God says *put them down* — what's your response? What should your response be? What is the only proper response?

Well, we don't have to guess. David shows us. The back half of this chapter is the great builder-king David, undone, on his knees. In other words, if you are wondering what to do with this reality, this truth that God is the builder and you are the one being built, I want to close now by showing you precisely what to do with this. Because David's prayer to God is the answer to everything we've seen.

Look at what David does first. He goes in, and he *sits down* before the Lord. He sits. The only time in all the Old Testament a man is said to sit in the presence of God. There it is. **There's the proper and right response to a God who builds on His own terms** — David stops building. He surrenders the project. He doesn't argue, he doesn't push his plan through anyway; he lays down his tools and he sits.

And here's the first thing I asked you earlier to hold onto — I want you to consider your lifelong building project of setting your own terms with God, drawing up your own plans for a version of yourself He'll finally accept. Watch David, watch the king lay it down. He just stops. He sets the tools on the ground and sits. And so can you. You can stop

drawing up the blueprints for a version of you impressive enough to be accepted. God set the terms before you ever picked up a tool — and His terms were never your performance. They were His sovereign plan. So, put the drawings down. Lay down your tools.

And remember the test we talked about earlier — the one we keep grading ourselves on, *how well am I building for God?* Look at David. The greatest builder in Israel sits down in the presence of God, and he never says a word about how well he built. Not one. He stopped taking that test. The most skilled builder in the nation simply asks, "**Who am I?**"

The first thing out of his mouth is a question. "**Who am I, O Lord God, that You have brought me this far?**" **There's the proper response to a God who builds, not only on his own terms, but also by His own grace.** David didn't pray to God, "God, look what I've done." He didn't say, "here is what I've built for You." No. No. He was in awe. Just pure wonder. Bare, astonished wonder — *who am I, that any of this should come to me?* The man who walked in to give God something was reduced to amazement that God has given everything to him.

And that's the second thing I asked you to hold earlier — all our endless auditioning before God, the résumé you keep hoping will impress Him. Look at David drop it all mid-sentence. The most accomplished man in the nation doesn't list one accomplishment; he doesn't say "Look what I have done for you." He just says, "**Who am I?**" So can you. You can stop auditioning. God builds his church with shepherd boys and fishermen and tax collectors and a thief on a cross — God is not recruiting the qualified or the ones who have much to bring; no, He is building His people with the empty-handed. And you might say, "But I have so much to bring. I have so much to offer." God says, "I am building a kingdom of the empty-handed. In my kingdom, being empty-handed is not a disqualification. It's a requirement. Because Jesus is building his church by his own grace, not by the performance of our building skills.

Let's watch David keep going. He sees that this promise is not just about him. "**You have spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come,**" he says — "**and this is instruction for mankind.**" David can't see all of it. He doesn't know the name Jesus. But he knows the promise has outgrown him — that God is doing something that reaches past his lifetime, past his throne, to mankind. We see in Jesus what David could only

strain toward: Jesus building His church, that will last forever. David was amazed at this before he even knew its name.

Then he says something tender. "*You know Your servant, O Lord God.*" **There's the response to a God who builds in His own steadfast love** — the God who said, *My love will not depart from you.* David's claim is not that he knows and understands God; it is that God knows him. David rests in being *known* by God. That's where the church rests. Not in our grip on God. But in His grip on us.

And that relates to a third thing some of you are living with — the bracing, the flinching, the spotless record you've been keeping so God won't have a reason to leave. David lays that down too. He doesn't recite his record; he says, "*You know Your servant, O Lord God.*" David simply rests in being known. So can you. That thing you did — the one you're sure is the last straw — that thing you did is not the thing that removes you, why? because your place in his family was never held by your record in the first place. It's held by His love. He corrects the people He builds. He does not evict them. So you can stop building a case for why God should keep you.

And finally — listen to how bold David gets. He says to God, 23 "*And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? 24 And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O LORD, became their God. 25 And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken*" (23–25).

And then in verse 27–28: 27 *For you, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. 28 And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. 29 Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.*"

He all but commands the Almighty: keep Your word! Now — that is not arrogance. That is faith. The boldest kind. David has heard the promise, and he takes God at His word so

completely that he dares to ask God to do exactly what God just said He'd do. **This is the response to a God who builds on His own unbreakable promise** — you stake everything on it. You pray like it's certain. Because it is.

I want you to consider the standing you keep trying to build solid enough, a foundation that you are trying to make sure is solid enough that you finally feel safe before God. Notice where David puts his weight. Not on his record. Not on his devotion. On a promise. So can you. Your security before God was never meant to rest on what you construct and hand Him; it rests on His word. It doesn't rise and fall with how you performed this week, because it was never built on your performance at all. It was built on His promise — and He cannot break it.

And so, all of this shows us the building project we are a part of:

First, it shows what the church actually is — from a building we come to, to a people God is making. You see, we get the word "church" wrong in almost the same way David got the word "house" wrong. Ask most people what church is, and they'll point at a building. A place. An address you drive to. But when Jesus said "**I will build My church,**" He didn't mean a building. He never has. He meant a people. You don't go to church. If you belong to Christ, you are the church — and together we are what He is building.

Second, this shows us who actually builds the church — from us, to Him. Because too often we treat the church the way David treated the temple: as something we build for God. So we pour in our effort, we prop up the programs, we run ourselves ragged trying to construct something impressive enough to hand Him. But remember what we said earlier: the problem was never the building, and it was never the serving. Serving Christ's people is good — gloriously good. The error is the same one David made — trying to prop up for God something He never asked us to hold up, as though the church was ours to sustain and God was depending on us. But hear the Lord of the church: "I will build My church." Not we build one for Him. He is the Builder. It is His building project. It is His possession. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it — which means it does not, finally, depend on us to keep it standing. And this is good news!

I know some of you are tired this morning. Bone-tired. And I want to conclude by saying something carefully, because tiredness comes in two kinds, and they are not the same.

There is a tiredness that comes from carrying a load Christ Himself gave you. The honest work of a job. The slow exhaustion of raising children, or caring for an aging parent, or showing up faithfully in a hard marriage, or serving at Kids Camp. The genuine cost of following Jesus and making Him known to everyone. That kind of tiredness is not a sin. It is honorable. It is the weariness of a faithful servant, and Jesus shoulders it *with* you. Don't hear me say a single word against that.

But there is another kind of tiredness, and many of us in this room knows it. It is the exhaustion of carrying a load He never asked you to carry. The grinding fatigue of trying to build something for God impressive enough to win His approval. Of propping up a record. Of running yourself ragged keeping the church alive as if it depended on you. Of constructing a standing you can finally feel safe inside. That kind of tired isn't faithfulness wearing you out. It's *the wrong building project* wearing you out.

And let us remember what Jesus said in [Matthew 11:28-30](#):

28 "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

[Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.](#)" Who do you think He was talking to? People exhausted from the very thing this chapter is exposing. People worn out from trying to build their way to God. And His answer wasn't *build better*. It wasn't *try harder*. It was *come to Me. Stop. Lay your tools down. Let Me give you rest.*

The reason you are so tired may not be because you've been faithful. It may be because you've been building something He never asked you to build. And He is, right now, offering you the same thing He offered them: rest.

So, please remember: you are not the contractor. You are part of what He's building. Let us serve *out of the overflow* of what He has poured in. This is good news. This is why we sing:

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus, All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat, "Yet not I, but through Christ in me"

That's what David saw, dimly, a thousand years out. In Jesus, the Son of David, God is building a people for Himself that will last forever. And we are standing in it.

Let us pray:

O Lord God – who are we, that You would build us?

We came in this morning with our hands full, and now, like David, we sit before You undone. So we set our tools down. We stop trying to build our way to You. And we say what he said: who are we, that You would do all of this?

There is no one like You. You needed nothing from us, and yet You gave us everything. We did not build our way up to You – in Christ, You came all the way down to us.

So forgive us, Father, for the years we spent trying to provide for the God who provides everything. And for the ones who are weary this morning – worn out from a building project You never gave them – let them hear Your Son say it now: Come to Me, and I will give you rest. Loosen their grip. Let them stop. Let them rest in being held by You, not holding on to You.

And now, Lord, do as You have promised. You said You would build a people for Yourself that will last forever – so build us. Bring us home. Renew us day by day until we stand with joy before Your throne.

We're about to sing the truest thing we know – that whatever becomes of us, it will not finally be our doing, but Yours. So as we sing, take the words from our lips and make them real in us: not I, but through Christ in me.

To Him be all the glory. In the name of Jesus, the Son of David, who builds His church and will bring us home – Amen.

Benediction:

Ephesians 3:20–21 (ESV)

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.