

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

“*But will God indeed dwell on the earth?*” (1 Ki 8:27)

That’s King Solomon’s question today.

It’s the most illogical and absurd question anyone could ask.

And Solomon admits it:

*“Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you;
how much less this house that I have built!”* (8:28)

It’s impossible.

God’s infinite, eternal.

He knows no bounds—

can’t be contained or limited or stuck in any box, no matter how large—
how can God dwell on earth?

When you think about it, it’s absurd!

Even John Calvin—

a Reformer around the time of Luther,
and founder of the Presbyterian and the Reformed churches today—

even Calvin went around saying,

“the finite is not capable of the infinite.”

It makes sense.

Something limited can’t hold the unlimited.

The made can’t contain the maker.

Not only is the Temple built by Solomon small compared to the World—

but it’s a building put together by sinners!

Surely there were columns a bit crooked, stairs uneven, and altars unlevel.

Some of the masonry and woodwork was surely unsymmetrical or the curtains an inch too high.

There had to be mistakes—that’s what you get, no matter how good the man is.

This temple doesn’t only fail in its capacity to hold God,

but on top of that, it’s not worthy of His presence even if it *could* hold Him.

Solomon knows this.

Yet he still has the audacity to ask God to live in this house.

We see something similar in today’s Gospel.

There’s a centurion who’s servant was sick—even to the point of death (Lk 7:2).

And because he meant so much to the centurion (who, by the way, was a Gentile),
 he sent some of the elders to Jesus,
 asking Him to come and heal the servant.

Now these Jewish elders plead to Jesus on behalf of the *worthiness* of the centurion.
 They hold up all his good deeds: his love for the nation and dedication to their synagogue.

And Jesus went with them.

But before He got there, the centurion sent others—friends of his—who pleaded,
*“Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.
 Therefore I did not presume to come to you.
 But say the word, and let my servant be healed.”* (7:6-7)

Now, if Solomon’s Temple was too small and unworthy of our Lord’s presence—
 how much less this Gentile’s home?

No amount of works can tip the scales.
 No matter how much he loved the nation,
 or how many synagogues he built,
 no matter how much money or time or acts of charity—
 it’s never enough to make anyone worthy.

Because everything we do—
 whether building a temple or seeking help for a servant or volunteering for VBS—
 it’s all marked by our sin.

Solomon knows this.
 The centurion knows this.
 And we know it too.

But will God dwell on earth?

That’s the question.
 Because if He won’t—
 if He refuses to be located and found;
 if He refuses to be approached or called upon—
 then what hope do we have?

If God doesn’t dwell on earth, then we can never be certain of anything.

We’ll only have fear:
 fear of not being worthy, not doing enough, helping and serving and giving enough.

We’d never know if our prayers were heard.
 We’d never know if God cares, or what He thinks, or if He’s even there.

We'd say what God thinks of us based on our feelings and experiences.

We'd never know.

And to never know is to never rest, to be in despair;
or it's to give up and say, "who cares."

But thanks be to God that He *does* dwell on earth!

It's for our sake that God located Himself within the Temple walls.
He answered Solomon's absolutely ridiculous prayer with a YES!

He came down from heaven and caused His name to dwell within the Temple.
Anyone—Jew or Gentile—was invited to call upon Him and know that He hears their prayer.
It says,
"hear...and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you" (1 Ki 8:43).

And the same thing goes on in the Gospel today.

The foreigner, the Gentile centurion, calls upon the Name of the Lord,
asking *Jesus* to hear and do all that he asks.

Jesus is the New Temple.

Elsewhere in Luke we hear,
Something greater than Solomon is here (Lk 11:31).

In Jesus, God has located Himself *for us*.

Again, the infinite, boundless, eternal God has flesh and blood just like you and me!

When we have a hold of Jesus, we have a hold on the creator,
whom even the highest heavens can't contain.

And while there's nothing about the temple walls, or human flesh, or us,
that makes us capable or worthy of having God dwell among us—
everything for God is possible.

It's His will to dwell on earth—
at first in a temple made with hands,
then in a temple made without hands—
in the flesh and blood of Jesus.

So, *does God indeed dwell on earth?* Yes!

But, *where?*

Where can the infinite, omnipresent God be *located, found, called upon, and received?*

The answer is wherever Jesus is, wherever His body gathers, wherever His blood is poured out.

The centurion gives us one more clue,
“only say the Word...”

Wherever the Word of God goes on, there also is the work and presence of God.

Whenever Jesus speaks, things happen—
 and His speaking of forgiveness is in His Church.

That’s why we’re here—
 to hear Jesus! To be where He is. To call upon God and have God come to us!

And though we’re certainly not worthy or capable of any of it—
 God is; and in Christ He wants to be located *for you*.

So you don’t need to fear.
 No despair, no giving up, no losing hope.

He locates Himself so that you might have life in Him.
 And with life, joy.

The joy He gives is the joy Solomon had when God filled His temple.
 It’s the joy the centurion had, when he found his servant well.

This joy is ours, knowing that our God isn’t far away or indifferent toward us.

He loves you.
 And you know that only in Christ—where God located Himself on the cross *for you*,
 and who now joins Himself to you,
 feeding you with the medicine of immortality, His very nature, His body.

He said the Word—
 you are forgiven.

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