

*Encourage one another and build one another up... (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*

In our society, little is more popular than someone being torn down (and, as the saying goes, the bigger they are, the harder they fall). The last few weeks, many of you have probably been inundated with news stories, jokes, and memes about the two high ranking corporate officials who were caught on a kiss cam at a concert – both were married to other people. Athletes aren't immune either, as Tiger Woods, Pete Rose, and many others can testify. Politicians, leaders, even celebrity pastors – our society almost seems to revel in their downfalls. I'm not sure what makes tearing people down so much fun. Maybe it distracts people from their own problems. Maybe it's boredom. Most likely, it makes them feel better about themselves. Whatever the case, tearing someone down is never a good thing, no matter how much “fun” it may seem or how much they ‘deserve’ it.

Our lives as Christians look like quite the opposite of what the world would have: it means making ourselves less in service of others. In other words, one of our duties as Christians is to build others up, not tear them down. We read that the early Christian church *throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied* (Acts 9:31). How was the Church built up? Paul wrote to the Colossians (a reading we heard last month), *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving*. It's what you are taught – the Word of God – that builds up. Most especially, it is the good news of Jesus Christ. *God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing* (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11). Our God and Father sent his only Son Jesus Christ into the world to die with our sins on his shoulders. That same God raised Jesus from the dead and began his renewal and reworking of creation in him.

Building one another up can take many different forms. It can look like forgiving the one who wronged us, as Paul writes, *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted* (Galatians 6:1). It can sound like an encouraging word when someone is going through a rough patch. It can mean being there to support and love someone in times of need. Whatever it looks like, it reflects the love of God, who builds us up on the foundation of Christ so that we might be presented mature (Colossians 2:8).

This coming year, our theme will be “Built Up!” It's more than a reminder of our building project. We'll work on learning how Christ is both our foundation and our example of building one another up. I look forward to being “built up” with all of you!

-Pastor Squire

“We are God's house of living stones, built for His own habitation. He through baptismal grace us owns heirs of His wondrous salvation. Were we but two His name to tell, yet He would deign with us to dwell with all His grace and His favor.”

(“Built on the Rock,” *LSB* 645, v. 3)