November 15, 2026
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1 Kings 8: 1-6, 18-23, 28-29 and 59-61
All In

We continue Solomon's prayer at the Temple dedication in verses 28-29.

> "Lord my God, listen to your servant's prayer and request, and hear the cry and prayer that your servant prays to you today. Constantly watch over this temple, the place about which you said, "My name will be there," and listen to the prayer that your servant is praying toward this place."

Solomon's prayer continues with seven specific pleas for God's care and intervention when there are disputes between neighbors, military defeats, drought, famine due to crop failure and disease, foreigners who come to visit, going to battle, and if Israel is captured and taken into exile. Incorporated into these prayers are heartfelt requests for God to forgive the people whose sins may have contributed to the situations, as well as aspirations for how the people are to care for each other, so that all the peoples of the earth will know of the Lord God's greatness. Solomon closes the prayer with praise for God's faithfulness and presence and asking God to help the people remain obedient, to walk in God's ways and keep God's commandments, words we heard in this morning's Call to Worship. Solomon ends by saying in verses 59-61:

> And may these words of mine that I have cried out before the Lord remain near to the Lord our God day and night so that God may do right by his servant and his people Israel for each day's need, and so that all the earth's peoples may know that the Lord is God. There is no other God! Now may you be committed to the Lord our God with all your heart by following his laws and observing his commands, just as you are doing right now." **The Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.**

To be part of something that is bigger than yourself. To make meaning out the absurdity, out of the monotony, out of the hills and valley, and ocean depths and cosmic wonder; out of all it. Out of battles and the wandering; from the years of servitude to the Pharoah and the years of devotion to King David. For the Hebrew people, the dedication of the Temple was a moment to step back and look back. It was a moment to recognize where they had been, where they currently were, and where they might be headed. And it was a moment to put God front center, for Solomon to remind the people – yes, we have a lot of baggage mixed in with the triumphs and yes, we have a lot places where we have sinned and been unfaithful. And yet, and yet we aspire. We aspire to know God personally and intimately – to know that Lord remains near to us each day and night, as Solomon recites. We here at PCO aspire to respond as Solomon calls us to respond: "be committed to the Lord your God with all of your heart." Solomon is asking the people, including us, to be *All In*.

To symbolize their commitment before the Lord, King Solomon and all the people with him offered sacrifices to the Lord as part of their dedication. Scripture tells us they were "sacrifices

of well-being." And then the people had a celebration – a festival lasting eight days. Now we may not have an eight day celebration following our commitment Sunday, but we do have birthday cake this morning, and the Alternative Christmas Market yesterday and Trivia Night tonight and Aaron's Installation Service next Sunday, so we may be getting pretty close.

The story we hear in 1 Kings 8 of the dedication of the Great Temple is one of the mountaintop moments for the Hebrew people. It is a mountaintop moment because the people are *All In*. They are *All In* in two distinct ways: first ***all of the people*** are in. Solomon initially gathers the elders and the heads of the tribes to carry in the Ark of the Covenant and the holy vessels into the Temple. And then Solomon gathers the full assembly: young and the old, the leaders and the followers, the rich and the poor. As Old Testament scholar Dr. Richard Nelson notes, that large offering that is made of twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep is a way of "indicating the total participation of all the people." All the people. Nelson concludes that Solomon's use of the language of "our God" throughout the passage is a reminder that all of the people – every single one – "has a stake in the God who has shown such goodness." [1]

All of the people were included. This is an important lesson for us to heed. It was not just the leaders and not just the rich and well-connected. It was everyone. Everyone was not just invited, everyone was able to participate; everyone came to celebrate what "our God" has done. In our Journey to 2030 vision, we celebrate the notion that "all in" means everyone. We celebrate that *all in* means everyone when everyone from our youngest to oldest are invited to come forward to place their pledges of time, talent and resources in the baskets. And that we dedicate these pledges not as individuals, rather as a community.

The second way the people were *All In* was giving of themselves to God out of their love for the place God held in their lives. The ways God had walked with them on their journeys. The recognition that God had been *All In* for them over countless seasons of plenty and even more seasons of lack. Giving gifts back to God was more than a pragmatic desire to support a mission that they believed in, and a new building of which they were proud. That was certainly part of it, but there was more. Going *All In* was also about gratitude for the relationship they had with God and the relationship they had with each other through God. It was through this lens of abundant relationship that Solomon and the people prayed. And it was through this lens of abundant relationship that the people dedicated their gifts and celebrated for eight days.

David King, the Director of the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, writes that faith and finance conversations should focus on what we have, not what we lack. He advises, "Instead of bemoaning what is missing, take stock of what you have." King walks through an exercise in naming what God has given us. He starts with material assets like property and endowments, and then moves to articulations of vision and mission, and human and social capital. In

[1] Richard Nelson. *First and Second Kings. Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.* John Knox Press; 1987; p52; 55.

particular he lifts up the “stories of transformed individuals or communities” as some of the richest resources that faith communities have.[2]

In a congregation with many visible resources, as we here at PCO are blessed with, it can be tempting to dwell on the *possessions* for which we are grateful. And yet when I look out at this congregation, I see those rich resources of transformed individuals and transformed communities. Of friendships across generations; of hungry people fed; of yarn knit together to warm a body in its last days; of refugees welcomed as new neighbors; of conversations exploring the meaning of life; of gifts of music to inspire and soothe the soul; of art and poetry and book reviews; of standing up for causes you believe in because you love your neighbor as yourself. These are our stories of being *All In*. You all – y’all- are already *All In*. The dedication of our pledges of time, talent, and treasures are a marker of the commitment you make each and every day, not just on Sundays, but everyday as you live into God’s call on your life.

Five years ago yesterday, November 14, 2021, I preached my first sermon as your pastor. The title of the sermon was “Belonging.” I quoted from Father Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and writer on spirituality, who said, “Through the Church, in the Body of Christ, God calls us to a new way of living, a new way of relating to God, to others, and to the world. Paul believes the Church is meant to be a community whose way of living runs contrary to the prevailing culture. We would call it *countercultural* today. It is a way of cooperating rather than competing, a way of giving rather than getting, a way of sharing rather than hoarding, a way of sacrifice rather than comfort, a way of faith rather than knowledge, a way of relationship rather than anonymity, a way of love rather than animosity. Through membership in the Body of Christ, this way of living is a sharing in the life of Christ.[3]

This way of living is a sharing in the life of Christ. To claim membership in the body of Christ is the heart of being *All In*. To claim that you are part of something that is bigger than yourself. To make meaning out of life that too often makes no sense. To know that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. And friends, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts when we, all of us, dedicate ourselves to being *All In*.

In a few minutes, we will have the opportunity to share our commitment to being *All In*. I know that in this uncertain economic environment it can be challenging to make a financial commitment. I know that in this world when there are so many demands on our time and attention, it can seem unwise to make yet another promise of showing up to help out. We, that is our PCO Stewardship Committee, recognize that pledges are not contracts and that offers of support may have to change as life circumstances change. And yet we ask you to pledge in spite of – and maybe yes - because of, that uncertainty. We ask you to make a pledge as an act of trust – trust in your relationship with God and trust in your relationship with the

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[2] David P. King *Shaping a Theology of Money*. Faith and Leadership. Online at https://www.faithandleadership.com/david-p-king-shaping-theology-money

[3] Richard Rohr. Paul. A New Creation. Center for Action and Contemplation. Online athttps://cac.org/paul-a-new-creation-2021-07-08.

community through God. We ask you to pledge as an act of faith – faith in the God we sometimes fumble about for, and yet when found, we realize that God is not far from each one of us, for in God we live and move and have our being. We ask you to pledge as an act of faith in this community who has been, continues to be, and promises to walk with you always. We ask you to be *All In*, standing on the shoulders of those who came before, and living into the vision of who we are to become.

Last week our Call to Worship was adapted from a poem by Ann Weems, sometimes referred to as the Presbyterian Poet Laureate, who died 10 years ago in 2016. I want to end my sermon today with her poem *The Church of Jesus Christ*.[4] I tried to shorten the poem and just share a bit of it. But this poem – in its entirety - speaks to what I have experienced as a pastor here over the last five years, a celebration of a church that is *All In*.

The church of Jesus Christ is where a child brings a balloon…
is where old women come to dance . . .
is where young men see visions and old men dream dreams.

The church of Jesus Christ is where lepers come to be touched . . .
is where the blind see and the deaf hear . . .
is where the lame run and the dying live.

The church of Jesus Christ is where daisies bloom out of barren land . . .
is where children lead and wise men follow . . .
is where mountains are moved and walls come tumbling down.

The church of Jesus Christ is where loaves of bread are stacked in the sanctuary
to feed the hungry . . .
is where coats are taken off and put on the backs of the naked . . .
is where shackles are discarded and kings and shepherds sit down to life together.

The church of Jesus Christ is where barefoot children run giggling in procession . . .
is where the minister is ministered unto . . .
is where the anthem is the laughter of the congregation
and the offering plates are full of people.

The church of Jesus Christ is where people go when they skin their knees
or their hearts . . .
is where frogs become princes and Cinderella dances beyond midnight . . .
is where judges don't judge and each child of God is beautiful and precious.

The church of Jesus Christ is where the sea divides for the exiles . . .

[4] Online at https://jimsomerville.wordpress.com/2009/01/28/the-church-of-jesus-christ/

is where the ark floats and the lamb lies down with the lion . . .
is where people can disagree and hold hands at the same time.

The church of Jesus Christ is where night is day . . .
is where trumpets and drums and tambourines declare God's goodness . . .
is where lost lambs are found.

The church of Jesus Christ is where people write thank-you notes to God . . .
is where work is a holiday . . .
is where seeds are scattered and miracles grown.

The church of Jesus Christ is where home is . . .
is where heaven is . . .
is where a picnic is communion and people break bread together on their knees.

The church of Jesus Christ is where we live responsively to God's coming . . .
even on Monday morning the world will hear . . .
an abundance of alleluias!

Join me in prayer.