

Lent Devotional March 16, 2025

Scripture

1 Corinthians 3:11-23

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. 14 If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

18 Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written,

"He catches the wise in their craftiness,"

20 and again,

"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

21 So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, 23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Trevor Jamison '01

I live in the North of East of England, less than one hour's drive from the city of Durham. Prominently positioned in its historic center is Durham Cathedral. The religious community associated with it began a thousand years ago. The present building was substantially completed a century later. It is vast, beautiful, and awe-inspiring. It attracts thousands of visitors each year, though how many as pilgrims and how many as tourists is a good question.

The Apostle Paul, had he ever travelled this far north, could have used Durham Cathedral as a visual aid to speak not only of church buildings, but about church institutions, about human leadership, about congregations, and even about individuals like you and me.

The Corinthian congregation, he writes, is a living temple, as long as God's Spirit resides within it and its members. That temple's foundation is Jesus Christ, not admired leaders such as Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. As long as such leaders build upon the right foundation, though, their work becomes a beautiful adornment, like the columns, arches, and glasswork in Durham Cathedral.

Two thousand years after Paul, many of us live in settings where the spiritual climate has become less hospitable to faith and belief. It is tempting to focus on religious traditions (including impressive cathedrals), still-powerful church institutions, talented leaders, and lively church activities to see us through.

We should be grateful for them all, but Paul reminds us that if we substitute any one of them for Jesus Christ as the foundation of church life, rather than recognizing them as an adornment, they will not sustain us. How helpful, then, to have a period such as Lent, when we focus upon Jesus and his journey to the cross, remembering who and what is foundational for our faith.

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of the Church, with all that is good in its traditions, institutions, leaders, and activities. Fill us with your Spirit, we pray, so that we remain focused upon your Son, Jesus, the foundation of that faith we hold and share. Amen.