

transforming generosity

Finding God Outside the Temple

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Throughout time, humans have been obsessed with all things large and grandiose. In ancient times, the pyramids were the quintessential example of this, massive structures built to deify pharaohs. The Colosseum, Parthenon, and other ancient wonders draw visitors to this day. In our time, we build towering skyscrapers, glittering metropolises, and larger-than-life government buildings.

Even our homes are significantly larger: The average square footage of a house in 1920 was 1,048, as compared to 2,657 square feet in 2014. But bigger is better, right?

After I read today's Gospel lesson, I immediately related to the disciples' awe of the temple. One of my favorite places in all of this country is Washington National Cathedral, just a mile from where my mother and her sisters were born and raised. I've been to the cathedral multiple times over the years, most recently after we buried my grandmother in 2014. It's a place of reverence for me, a place of unspeakable peace. Among the stained-glass windows, the storied history of that sacred place, I feel closer to God.

But God is not any more present in our beautiful cathedrals than he is in our small churches. He is just as present at St. Augustine's in Homer, Alaska, among a small handful of faithful parishioners. He is just as present with a handful of volunteers with St. Isidore's Abundant Harvest food truck, where thousands are fed each year in North Houston. He is just as present with our work with the homeless and trafficking victims, ministries not always contained by four walls and a roof, but where two or three are gathered together. God is present in nursing homes, church missions in strip centers, in school chapels, and on military bases. God is not limited to a worship schedule, a day of the week, or the spatial confines of high, holy places.

King Solomon encapsulated that in 1 Kings 8:27, where he said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house I have built!" And Jesus reminds us of this in our Gospel: When we wrap ourselves up in the worship of *anything* other than God, we will be led astray.

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For reflection ...

- ❖ In what places do you feel closest to God?
- ❖ For many of us, our idols aren't limited to persons or buildings. What do you fixate on that distracts you from God?

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