

Proper 28C

One of my favorite toys as a kid was Lego. I was the only one of us in my family to have them. I think we didn't really know about them until I came back from a friend's house talking about them. I think my parents had their doubts about whether I would really enjoy them long-term, but hey...it was something different to put under the Christmas tree.

Those were the days when the sets were still really basic. Just blocks of different sizes and colors. Eventually I bought a set with wheels. I remember the fascination I felt when they came out with the heads/arms/bodies. They had hats! Hair that could go on 2 ways! The hands could hold stuff!

I see the kits they have now, and I wonder if I would have enjoyed them as much. So much is already done. There is a minifigure for practically anything you could want (although—ask Sandy what she found when she did a search for a Lego Jesus!)

Part of the delight was finding ways to put these square and rectangular blocks together to create things. I felt so clever when I figured out how to make a round house using square blocks.

But it also meant not being too attached to whatever you created, because you would need to take it apart in order to make something new.

My sister became a fan as an adult, maybe 8 years ago or so. She likes the kits that are more like puzzles, which are made to be assembled into one thing and then left in place. On Wednesday I said something about how they don't seem true to the original idea of Lego, which was about fostering creative thinking.

Patty pointed out that these 'specialized' kits are intentionally designed to be put together and left together, so that you buy MORE kits and they make more money.

SIGH

Our Chapel Kids really like Lego, as you can see at coffee hour. We challenge them to come up with ways to tell a Bible story using them. Most recently it was Zacchaeus' tree—really quite remarkable! We've seen Daniel and Lion's Den; Noah's Ark...Kioko even built the Holy of Holies with the Ark of the Covenant inside it.

But there is always a moment when we tell them it's time to take them apart and put them away. And there is ALWAYS some push back. It's hard to put that much work into something and then have it taken apart. We

usually take a photo so that they can look back at it if they want. But it's important for them to learn to let go. Nothing lasts forever.

That's part of what is happening in that Gospel reading today. This occurs in that last week of Jesus' life, and he knows that things are going to fall apart very soon. His disciples won't really understand what is happening, and they will only see the destruction.

He points to the Temple and says that the day will come when it will no longer be standing.

Keep in mind, that the structure they are looking at is not the exact same one built by King Solomon all those generations before. That one was destroyed by the Babylonians. This Temple was rebuilt after they returned from Exile, but then...well, things happened. It remained standing, but various conquering armies desecrated it. Finally, Herod the Great did some 'renovations' to it. Keep in mind, he was only distantly related to David's line and was not in the least interested in preserving it as the holy place it was meant to be.

So it was a symbol of their faith, sure...but it also could be seen as a symbol of the corruption that had crept in. A symbol of what happens when Empire attempts to insert itself into holy places.

Jesus is not being as blasphemous or revolutionary as it might have seemed to those who heard him. Instead, he is naming a hard truth.

The things we build don't last forever. Sometimes they fall apart. And sometimes they have to be dismantled in order to build something that aligns more closely to the values of God's realm.

This passage is considered to be part of "apocalyptic" literature. That word, apocalypse, means to uncover or reveal. The book of revelation is probably the apocalyptic literature most people are familiar with, and that's unfortunate. Because we tend to think of apocalypse as something horrible and destructive and world-ending.

And yes, unfortunately, too often those moments of revealing deeper truth do involve violence. Not because that's how God wants it, but because the people who benefit from the system as it is are no more willing to take it apart and try to build something new and better than our Chapel Kids are eager to take those Lego creations apart.

We too often try to prevent God's ongoing work of creation and redemption, because it means we have to change. We have to let go of the pieces we hold dear. We build all kinds of temples, to all kinds of false gods,

and then put our energy into desperately holding them together, even after the walls are crumbling and the roof has caved in.

Jesus is trying to tell them the same thing that Isaiah is saying in the first reading. Nothing stays the same forever. The things in which we have placed our trust will inevitably disappoint us, because they are not God. Empires fall.

And it's going to be okay.

That doesn't mean it's going to be easy. Doesn't mean there won't be suffering and sorrow and death. We will experience heartbreak and loss. We might even wander dangerously close to the edge of the Pit of Despair.

But if we are sincerely seeking the Kingdom of *God*, we will always find it. Sooner or later. It won't come pre-built. It won't even come in one convenient kit with all the pieces in one box and a nifty instruction sheet with drawings telling us how to put it together.

No, we find the Kingdom of God by seeing it in the little pieces that we run across along the way.

So this Lego image was in my mind as I began to celebrate the Eucharist on Wednesday morning. And I had one of those 'moments'—I don't really know if I can

call it a vision. Hildegard of Bingen might have called it a showing.

But as I held up the wafer and again repeated the story of how Jesus took the bread that last night before he died, I suddenly saw it in light of this idea that things have to be taken apart in order to be put back together. That's what we do when we receive communion every Sunday. The Body of Christ is taken, blessed, broken and given out in pieces so that we can go out into the world carrying a share in the grace of God. We break it apart so that Jesus can do something amazing with the pieces.

We bear those pieces out into a world that very often resents and rejects the Kingdom vision we have to offer. But we carry them anyway, trusting that through us God can "do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine."

Things break. But our creative, redemptive God takes them and makes new and even more beautiful things out of the pieces.

Amen.