



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Pentecost 14, Proper 16 – Year B**  
**August 26, 2018**

**[RCL]: 1 Kings 8:[1, 6, 10-11], 22-30, 41-43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69**

**1 Kings 8:[1, 6, 10-11], 22-30, 41-43**

What a day it must have been to dedicate the Temple at Jerusalem. The dedication of the temple can stand in for many things and help us expand our imaginations: the dedication of our own churches, the dedication of our gifts, the dedication of our lives. Indeed, we need to dedicate ourselves daily to the work that God has given us to do. The pageantry of this event certainly helped to set the scene and reveal its importance. We must find ways to commit deeply to our own dedication to God, so that people may come to hear God's great name because of the way we live our lives.

How can we more fully dedicate our lives to God, making an offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies? What do we need to do so that we may always deepen our commitment to God and grow into deeper dedication?

### **Psalm 84**

The psalm clearly echoes the themes of the reading from the Hebrew Bible, and it is easy to imagine it has a hymn on that day. Can we live in God's house? We cannot live in the Temple at Jerusalem – no one can. Likewise, we cannot dwell in our churches. This is probably a good thing for us and for the gospel. After all, all of creation is God's house. As a result, we can live in God's temple always and everywhere.

Do we live our lives like we live in God's dwelling? How might our lives change if we remember that we do indeed live in God's house?

### **Ephesians 6:10-20**

The imagery of this passage is tricky. Most of us live far from military imagery, and even farther from military imagery of the Roman Empire. With youth groups, I have done an activity where we re-imagine this text using modern and personal metaphors. Cell phones, Facebook, cars, and any number of modern devices – even lucky shoes – have been suggested by these youth. How might you re-imagine this passage to convey Paul's point?

This passage continues the themes that I have highlighted in the Kings reading and the psalm. We must put on the whole armor of God because our whole lives must be dedicated to God's work. Christ never asks for a little bit. As a result, the closing thought of this passage is of vital importance. Paul's prayer must become our own. We must pray to be alert and to persevere. We must also make a bold witness for the gospel. What would our lives look like if we lived into Paul's prayer?

### **John 6:56-69**

The disciples found this teaching difficult. I think we are a lot like them. Jesus is teaching us the words of spirit and life, but there are those among us who do not believe, and often Jesus' teaching is just plain difficult. Truly, much ink has been spilled trying to figure out what it means to eat his flesh and drink his blood! I'm not sure that it is helpful to become bogged down in those theological debates. Rather, what does it mean to nourish the spirit and live by it instead of the flesh?

Jesus asks the twelve if they wish to leave. Peter answers that there is nowhere to go; Jesus gives the word of eternal life. As we know, it is easy to turn to sources other than Jesus for sustenance. As Jesus says, those things – that is, the flesh – are useless. Are we sustaining ourselves in spirit? Are we taking Jesus' words, the words of eternal life, and feasting on them?

*This Bible study, written by the Rev. JK Melton, originally ran August 26, 2012.*