

Psalm 149; Ephesians 1:11-23

Grace to you and peace from God who is who was and who is to come. Amen.

We live in an old house - we, being the Brocks, not this congregation. We live in a house that, according to the records, there was a structure on our lot in 1824. Now I can't honestly say it was exactly our house, but there is a strong probability that the afore mentioned structure was in fact our abode. It's kind of a neat old house, but as many old houses, is in need of repair. Some of you here know that it's in need of repair because you were over helping me repair it earlier this spring. I had a painting party and about eight folk came over, and we scraped and sanded and primed. Even though we worked at it for about seven hours or so, we only got about three quarters of one side of the house done.

But it was about a year ago, when I first started really commenting on the fact that I really needed to paint the house because the paint was just literally coming off in big sheets. My father-in-law happened to notice the condition of the siding on the east side or the backside of our house. More specifically, we have a little jet out, a little "L" out of the house. It was at one time its own little building; it was what would have been called a "summer kitchen" that over the years was just eventually attached to the main part of the house. We use it as a family room now. My father-in-law noticed that many of the boards on the backside of that building were just not in the condition worth trying to sand down and paint them because they were cracked or they were warped or they just weren't going to be worth trying to repair. And so instead he came up with a great idea. He and my mother-in-law live in a house that was built in the 1790's. They've lived there about forty years and have spent that time repairing and redoing the house. They've done most of the work themselves. So my father-in-law, said 'oh, it will be easy, I'll come over, we'll take that siding off, we'll put in some insulation, we'll put up some plywood and we'll be happily done with the siding before you even get home to meet the school bus.

Well, I was a little leery, but it's my in-laws, and I've learned that I don't argue with my in-laws. So they arranged for a day. I came to church and was a bit nervous and I went home, actually a little early to meet the school bus, and my in-laws were indeed there. They had gotten the siding off of the house and there was the backside of the lathe and plaster, all out in the open that I could see. It was kind of interesting to look at the structure, of the way that the house was built, because it's not 16 inches on center studs. There were very sturdy looking pieces of lumber and these cross braces. The thing that I noticed most especially, though, was this big gap between the foundation and the floor. The part where you would normally have a sill, the thing that holds up the house. It wasn't there! It had rotted out. It was dry rot, or insect had gotten to it, I'm not sure exactly what it was. The little bit that was there we could pretty much stick our hands right through. So then we spent the next several hours trying to figure out how to repair this, and then it was 4:00 in the afternoon in October, it was just not the best time for me to see such massive destruction to my house, but we got through it. We figured out a way to rebuild the sill and we got the insulation on and we got the plywood up and finally about 8:00 that night, that's when we

decided to call it quits because we couldn't see where to hammer any more. That was October of 2006.

YESTERDAY, my father-in-law came back so that we could keep working on the project. (Did you notice the 2006 part, this is not 2006 anymore.) So he got there and we decided that before we started putting on siding we should really take off the rest of the old siding that is way up there at the peak of the roof (that would be at the end of the attic above our family room). And so we get up there and of course, it's easier to pound those boards out so who gets to go crawling around IN the attic to pound those boards OUT. But we got the boards out and we eventually got the plywood back up, and I had to breathe in a whole bunch of dust that was probably a couple of centuries old, but I am okay, it really didn't bother me.

And so all the time that I am doing this, both last year and this year, I marveled at the sturdiness of the construction (with the exception of the rotting sill and the siding that was coming off). But still the foundation of that part of the house is two feet wide. It's good stone and the rest of the building is very well constructed. We walked through that corner on the inside and there was no jostling around, you could tell that the building was WELL constructed at one point. I was reminded of that again as I was crawling through the attic and seeing the way the roof beams come together. They just come together to form an upside down "V" and there are a series of them. They're not connected lengthwise. They're just coming up like this, the whole thing, the craftsmanship that went into that. I was marveling at how well constructed it is and for the most part a strong, sturdy and safe structure. The folks who put it together nearly two hundred years ago did a great job and it has been well used ever since.

Now we're gathered here today because of those who have gone before us. I live in a house thanks to the WORK of some unknown people 190 years ago. We're gathered here today, in part, because of the work of some unknown people. Because back in the 1890's, there were people here in Camp Hill who decided that, while going to Trinity Lutheran in Mechanicsburg, like they've been doing is okay, but it's an awfully long haul. It's difficult to get on a horse, or get the buggy going or even just to walk all the way to Mechanicsburg. So with the help of Trinity Lutheran in Mechanicsburg, those folks started this congregation in Camp Hill. Maybe they were tired of the big commutes to Mechanicsburg, although today, it is something we may scratch our heads at. There might even be folks here that drive past Trinity in Mechanicsburg just to get here. But in addition to that they had the foresight to see that Camp Hill had the potential to be a growing community, and they started this congregation, and we're gathered here because of those folks.

Now, we're also gathered here because of probably somebody in our own lives, someone who was a witness to us of faith who brought us up in the faith of Christianity in the domination of Lutheran. We're probably definitely here due to our baptism. Some of us I am sure were baptized as infants and it's due to the faith of those who oversaw our baptism, be it our parents, grandparents or godparents, whoever it was that saw to it that we were raised in that faith. And that faith is what continues to bring us here. We might be gathered here because of what you might have gone through in Confirmation or as what we call it now, Affirmation of Baptism. That time of education and faith building, that where we learned to take those promises that were

made on our behalf at our baptism, take those promises and make them personal. Make them meaningful to ourselves.

We're gathered here in this place, on this weekend because of those folks known and unknown who have gone before us. We're also gathered this weekend as we remember those perhaps a bit closer to us, those men and women, our brothers and sisters in Christ who have joined the Church Eternal since our All Saints day last year. We'll read their names in a few minutes as we go through the list. All of these folks who have gone before us, like the folks who built my house that have given us the foundation of faith, the framework at which we build our lives as Christians in the Lutheran tradition.

Now as my father-in-law and I were working on my house yesterday, trying to get things apart and then struggling to get them back together again, we also kept running into lets call them "repairs" that had been to the structure throughout the years, and we would usually one of us comment something along the lines of, 'WHAT were they thinking when they did that particular thing.' Because generally the piece of repair work that was involved, usually called for can we say creative imagining.

As that was happening though I had the realization that we too were now becoming a part of that history of repairs. Ron and I, like those folks before us who built, maintained and repaired this home, and I am sure that someday, hopefully MANY decades from now, when some other future owner is striving to improve or repair some aspect of the house, they will come across the things that Ron and I have done, they too will shake their heads and wondering what were those guys thinking.

But remember this day that this is about more than just those who have gone before us. For we too are part of the body of saints, not only who have gone before us and are here now, we're also part of the body of those yet to come. Now our faith is more than just a house, because someday my house will burn down or no longer stand or just crumble to the effects of time. Our faith though, will remain, long past any failing or endings of our bodies, our faith, the Christian faith will endure. And so tonight we celebrate, we celebrate those who have come before, those who are with us now and those who will come after us. We celebrate this faith of ours that has no end; we celebrate life in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.