

De-Construction as Building

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

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The first step in constructing a new building is not to go up, but to go down. Before the framework becomes visible and progress can be easily assessed by onlookers, workers must spend some time clearing the lot, removing structures that are already there, and digging down into the earth to form the basement or foundation. In a certain sense, this phase could be called the de-construction phase. For as basic as the de-construction phase is, it is essential to the building's future.

Our readings this weekend speak of the end times in a very frightening way.

In our Gospel from *Luke*, speaking of the Temple, Jesus says, "all that you see here- the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down." He continues, nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues will take place; there will be mighty signs from the sky; we may be seized, persecuted, and sent to prison; some will be handed over by family members and friends; and you will be hated by all. God seems so destructive.

Our first reading from the prophet *Malachi* contains similar language: "Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble,...leaving them neither root nor branch, says the Lord of hosts." Again, God seems so destructive. Is this *really* who God is?

I think that there is a better way to read these sorts of scripture passages. Instead of reading it as destruction (as do many fundamentalist Christians), we can read it as de-construction. There is a difference. Both destruction and de-construction can make us fearful in that it involves taking away, but de-construction serves a higher purpose. It is not a reckless tearing down for the sake of tearing down. De-construction is calculated, intentional, smart, and for the sake of future construction. It is creating space for something new to come into existence. In reality, God is not doing destruction in our readings this weekend, God is doing de-construction. God is clearing, removing, and tearing down the old in order to construct the new, the Kingdom of God.

In our own lives, there will be seasons when we are asked to do some de-construction. Some of our mindsets or biases may be shaken. The idols we worship may come tumbling down. Our routines and patterns may need to adapt. This hurts and feels like losing. But it is all part of building. In fact, if we learn to do this part well, what we do construct will be much more secure.

De-construction is a vital part of the building process.

Can I distinguish between destruction (which usually isn't good) and de-construction (which is vital to building)?

Both destruction and de-construction can cause fear and panic. But let us remember that de-construction works together with construction. As we move ahead as individuals and a community, let us not be afraid of what needs to come down before we can put something up, for if we have faith, we will come out stronger in the future and nothing, not even a hair on your head, will be destroyed.