

# Who Laid Its Cornerstone?

Proper 7

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Job 38:1-11

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Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

What is a cornerstone? “The cornerstone...is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, (and it is) important since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure (Wikipedia.org).”

This summer we are celebrating the construction of our church building, which happened nearly one hundred years ago. Yet this celebration would not be happening if it were not for the placing of the cornerstone on the southeast corner of the building. A few years ago, someone in an adult instruction course asked how old Augsburg Immanuel was, and I was curious so I went to look. Learning that it was nearly one hundred years ago, it seemed the proper time to remember its construction and to give God praise for all the work He has done here.

It’s true that additions have been made since that time—including digging out a basement—but our church building was officially completed in 1918. It began in 1917, when the first stone, the cornerstone was set, giving a reference for how the rest of the building would be built.

In our text, God asks Job where he had been when God built the earth. He asks “On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

This morning, we’ll consider why God asked Job this question, as well as why those before us built churches, including Augsburg Immanuel. We turn to our text.

## Verse 1

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: ‘Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?’”

The Lord God shows up and begins asking these questions of Job toward the end of the account of Job. For thirty-five-plus chapters, Job has been attacked by Satan and accused by his friends of doing wrong. Up to this point, Job had suffered patiently—thus where we got the old phrase “The patience of Job”—and he had waited for the Lord’s deliverance.

Job was not the first man on the earth, nor would he be the last man on the planet. He had not been there when its cornerstone had been laid, and yet he lived as one of its people. Today we live here in the country south of Vandalia. This location had been known—and still is known—as Augsburg. About one hundred years ago, some of your ancestors laid the cornerstone for this building so that they and their descendants might worship here.

They laid the foundations so that they could come and worship God according to His will. They knew that they were His creations, and that He had sent His Son to pay for their sins. So they had this building built to give Him glory and so that there would be a place for His Word to be read and heard, which would also give Him glory. They built this place of worship, even down to its very doors, through which generations could come and hear God’s Word. As we continue our text, we hear about how God had constructed some doors as well.

## Verse 2

“Or who shut the sea in with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, “Thus far you shall come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed”?”

By describing the seas bursting out from the womb, God illustrates creation as a kind of birthing process. God is the creator of all things—from the creation itself, to every human being, to the new life found in His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the one who instituted the church, from which every church building, including this one, were built. This is His Church and we are His new creations in Jesus.

God didn't need Job, or us, to be there when He created the earth; and He didn't need us to be there when He sent His Son to save us. He is the architect of everything we know and everything we are. And like any builder, God has an attachment to and love for everything He has created. God built everything and everyone out of His great love.

But then one of His own creations rose up against Him with others and tried to overthrow Him. God cast that one, Satan, out along with all the other rebel-rousers. That was when Satan possessed the serpent and misled our ancestors, Adam and Eve, to disobey God. Their disobedience hurt God and God would later come to say that He wished He hadn't even created humanity. Yet God did not give up on His beloved creation. He had promised in the same chapter of human history in which we fell that He was going to save us.

Out of His great love, God sent His Son, the seed of the woman Eve, to destroy Satan's corruption of His creation. In that way, God began creating us anew by the power of His Word.

## Verse 3

Because God did not let us stay in sin, because His love was so great, our ancestors have been passing down His Word from generation to generation, from church building to church building—all the way to this one. Are we, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, any different?

If God were to ask us where we were when He was building the earth, laying its cornerstone, would we be able to answer that we were? Were we even there when this building was being built? No, everything we have, from our very lives to this building where we worship God, are gifts from God.

God constructed every part of us human beings after He had made the earth, fashioning the first man from the clay of the earth, and then the woman, Eve, from that man's rib. He made us to be the pinnacle of His creation. No other creature received the special form of creation that humanity did. So God is the architect of the world, and the One who made all of humanity.

But more than that, when our ancestors fell, God did not start over. He loved us so much that He promised to send a Savior. He sent His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. Then, God Himself dwelt among us as One of us. He lived, He breathed, and He felt and was affected by sin, just like us. Jesus came to the earth, but He also came willing to die for us. He took every sin of ours upon His own body and paid the price for it, suffering hell, separation from God the Father, for it—thus freeing us from the punishment we rightly deserved.

And by dying for us, God created new life for us. He has given us this life in hearing His Word, being washed in the waters of Holy Baptism, and as His Spirit works in us every time that we hear His Word. In that way, God is also the architect of our new life. Like the creation itself, it all began with a cornerstone—and Jesus is our cornerstone, the One on whom all the rest of us are being built.

For all this, it is our duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true. In Jesus' Name. Amen.