

Polly's Ponderings

"Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon Son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Matthew 16:17 & 18

Long before I have served as a pastor in a church, long before I was ordained and long before I attended seminary, I told one of the members of my church that I wanted to write about the reason for suffering in the world. He didn't laugh and for that I am grateful. But he did say that I was seeking to tackle an issue that has been a wrestling point for Christians since the time of Christ. Today that encounter that occurred so many years ago has returned to my thoughts. Maybe this is not too surprising considering all the talk of suffering and potential death due to the current health scare.

I certainly do not think I have the answer but I want to share with you some thoughts that I am pondering about today. I was reading ahead in my Celtic Daily Prayer Book and there on the section for April 1st there was mention of a book by Gene Edwards. "You must read this-you'll hate it!" Immediately I thought "what kind of recommendation is that?" Immediately following was the thought, "Where can I get this book?" Lucky for me the next few days devotions are based on that very book. And so, I continued reading ahead. Let me share with you words that were found under April 5th on page 370.

"There are enough stones here to build a city! A very large city. Can you hear the masons? They are beginning to return to their work over there. Hear the hammers? The chisels? One day, when all these stones are completed, they will be taken to the site, near the house. There they will be taken through the door, and from there to the the builders' site itself, where the stones are being reassembled. Reassembled, but this time in to a house...almost as one vast stone. At that site, on *that* side of the door, there will be no hammer, no chisel, no mason work at all. It is here, on this side of the building site, where all chiseling, sanding and polishing *must* take place. Here! Not there. All the thud of hammer and falling of axes, the grating of chisels and the grinding of sand...is done *here*! It is the plan of the Master Builder that all the business of making rough rock into perfectly fitting, polished stone be accomplished in the stone quarry. *There*, there, beyond this place, beyond that door, is only the assembling together of what has been done here."

That put the verse found in Matthew declaring that Peter would be the rock upon which Christ would build his church to take on new meaning. Because it is no longer a statement only about Peter. In light of the idea that God is the Master Builder and has the means to take ordinary people who believe and to shape them into the stones that He will use to build His church tells me that you and I are some of the building stones that are being shaped, sanded and polished to fit perfectly together to build Christ's church. In this sense the earth becomes the quarry in which the stones are cut free. And the moments in time that shape us become the hammer and the chisel God uses to fit us for the determined place He has chosen for us in the building of the church.

It seems to me that with that kind of thinking I can begin to look at each situation, good or bad, as a

potential for God to use that experience to shape and perfectly fit me for His plans for my life and for building up the church. So especially in this moment when things are uncertain let us look carefully and ask God's guidance to see what He has in for us to learn in this time that might shape us for His good. This might not remove the suffering but it can bring purpose out of the suffering.

And let us give God the glory because He is using ordinary people to build His church and the gates of Hell will not overcome it.