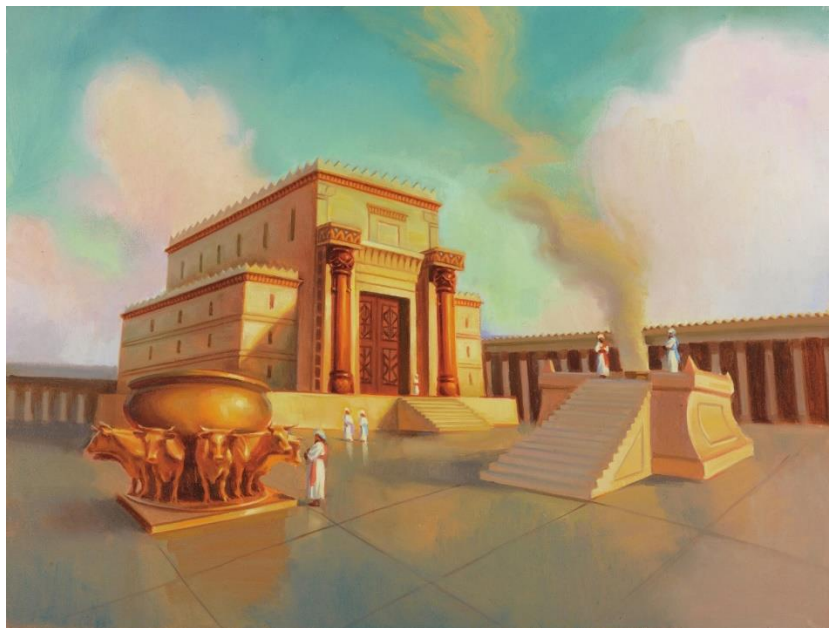




**A Sermon for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost
August 25, 2024**



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**Click Here for today's Readings:
[Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)**

1 Kings 8:1, 6, 10-11, 22-30, 41-43, John 6:56-69

Moment of decision

Jesus's disciples have just heard his long discourse about the Bread of Life. And many of them didn't get it and left. Jesus asked Peter and the rest of the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

I remember a scene in an old Jesus movie. Peter and other disciples are sitting around a campfire, talking about their options. One of them asks Peter, "Well, are you going or staying?" Peter says, "I'm staying. My old life is over. I have nothing to go back to. This is the way."

That's the decision the twelve made, although we know that Judas reconsidered later. The eleven never went back to their old lives. Many other followers of Jesus made the same decision. Jesus told them all they needed to hear. He said the words of eternal life, and their new Eternity began in that moment.

I had one of those moments. Perhaps you did, too, or perhaps you are still waiting for it – my girl friend called it "a telegram from God." I was 43 years old, had made several radical decisions in my life up to that point, including moving back and forth to Germany twice, but once God made the new way clear to me, I was on my way. It took me two years to sort out the implications, but I did, and went to seminary, in a radical change of direction, which included leaving my job, my home, and ultimately my marriage. Like Peter said in the movie, "My old life is over. I have nothing to go back to. This is the way." I've been on the Way ever since.

In our Old Testament reading, King Solomon is at one of those decisive moments himself. He inherited the united kingdom of Israel when his father, King David, died, and Solomon led the Jews to a new understanding of their life in God. Up to this point, the Ark of the Covenant symbolized God's presence, and the Jews had hauled it around with them, through the desert, through their battles in the Promised Land, usually parking it in a tent, and finally bringing it to Jerusalem, a central point for worship. This was a major organizational feat by Solomon. He literally built a house for

God, a place for the Ark of the Covenant, and a focal point for the Jewish worship of God. The Temple in Jerusalem was a very big deal. And Solomon's building of the Temple was a major decisive point in Jewish history. Solomon's temple was destroyed five hundred years later, and rebuilt, twice. The first was a restoration, and the second was a major enlargement, which was still going on at the time of Jesus. Forty years after Jesus died, the Temple was destroyed again, and now lies as rubble under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It is still a major focal point for Jews, who bewail its destruction at the Western wall of the Temple Mount, a wailing wall of loss. The loss of the building did not destroy their faith. It just began a new phase and a dispersal of the faith. With no Temple for a focus, the Jews dispersed to synagogues, places of worship and learning, no longer centers of ritual sacrifice. Getting rid of the building was probably a good thing in the long run.

I think about you and this building. You have not made an idol out of it. In a time of major decision, half of you were able to leave your building, St. Peter's, and join the congregation in this building, St. Michael's, and to create a new united congregation, with the invigorating title of New Life. Breaking the mold brought you new life, abundantly.

Many of us have made big decisions to pursue new life in new ways. I told you my story, the short version, and you have surely had such moments of decision in your own lives – the decision to enter a new job or career, a new relationship, join a new church or denomination, leave one place and move to another. All such decisions have implications for the rest of our lives. All of them involve risk, but to stay idle is the bigger risk. Joyfully reaching out for new opportunities is life changing. Look what Judaism was able to do, once they let go of the Temple! For those of us who cherish relationships with God and each other, we know we will be fine, as long as we follow Jesus.

There's a great hymn you may know, in our Spiritual Hymnal, Lift Every Voice And Sing. Perhaps you'd like to join me with this wonderful affirmation.

LEVAS 136: I have decided to follow Jesus....no turning back, no turning back.