

**Read: 1 Kings 8:6-13**

## God built a beautiful church

### **1 Kings 8:6-13**

The priests then brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its carrying poles. These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.

Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud; I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever."

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Don't you love the way churches look at Christmas? There is a beautiful Christmas tree covered with lights and ornaments, an Advent wreath with real candles on it, and a manger scene set up near the front of church for everyone to see. Red poinsettia flowers are placed all around the front of the church and beautiful white and gold cloths are placed on the altar. On Christmas Eve, the lights are turned off, and the church goes dark as everyone holds lit candles and sings "Silent Night." How beautiful! But the most beautiful thing about church and Christmas is that we hear about Jesus.

King Solomon lived a thousand years before Jesus. He built a temple (like a church today) for God, and it was one of the most beautiful buildings ever made. It was made of white stones that gleamed in the sunlight. The inside was covered with expensive wood and overlaid with pure gold and silver. There were carvings of cherubim (a word for angels) as decorations. But that's not really what made it beautiful. It was beautiful because God made his dwelling place there. But that created a problem: when God filled the temple with a cloud of his holiness, the priests had to leave! It was a beautiful place, but people couldn't come near it.

On the night Jesus was born, shepherds came to see him. What did they see? They saw a baby who didn't seem too holy to get near or too scary to be around. And that's the point: In Jesus, God came to be with his people. The same God who is so awesome and holy that people couldn't approach him in the temple came to us in a way that's so gentle and loving that

everyone throughout his life could come to him, listen to him, and find peace with him. And do you know what we call that, when people are together with a loving and gracious God? We call that a beautiful church.

And that's what he's making right now. As you read God's Word together, as you hear about the love of your Savior, as you say your prayers to God, he's with you right now. You don't have to run in fear; it's okay if you're not dressed up in a fancy way or singing beautiful songs. You're hearing the Word of Jesus, and God is with you, among you and living in your hearts to forgive your sins and give you peace. Right here, right now, God's built a beautiful church with you.

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for the Younger Children**

- Name your favorite Christmas decoration in your house or at church.
- How does it help remind you about Jesus?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- How would you define what a "church" is?
- What are some ways we can remind each other that our home is really a church, too?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- Today's devotion reminded us that God made a "covenant" with his people at Mt. Sinai. What's a covenant?
- What are some promises that God's given to you through Jesus?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Dear Jesus, of all the gifts we receive at Christmas, you are the best! Thank you for being God's Word, telling me everything God wants me to know. Thank you for being God's light, showing me everything God wants me to see. Thank you for teaching me to know God himself. Amen.