

# What are we planting?

Jacqueline Cleland

*Hebrews 10:11-14*

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I want you to close your eyes and imagine something with me for a moment. I want you to imagine your ideal legacy. What is a legacy, you might be asking, as Lin-Manuel says, "Legacy? What is a Legacy? It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see." Something that will last the test of time to be shared with future generations. We are borrowing this land from our descendants and are charged with its' care. Maybe you make the Canadian Stonehenge. Perhaps you build a community space to rival the Colosseum in Italy. Picture all the help this place can give, the healing, the entertainment, and the political advances for humanity.

Oh, you might be imagining Richmond Presbyterian Church; you all helped build it, right? We have all built up this building with blocks made of love. It had a renovation done with the Leading with care policies in mind. It has the amazing fireside lounge that does fantastic youth programming.

Take a moment and imagine the greatness; imagine the impact.

Take a moment and imagine the greatness tumbling down to dust and being left with nothing. Imagine the impact.

How does that make you feel?

Now I hang out with youth far too long and expect shouted out answers. So please give me one or two.

Thank you, person, that I may have 100% pre prompted in case people had decorum in church.

We can feel Anger, Emptiness, Frustration, Inadequacy, Helplessness, Fear, Guilt, Loneliness, Depression, Overwhelmed, Resentment, Failure, Sadness, Jealousy.

And probably a few more that we did not name.

Wanting a contrast, I want to think about Jesus, the Savior, the man greeted in Mark 11 by the population singing "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

What feelings do you have with a greeting like that?

Love, Joy, Acceptance, Celebration!

Another image that contains contrasts that I want to address is the temple building being talked about in our scripture reading today. Now, if I am being honest when I picture the temple, I think of a rundown has-been building, a place of history to be tiptoed around but not worshipped at like our home church. But that was not what it was in its glory days. It was, as ancient historians wrote, "magnificent." If its massive size was not impressive enough, much of the temple was covered in pure gold. It was very literally golden. Not only that, but it was the House of God!

Imagine a temple that was worthy of being the one and only house of God.

The house of God was a stunner beyond wonder. It was beyond my feeble words to describe. Yet all was not perfect. It was cloaked with the sins of others. Much of the grandeur was built on the “gifts” of poor widows and others, which Jesus carefully analyzed.

Jesus called out the systemic oppression going on to those in the margins and oppression that many benefited from directly or indirectly. Some benefited without ever knowing the history only the end result. Does this remind us of a bit of our Indigenous brothers and sisters? We as descendants of those who move to Canada, benefit directly and indirectly from the sins of an oppressive past. There is so much that we do not know about this part of our history, but Jesus is calling us to learn.

I know that we can all love our building and the great things it can and has done for us. Yet it is our temple. Our land acknowledgement states that we are honored to be worshipping on the traditional ancestral unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples and do not take this privilege and responsibility lightly. Richmond Presbyterian Church seeks to learn from Indigenous wisdom as to how we can live in right-relatedness with Creator, creation and all peoples.

Drawing a parallel, the old temple fell. It fell in a spectacular way as Jesus predicted. The Romans built great fires at the base of the walls, and the intense heat caused the foundation stones to crumble. I am a chemist, so forgive me a second, but under intense heat, the calcium carbonate in marble dissociates to yield carbon dioxide and lime which are a gas and a powder. Thus, structurally compromised, the walls will collapse under their own weight into great piles of stone as the gas escapes. The land of fertile worship tainted or not was not barren, and the history masked but never forgotten.

It was considered a mini apocalypse.

If you noticed passage does not stand on its own. In the larger context, take us from the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (11:1-11) through Jesus and the religious leaders disagreeing again (chapters 11-12) and this apocalyptic chapter (chapter 13) to the betrayal of Jesus (14:43-51) and Peter’s denial (14:66-72), the crucifixion (chapters 14-15) and the resurrection (chapter 16).

Yet, some people don’t believe that this is an apocalypse passage. They argue these are not signs of the end times but signs of events that will occur before the end arrives. It is the symbol of the old passing away and something new being born. The golden covering of oppression coloured the old worship. This new worship was not to be building-centric but to be Saviour-centric.

Yet if things are supposed to be Saviour-centric, where was love and support of Jesus in his time of trial. Well, it is likely that that Jesus’ prediction of the temple’s destruction may have cost him his popular support.

I mean, I probably lost some of you when I asked you to picture the destruction of a theoretical constructor of this church we are in now. We don’t always like bad news, so we tune it out.

Yet this is not a story of bad news. It is a parable—a parable of the seed.

We have some seeds that grew from places of thorns and rock in our past, so God flattened our temple of worship for something more. For our legacy.

A legacy of gas and powder.

Did you know what a benefit there was to the temple burning? It produced limestone. Now when lime is added to soil, these compounds react to increase the soil's pH, making the soil less acidic and more alkaline. Lime's primary role is to alter soil pH and offset soil acidity, improving the availability of plant nutrients. Quite simply, it helps seeds grow. It helps the seeds of our legacy grow from the ash of our failure grow into something better that we could not attain on our own without Jesus.

From the fall Jesus predicted there was growth at the place of the Temple. Growth in ways we would never have expected. This Holy land of the temple grew to be one of the most Holy sites for Christians, Jews and Muslims. It became in some ways more loving and understanding of different ways of loving God.

We have all made mistakes in our ignorance and we can make a difference. It will not be easy, but we are not only on our own, not only in community but we are with God's guidance and love. We need God involved in the process of this labor. It is not the end of all but "the beginning of birth pangs" (v. 8). The emphasis of this passage is not suffering and destruction but hope and salvation! We are birthing a brighter future together.

Our church may not have been made of the gold collected unfairly from widows and minorities, but it is built with resources taken from others. Taken more specifically from our Coast Salish siblings. We had a sad realization lately with the discovery of the legacy of the residential school that our history is not always positive to all people. The legacy of the perfect church that some thought we once had has been destroyed like the temple of old.

And that is a good thing.

The Church's relationships need to be rethought and for God to breathe life into them. We are in this continued cycle of death and rebirth. It is no longer an image for another people, place or time. It is our place, our time, and for us as people. When old ideas are challenged, it can be hard; we can think of it as a mini apocalypse. But that is okay; God made us all in God's image. God loves all those made in God's image and will help us grow to overcome this communal sin. This is not the end but labour pains to birth a new love.

Sometimes we have to let old things go to create space for new things to grow. I want you to take a moment now and close your eyes. Picture the good that can possibly come from the seed that we are planting in the limestone. Could reconciliation be the seed that begins to heal the damage caused by what we in retrospect understand to be a less than faithful interpretation of the Spirits leading? How do we help it grow? How is God helping us to see a new path forward? Close your eyes and picture where God is calling us to grow on this land. On this land that we share with our Coast Salish siblings.

Picture us birthing a new legacy that God helps us plant together.