

Day 51 – Apr. 10

In Iona, Scotland last summer, I had 8 days to sit in nature and pray, write, and meditate. And whether it was a pebble beach to the south with a stone labyrinth inlaid in the grass, a white-sand beach to the north with sheep grazing nearby, atop Dun I which is the highest point on the island, or Staffa, a nearby island with a huge puffin breeding ground, each day I sat in God's cathedral and worshiped. I have always met God in nature and will actively seek it out as the place nearest to God's heart.

I have also had the opportunity to be a part of groups arguing about how we use our money. One side wants to beautify the church and another wants to feed the hungry in the community. I was on the side of the practical use rather than the beatific, of feeding the hungry and housing the homeless rather than decorating the sanctuary with a new coat of paint. But as I've pondered texts like today's reading and had experiences like Iona, I've fallen far more toward the middle on these discussions. Everyone wants to see the poor served, but there is also value in the creation of a place whose beauty leads us closer to God.

As Solomon begins his plan to build a temple, he does so without a military need for funds. He has finally achieved peace and so has the resources and time (and permission) to build God a temple. And he will (spoiler alert) build a temple that becomes a worship center for the entire people of God. It's beauty would inspire people to worship, to sing, to pray, and to meditate on God.

There is a misuse of funds to build a structure that is not useful for ministry. But there is also a good use of funds to draw people to God through beauty, the arts, and architecture. As with most everything, it's truly about intention as much if not more than end result.