

Lessons from Notre Dame

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I watched Notre Dame burning last night, along with a great many others, I am sure. Of course it can be described as a tragedy, but three things struck me.

First, almost no one mentioned it is a church. Its role as a tourist attraction was mentioned time and again. Its architectural significance was stressed. Its role in the French psyche was also to the fore. But its function as a church - which is what it actually is - was almost ignored.

Second, the tears that flowed in Paris might have been of regret, but many who shed them have probably not been into Notre Dame for years. I happen to live very near a magnificent cathedral. Most people in Ely rarely go near it, although entrance is free for all residents. The regret might have been from ignoring the place.

Third, of course I would not have wished that this happened, but the fire reminds us that all of this existence, and all that we make and do is temporary. It is literally the case that nothing lasts forever. Except, perhaps, our legacy. A lot of carbon was emitted last night. A lot more will be in the inevitable rebuilding. I am not saying there should not be a rebuild. I am suggesting that if our legacy is entropy then we need to consider what the value of our temporary activities really is.

Doing what we really value is important. As is appreciating it. And understanding what it is that motivated it matters.