

Easter 5
Mother's Day
May 14, 2017

"Living Stones Built on Jesus the Living Stone"

1 PETER 2:4-10

As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ⁷ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," ⁸ and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message-- which is also what they were destined for. ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Stones are quite amazing. They come in all sizes and shapes. They are different colors. People love to use stones to decorate their yards and even the inside of their homes. Stones have been used to build walls. They have been used in battle to tear down walls. David used a smooth stone to kill the giant Goliath. Children love to throw stones in the water.

Where do stones come from? How did they come into existence? I am sure that God created many of the stones that are in the ground all over the world. Others were polished by thousands of years of water and wind and ice moving across the ground. Stones have this in common. They were given to us by the hand of God.

Bricks are different. They tend to be the same size, same color and shape and made of the same material. They are not made by the hand of God but by the hand of man.

You are not a brick. You are a stone, a living stone, built on Christ the living Stone. You are unique and special in the eyes of your God who made you. You become even more special when by a miracle of God's grace your life is built on Christ Jesus your Savior the Living Stone. As living stones built on the Living Stone you become part of a beautiful house that gives glory to God.

Built on Christ the Living Stone

Peter comforts the Christians who are going through hard times by telling them they are living stones built on Jesus the Living Stone. "As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--" You come to Jesus. He took you when you without God and without hope, and built your life on him and made you a living

stone. Now you come to Jesus. Every day you come to Jesus for pardon and cleansing for you sin. You cannot find this all important forgiveness and peace with God in yourself. You cannot make us for the terrible things you have done wrong in your life in the past and even now in the present. Every day you come to Jesus pleading for his forgiveness. Every day you come to Jesus for help to battle the temptations that come into your life.

Jesus is the living Stone. He offers eternal life to people when their lives are built on him. How sad it is that some people reject him and don't want to have him build their lives on him. As it says so sadly, "he is rejected by men." Peter saw that over and over again in the lives of people during those three years he spent with Jesus. Jesus came to people. He engaged them in conversation and they walked away. Some even picked up stones to throw them at Jesus and kill him.

Let's turn our attention to verse 7 to see further evidence of this rejection that is still so prevalent today. "Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.'" Here is the perfect stone to place at the top of the arch. It is carefully cut and ready to be put into place. What do the builders do? They reject the stone. Look at Jesus. See how our heavenly Father carefully sent his Son into the world to complete our salvation for us. He cried out from the cross, "It is finished." When the work was done, our Father raised his Son to life again. It was all done perfectly so we can be sure our sins were forgiven and we have peace with God. What do people do with this living Stone that gives them life that lasts forever? They reject him. He becomes a stone over which they stumble and fall. Ultimately that living Stone will crush them on the day of judgment.

Even though Jesus was rejected, he has become the capstone. As it says again in verse 4, "he was rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him." At Jesus' baptism the Father told us how precious his Son was to him with the words, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." He said the same at the transfiguration. He announces the same by raising his Son from the dead.

Listen again to what our God says in verse 6, "For in the Scripture it says, 'See, I lay in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'" My dad used to tell stories about the stone masons who would lay the foundations for barns using large stones that perfectly placed in the corners and walls to support the weight of the beams and timbers. He said he watched a stone mason take a large stone and split it perfectly using a hammer and wedges. The largest diamond in the world is worth over 400 million dollars. It was discovered in 1905 and then carefully cut and split. Nothing compares to how carefully our Heavenly Father laid a foundation for your faith in Jesus his Son our Savior.

"The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." There are lots of disappointments in life. See the people who put their hope and trust in the material possessions of this life and then find themselves disappointed and sad. See the people who put their hope in developing relations with other people only to find the closeness they enjoyed with a friend or marriage partner is now gone. I may have plans for the future but then find these plans just don't work out the way I expected. And if I put my hope in trust in my performance to put my life right with God, then I will experience the greatest disappointment in life, being rejected by God on the day of judgment and spending an eternity forever in hell.

With Jesus as your living Stone you will never be disappointed. Last week we heard how Jesus is our Shepherd who will carry us in his loving arms throughout our life. He will even carry us through the doors of death and take us to the place he has prepared for us. We will never be disappointed. We are living stones built on him the living Stone. As Psalm 118 says, this something that is marvelous in our eyes. And we get to be part of a building that gives glory to God.

Built on Christ to give glory to him

Because you are built on Christ, you are now living stones in Christ's church carefully placed where Jesus wants you to be. Verse 5 says, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God." Yes, we are living stones and we are part of a spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. Recall with me the great temple of King Solomon with its massive stones that were quarried to fit perfectly together without even the sound of a hammer while the temple was built. These stones provided a place where the priests offered sacrifices that pointed to the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. We are living stones built on Christ. We are a holy priesthood that offers sacrifices which point back to Christ. These sacrifices are the lives we live to glory Jesus for all that he has done to rescue us and save us.

A stone such as this that I am holding in my hand, is randomly deposited in fields and streams. This is not the case with you, a living stone built on Christ. As a living stone your life is strategically placed where Jesus wants you to be. There is a certain place in the wall or the building where the Lord wants you to be where he can maximize your life to give glory to him. Life has meaning and purpose and value before the Lord takes us to the place he has prepared for us. Jesus has ascended into heaven. He is sitting in glory and the right hand of the heavenly Father. He is constantly working with you to strategically use you to bring the greatest glory to him. The Apostle Paul really captured the meaning of life when he wrote joyfully in Philippians, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Because you are living stones built on Christ you really are a very special people as we are told in verse 9. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." You are a chosen people. The stone mason carefully chooses exactly where he wants to place the stone. You have been chosen by God to have your life built on Christ. You have also been chosen by God for important tasks in life to give glory to him. Just as God's Old Testament people were chosen to give glory to the Messiah who was to come, we have been chosen to give glory to the Messiah, the Lamb of God, who has come.

You are a royal priesthood. The first chapter of the Revelation has these words that help us appreciate how we are royal priests. "To him who loves us and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father- to him be glory forever and ever." Martin Luther wrote in his catechism, "Christ has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature. that I should be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness."

You are a holy nation. Within this country in which we live there is a group of people living who are very special. They are a holy nation because like living stones they are built on Christ. They are holy because they are washed clean by Jesus' blood and they want to reflect that holiness in the way they live their lives. In his book, *The City of God*, Augustine wanted to convince the people in Rome that there was a group of people living within the Roman Empire that lived their lives in a way that was very beneficial for the people of Rome.

You are also a people belonging to God. The Greek word used here for belonging has the thought of putting something around the way you might put a fence around a piece of property or put a fence in the yard to keep a child or pet from running off. When you are living stones built on Christ you are fenced in, you are protected, you are God's property, his real estate, and he has great things planned for you.

"Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Look at where you once were. Look at where you are now. Look at the time you did not know God's mercy. Now look at the time right now that you know God's mercy. Every morning we can wake up and say, "Your mercies are new to us every morning, great is your faithfulness."

Stones are beautiful. They are a gift to us from our God in his creation. Even more beautiful are the living stones that have been built on Christ to bring glory to his name. You are such a living stone built on Christ the Living Stone. That's a great place to be. Amen.