

Sermon Draft

Text: 1 Peter 2:2-10

Sermon: "A Living Stone"

Our text this morning from 1st Peter focuses on the Living Stone and a Holy People. Two challenges facing the new, struggling church at the time was community and commitment, being a living stone and a holy people. The widely scattered Christian churches of Asia Minor had to learn how to live apart from the greater pagan society they existed in while living as part of that same culture. Simon Peter knew that this was a balancing act not easy for anyone but even less so for such new and inexperienced Christians. The same problems face us as Christians today, how do we live in this world, as Christians and yet not of this world.

Peter offers us some words of comfort in verse 4: ***“As you come to him, a ‘living stone’ rejected by but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”***

Peter declares that not only is the Lord a "living stone"; all Christians are "living stones" building blocks in God's great construction project as God builds up a "spiritual house," the true community of faith, the church. Note in verse 5 the passive language 1 Peter uses to describe this building project. God is the builder here. God is building us up in Christ. This is not any human construction project.

His unique reference to "living stones" leads Peter on to more familiar "stone" images. Both the "cornerstone" and the "stumbling block" images further distinguish the believers who claim Christ from those who reject him. Instead of rejecting the "living stone" who is Christ, new Christians are invited to share in being part of the construction of a new "spiritual house" (v.5). This "house" is, of course, the church itself, the God-designed community of faith which is bonded together through the cement of its commitment to Christ.

For these "resident alien" Christians struggling to live out the faith in Asia Minor, the image of being part of such a secure house, a spiritual home, was especially poignant. Christians, formed together into a close-knit community through the spiritual power of the "living stone," undergo a miraculous transformation.

In verse 9, Peter reveals that while they may yet feel like "newborn infants" (v.2), these fledgling believers are nonetheless ***"a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people."***

God has claimed us as His own in Christ and turns us into living stones, a royal priesthood. He sends us out to do His work by living and sharing our faith with others and bringing them to church, to be part of the church family and to hear God's Word. But the church is more than just a building.

Brick and mortar. Lumber and nails. Arches, rafters. Rock and concrete. When we build a church, what are the elements we want to include? Do we want a steeple, a bell in a bell tower? Do we install pews, or use removable chairs to give our building more versatility?

When Jesus built his church, he didn't consider any of these components. When Jesus built his church, he started with a very small, but firm foundation. Upon that foundation, he built a structure that has been rocked and windblown, shaken and flooded, even attacked by numerous enemies, and yet has withstood and survived down through the ages.

What is this church of Jesus Christ supposed to be? Are we simply in a "church building" that has become stiff and boring, weathered by the years and near extinction? Or are we a "building church," with veins full of life with the empowered goal of still wanting to reach the heavens? The church that Jesus built was a living church, alive with the "living stones" that were its building materials. Living stones that had as their cornerstone the very stone that the builders of the world had rejected.

Though rejected by mortals, God chose this cornerstone, so that it would become the foundation for his building on earth.

Though Jesus had the whole world from which to choose, he selected very simple material: a few fishermen, a tax collector, and some others of seemingly simple means and position. There were no kings in his foundation. He completed the first stage of his structure without the help of aggressive marketers and developers.

Jesus just used a variety of living stones. He used stones that would weather the cause. Stones that would not crumble under the weight that would be built upon them. The building material that Jesus chose was well suited for the building he intended to construct.

The church that Jesus was building was to be a living, breathing construction of dynamic proportions. One that would outlast the ancient structures of Jesus' time that still stand today. The church of Jesus Christ was built to last an eternity.

We still today get hung up on the "church building." Is it meeting our needs? Do we need to make major repairs rather than just continued maintenance? Should we add-on or rebuild? Should we renovate our sanctuary and modernize to fit the times?

Jesus is more concerned with building the church than the church building. Jesus built his church with living stones. In today's text, Peter calls us "***a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.***" He goes on to say that because we are as such, we can proclaim to the world "***the mighty acts of him***" who called us "***out of darkness into his marvelous light.***"

We are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."
Before Jesus, we were nothing. Nothing held us together. We were not a people; we were only individuals inhabiting the same world. Jesus changed our world, and that's exciting. Jesus made us into God's people by making us into his church. Jesus pulled us together and united us into something special.

We are not about a church building; we are about "church building." A pastor of a small southern church was on his way home when he met an acquaintance from town who was not a member of his church. After chatting a while, the man asked how many members the pastor had in his church. The pastor responded, "Fifty active members." The friend said, "That certainly speaks well for you." But the preacher responded, "Well, I wouldn't exactly say that. All fifty are active - but 25 are actively working for me and the other 25 are actively working against me!"

When we work together, we build up the Body of Christ.

When we work against each other, we work to tear it down. Jesus' original disciples didn't always agree on everything, but they knew how to work together in spite of their disagreements. They were able to build upon what Jesus had started. They found ways to do it together by sharing the responsibilities of church building.

Jesus is the foundation but we are the living stones he uses to build the church today. Now, it is in our hands. How shall we build our church? Will we build with brick and mortar, or with living stones? Are we willing to get our hands dirty? Are we willing to exercise our spiritual muscles?

A little boy was watching his father fry some eggs for the family breakfast and said he had a joke. "Dad, how can you eat an egg without cracking the shell?"

His father thought about it for several moments then finally concluded, "I don't know how. How do you eat an egg without cracking the shell?"

The little boy replied, "Have someone else crack it for you."

Sometimes people in the church want the benefits the church has to offer without sharing the responsibilities. We all want revival as long as someone else does the praying. We all want more people in the pews as long as someone else does the inviting. We all want to see the church built up with more programs as long as someone else does the work.

But if we want to eat eggs, we're going to have to break some shells. And if we want to build the church, we're going to have become a part of the construction crew. All of us together in Christ.

Amen