

**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:1-12**

**May 5, 2019**

**Isaiah 28:16 -17; Psalm 118:1, 21-25**

## **Jesus: Foundation Stone or Stumbling Block?**

**God does not expect us to be perfect... God invites us to be holy.**

Last week Darrell reminded us that holiness is a journey in company with God, so that we come to know Him and are transformed more into His likeness. For most of us this is a lifetime process – to know God more fully and become like Him more nearly. It's all about consciously putting aside the old self so that the new self in Christ can come to the fore. That's what Peter means when he writes: ***Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind... 1 Peter 2:1-3.*** Actually, the original says: *... hypocrisies, envies, and slanders of every kind...* Plural – so rather than thinking in general terms (I'm not a hypocrite, I don't envy anyone, I don't slander), we might reflect on particular instances where we've exhibited or felt those sinful things of our old nature. Now that we've become acquainted with Jesus, trusted Him for forgiveness and our salvation, we must begin growing in Him.

It's a matter of seeking after the spiritual sustenance He gives, just *... like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk ...* We're reminded of Jesus' words: ***Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 18:3.*** Like a child eager for the adventure, to learn and grow as we follow in the footsteps of the Master.

## **Who Is Jesus?**

Peter uses one key word to describe who Jesus is. He is the stone upon which the whole church is built. This is mentioned in four different places: (4) **he is *the living Stone***; (6) **he is *the cornerstone***; (7) **he is *the capstone***; (8) **he is *the stone that causes men to stumble*.**

**But Peter tells us more: that He is the stone chosen by God and precious to believers, while a stumbling block to unbelievers. For it is true that not everyone will receive Jesus and the salvation He offers. We should know this. Remember what it says in the Gospel of John. After Jesus spoke of himself as the bread of life come down from heaven we get this: *From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him, John 6:66.***

### **Living Stones**

**Peter continues, saying that we who believe in Him are like “living stones.” He is the Rock and we are like chips off the Living Block.** If we understand what Peter is saying, then we know something about the church and we know something about the world. A living stone sounds strange because stones are always dead. But when we come into contact with Jesus Christ, we are made alive with him. That tells us that the church is more than a human organization. The true church is an ever-growing collection of living stones, being built one upon another by the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. We come together because He has brought us together as those who are now alive to His life. From our perspective, the church often seems weak, confused, uncertain, competitive, divided, and ineffective. But **our Lord is building a spiritual temple that spans the generations.** And he’s building it one living stone at a time. That temple matters much more than the most beautiful sanctuary or the most ornate cathedral built of brick and mortar. The greatest buildings built by humans will one day crumble to the ground. Our buildings and grounds, beautiful as they are, will not last forever. Only the true church, comprised of living stones in Jesus Christ, is eternal.

**I know people get frustrated by how slowly the church moves. We have so many meetings and groups and we talk a lot about budgets, buildings, and programs. It’s easy to lose sight of the big picture if you focus on the ecclesiastical machinery, even though that machinery is necessary for the church to do its work in the world. God**

**is doing something beyond all of that. Through St. Peter's eyes, every Bible class or small group is a quarry for living stones; every children's worker is nurturing and smoothing each little child to find his/her place in God's great living temple; every worship service is an exciting time to see what God is doing to add more living stones to his temple; and every church member is a stonemason sent into the world in search of living stones for God's temple.**

## **Royal Priests**

**Who is Jesus? He's the Chief Living Stone. Who are we? We're living stones in him. We are the people who come to Christ by faith. We are a spiritual house and a holy priesthood. We are the ones who will never be put to shame. We are the ones to whom Jesus is precious. We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God – not because of our goodness or moral perfection, but because we are the people who have received His great mercy. Our lives (like everyone) are broken and hurting but now are being healed and reformed by His goodness.**

**The Old Testament system had a priesthood and sacrificial system for approaching God. The message was that it wasn't easy to approach God. The priest served as a go-between to bridge the gap between God and man. In the New Testament we are the priesthood. **In the church every believer is a priest.** The essence of being a priest is having access to God and interceding in prayer for others. I am your pastor, not your only priest. I just shepherd all the other priests in this church. You don't have to come to me in order to pray or read your Bible. You can talk to God and read your Bible on your own any time you like.**

**In the Old Testament the priests offered animal sacrifices to the Lord to atone for sin. So, if all of you believers are priests, how many of you brought a lamb with you to church today? How about a bull or some turtledoves? When Christ died on the cross the system of animal sacrifice ended, ... *because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and***

*goats to take away sin* Hebrews 10:4. Now we offer ourselves as **living sacrifices to God**, not to atone for sin, but to build up His church. Here's what we offer: **Our bodies (Romans 12:1); our praise (Hebrews 13:15); our good works (Hebrews 13:16); our generous giving (Hebrews 13:16); our efforts to bring others to the Lord (Romans 15: 16); our love (Ephesians 5:1-2); our prayers (Revelation 8:3-4)**. All that we do and say should be a heartfelt offering of ourselves in gratitude to God for all His mercy to us.

### **Making a Difference**

The Latin word for priest is *pontifex*, which itself comes from two words means “to make” and “bridge.” Just as He bridged the chasm between our sinfulness and God's holiness, Jesus means for us to be bridge-builders for Him. We do that when we worship, when we praise, when we confess our sins, when we pray, when we give, when we witness, and when we perform acts of mercy. You can be a priest wherever you are, 24/7. You don't have to wait to come to church. We are all portable temples and mobile priests.

Do you want to make a difference in this world? We want to know that our life has counted for something. Jesus said, **“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”** Mark 8:36. Start making a difference by stepping into your role and responsibility as a bridge-builder for Jesus. **Making a difference starts with you and your family – connect to Christ every day, not just on Sunday.** Lead your family to church regularly and ensure that your children are instructed in the ways of God. That's making a difference. Jesus' method is to change the world one person at a time.

*... I urge you, as **aliens and strangers in the world**, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us,* **1 Peter 2:11-12**. Remember who we are—strangers and aliens. We belong to another world, really, the world that Jesus came from and to

which we are going. Therefore live that way! We ought to always be praying: Lord, don't let me become bitter. **Lord, deliver me from arrogance.** **Lord, don't let me become cranky.** Lord, teach me how to love others. **Lord, free me from a critical spirit.** Lord, I want a merciful heart. Lord, use me to win others to you.

Don't be surprised if you get pushback. Stay humble, do good anyway, leave the results in God's hands. So live your life that you are ready to meet Jesus when he returns and so that unbelievers will glorify God on that day.

*... you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, **that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light, 1 Peter 2:9.***