

## “Living Stones?”—1 Peter 2:4-6

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Living Stones?”, is 1 Peter 2:4-6 → *As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men 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. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Stones and rocks are probably the last thing a person might describe as living. Aside from being inanimate objects they do not exemplify any of the normal characteristics of life, needing food, water, air and sunlight to exist. To the average individual a rock is simply a rock and can be useful for many things. While I’m not sure a geologist would describe a rock as living, he might believe that it is possible for rocks to tell us much about life. Ask a person who grew up on a farm and had the privilege of engaging in that wonderful exercise of rock-picking in the field. Just when you think you’ve picked them all, more show up, as if they were multiplying somehow. They seemed to be alive and producing

more.

As Peter described Christians in our text he refers them as *living stones*. This is a very appropriate picture when you consider it from his perspective. Once Jesus conducted a “survey” of sorts. Ascertaining from His disciples who the general public thought He was, Jesus asked a very important question: *Who do you say that I am?* After Simon Peter replied, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (cf. Matthew 16:15-16), Jesus said to him in Matthew 16:17-18 → *Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Jesus gave Simon the name Peter, the Greek of which is related to the word for rock. Fortunately the “rock” upon which Christ says He will build His Church is not Peter himself. He was a rather unstable fellow who acted rashly much of the time. The rock upon which Christ says He will build His Church is the great confession which Peter made—that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. So, as Peter wrote this first epistle, it is very appropriate that he used the metaphor of a building of *living stones* to describe the Christian Church in the world.

The quality of being a ***living*** stone is a derived quality. It is a life which is derived from Jesus Who is *the way, and the truth, and **the life*** (cf. John 14:6). Jesus had spoken about such life during His earthly

ministry when He described those who have faith in Him as having *living water* flow from within them. It's a picture of **His** life in people which is moving, fresh and life-sustaining, not stagnant (cf. John 4:10,13-14;7:38). He referred to Himself as *the living bread that came down out of heaven* to give eternal life to those who believe in Him (cf. John 6:51). Hebrews 10:20 says we get to stand in the presence of our holy God with confidence *by the new and living way that Jesus opened for us*.

Jesus' sacrificial death and rising from the dead served not only your resurrection to eternal life at His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming on the Last Day, but also your death and resurrection **now**. All people are born spiritually dead toward God, unable to save themselves and destined for hell. Ephesians 2:1-2 says people who are the walking dead in . . . *trespasses and sins are following the course of this sinful world, following the prince of the power of the air, that is, the devil, and following the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*.

Thus, everyone needs the new life which can be obtained only by repenting of your sins and trusting in Jesus Christ based upon what He has done for you. Ephesians 2 goes on to say: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ**—by grace you have been saved!* (cf. Ephesians 2:4-5) Faith comes to the *living Stone, Jesus, Who was rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen*

*and precious* for your salvation. Thus, this dying to sin and rising to new life is the work of Christ as the Holy Spirit works faith in your heart. It opens up a whole new way of living.

The derived quality of being a living stone is also pictured in verse 6 of our text where Jesus is described as *a cornerstone chosen and precious*, placed by God. Just as the cornerstone may have bore the weight of the building and set direction for the building process, the weight of the burden of your sin, along with direction in a new life, are borne and given by Jesus as the cornerstone of His Church. This is why when you *believe in Him you will not be put to shame*. Christ's Church is not inanimate brick, mortar, wood and stone. His Church is "fleshed out" in the Person and the Work of Jesus Christ **and** the people who trust in Him for the forgiveness of their sins, eternal salvation and living a new life in their daily vocations in the world.

In this new life relationship our text says that we *like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house* which is active in the world. Verse 5 calls us *a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. In the Old Testament God had instituted the priesthood as the mediator between His holiness and men's sins. Jesus has dealt with your sins in His perfect sacrificial death once and for all, so that now you can stand holy and blameless in God's presence. We are His priests, mediators between the world living in the darkness of sin

and Jesus. The only way people will know about Jesus is when Christians bring Him to them. Everyone needs a priest to get to God and Jesus is that Priest which you bring as *a holy priesthood* to the world (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5).

Offering *spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ* is described in a variety of ways in the New Testament. First, the Holy Spirit tells you in Romans 12:1 *to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* This happens *by the mercies of God* which have been **fully** expressed in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ. Thus, you can dedicate your entire life to Him, serving Him in the midst of all the vocations you fulfill in your day. In those tasks, conversations and relationships we seek to be faithful to Christ and share the Gospel in our words and actions.

God does not need your good works. Others benefit from them. Your neighbor needs those good works. Thus, serving our Lord Jesus by helping others is described in Hebrews 13:16 → *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.* The focus is not how much of a “sacrifice” something is for me. The focus is how something benefits others for whom Christ also died. It is offered in the name of Jesus by one who is simply being whom Christ made him to be—a forgiven sinner sharing with other sinners. Paul even referred to the financial gift which the Philippian Christians gave him as

*a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God* as it helped meet the needs of others involved with sharing the Gospel.

Hebrews 13:15 also speaks about your words as a spiritual sacrifice to God: *Through Christ let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name. Lips that acknowledge* the name of Jesus are not only lips which pray, praise and give thanks to Him but also lips which are *always full of grace* (cf. Colossians 4:6) in the everyday conversations of life. They are lips which strive to build up in Christ rather than break down in sin. Paul even referred to his ministry to people as a *priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit* (cf. Romans 15:16).

Yes, the stones in Christ's Church are living because Jesus lives eternally and the Holy Spirit lives within Christians. Your living is confident and secure as your life is sustained by Jesus, the Living Cornerstone of your life. So . . . *as you come to Him, a living Stone rejected by men 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. Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,

keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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