

God Builds His House with Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4-10

May 3, 2026 (Eas. 5-A)

St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—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. 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.”

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and, “a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

But 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. 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. (1 Pe. 2:4-10 NIV)

In the name of Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, dear friends:

“Doctor Livingstone, I presume?” Those famous words were said in November, 1871, by the African explorer Henry Stanley. After eight months of searching for the famous explorer-doctor-missionary David Livingstone, Stanley finally found him in the heart of Africa. His question was an obvious one; who else could the only white man for hundreds of miles be, besides the famous Dr. Livingstone who had not been seen by the rest of the world for nearly six years?

Today's text tells us that we have come upon a “living stone,” and there's no need for us to presume or guess who it is. Peter—a nickname Jesus gave Simon that means “Rock”—calls Jesus the “living stone” on which God builds his house, the Holy Christian Church. But he also tells us that we believers are like “living stones”: “As you come to him, the living Stone... you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.” Let us see today how **God Builds His House with Living Stones.**

Peter tells us that Jesus Christ was a stone “rejected by humans.” This echoes the prophecy of the Messiah, the Lord's servant, in Isaiah 53:3: “He was despised and rejected by mankind.” Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22: “The stone the builders rejected.” The builders, the leaders of God's people, rejected Jesus when he appeared among them. They refused to believe that he was the Christ, God's chosen one. Their hatred of Jesus drove them to demand for his death, which they accomplished when Jesus was crucified on Good Friday.

Another prophecy, from Isaiah 8:14, described him as “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” Devil's Lake State Park has a hiking trail called “Tumble Rock Trail.” It's a beautiful trail along the west shore of the lake. But as the name implies, you need to watch your step for the rocks that had tumbled down from the bluff, or you might trip, fall and hurt yourself on one of those rocks. For those who do not believe and reject Jesus, Jesus is like that stone. Those who trip over that stone, and take offense at Jesus and disobey his message will fall and perish.

Yet that same stone, rejected and stumbled over, is the stone “chosen by God and precious to him.” God himself took Jesus, “the stone the builders rejected,” and laid him as “a chosen and

precious cornerstone” in Zion, the name of God’s house, the Holy Christian Church. The builders discarded Jesus, put him to death; God, however, raised Jesus from death to life. He accepted his Son’s death as the payment for everybody’s sins, since his Son had not sinned. Because Jesus has been raised, he is truly a “living Stone,” and has been made the Church’s cornerstone, the first stone laid that gives the right angles and lines up the rest of the foundation and building.

As we sang earlier, “Christ is our cornerstone, on him alone we build.” The prophecy in Isaiah promises, “And the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Christ’s resurrection from the dead gives us that confidence. It proves to us that Jesus is “the way, the truth and the life,” as we heard in today’s gospel reading (Jn. 14:6), and that “salvation is found in no one else,” as Peter and John declared in our first reading (Acts 4:12). All of us need someone to build our lives on, someone who will hold us up when life seems shaky, when events grow scary. God has given us the Cornerstone to anchor our lives on. Build your life on Jesus, the Christ, the only way to heaven.

Peter tells us more about this building: “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.” It’s amazing that Peter would call us “living stones.” By nature we were spiritually dead, sinful, unable to please God. Our hearts would likely reject and stumble over Jesus, the “Living Stone,” just as the Jewish leaders had done. But by the grace of God, he chose us to be his people. He made us alive by the work of the Holy Spirit, calling us from unbelief to faith when we were baptized in the triune God’s name. Our hearts of stone have become living stones, alive with faith in Christ. And now God has chosen us and places us into his house, his Church, just where he wants us to be. What marvelous grace to be part of his house!

God builds us into his house for a purpose: “to be a holy priesthood...a royal priesthood,” even. Maybe we don’t think of ourselves as priests. We picture priests as clergymen in the Roman Catholic Church and a few other denominations. But the picture here is that of Old Testament priests who offered up sacrifices and prayers to God on behalf of the people. Jesus is the great High Priest who offered up himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for sins. We who are built on Christ, believers in him, have access to God. Hebrews 13:15 encourages us, “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.” And we’re told in Romans 12:1, “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.” We are truly priests, offering God our voices, our hands, our feet, our whole selves in service to God!

Peter reminds us that being a Christian and a church member is not a “spectator sport.” We come here on Sundays not to be couch potatoes watching the pastor do his thing, or just sit here like a rock; we are living stones, actively praying, praising God, listening to his Word and then being doers of it throughout the week. We’re here to get involved, serving God with our various positions at church, home, and community; with our various abilities and talents; and with the various opportunities that we have, talking about Jesus to others as well as one another, and speaking our faith by the way we love and help others. Pray to God that he open our eyes to see the many ways we can serve as his priests!

Marvel with Peter at our positions now: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession.” Yes, 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.” May that great love of God move us all to be active “living stones” in God’s church! Amen.