

“Living Stones!”—1 Peter 2:4-5

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Living Stones!”, is 1 Peter 2:4-5 → *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.* This is the text.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Stones. What a strange way to picture a day upon which we celebrate Life, and eternal life at that! Everyone knows that a stone is an inanimate object. It can't breathe, it can't walk, talk or grow. Yet, it is used throughout the Scriptures to describe our relationship with the LORD in many ways. Yahweh is described as *a rock of refuge* for us (cf. Psalm 31:2) and Jesus is described as the *cornerstone* of His Church (cf. Ephesians 2:20). We have heard over this Lenten season how stones were used to take life in condemnation and judgment. The stone is also used to describe unbelief—people whose hearts remain hardened toward God and refuse to believe in Jesus Christ, thus forfeiting eternal life.

Maybe a stone is a good description of the church as people observe Christians in their daily lives. Too many times we can act like inanimate objects or “dead” stones in the Church, especially when we are reluctant to take an active part in Christ’s mission. Do we spend more time “excusing ourselves” from service rather than “expending ourselves” into service? Do the people we encounter in our daily vocations of life see our faith living and active in us? These are serious questions for us to consider because our text describes Christians as *living stones* who have come to the Living Stone, Jesus Christ. Acting as “dead stones” hurts rather than helps to build up Christ’s Church and denies our identity in Christ.

Nowhere in Scriptures is the Church ever referred to as an inanimate object made of wood, stones and mortar planted on property somewhere. The Church always refers to Christ’s people ***living*** to bring the benefits of His Person & Work to others. This is why Christians are referred to as *a holy priesthood* in verse 5 of our text with the express purpose of offering *spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. *Spiritual sacrifices* are those acts of service which are directed by the Holy Spirit and bring praise and glory to Jesus.

Hebrews 13:15 describes our gathering here today as a spiritual sacrifice. Through Christ we *continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the*

fruit of lips that acknowledge His name. The next verse describes a Christian's good works which serve others as *sacrifices which are pleasing to God.* Paul described the people who come to faith in Jesus through his sharing the Gospel as *spiritual sacrifices* to God. (cf. Romans 15:16) *We act as a holy priesthood* continually as the Holy Spirit works through us to bring the living resurrected Christ to the world and the world to Christ, our Living Stone! Thus, it is imperative that the Church—**all** who believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life—act as *living stones* who continually come to Jesus.

Verse 4 of our text describes Jesus as *a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious!* This is the challenge we face while striving to live our faith in Christ each day in the world. The world doesn't want to hear about Jesus because people do not want to confront their sin honestly and accept responsibility for it before God. For that matter, the world intentionally strives to avoid the word "sin" and refuses to acknowledge a God Who would hold us accountable for such sin. Thus, many continue *dead in . . . trespasses and sins* (cf. Ephesians 2:1), striving to kill those who challenge such a life. The mortal persecution of Christians is a reality in our day and calls us to take our description as *living stones* even more seriously!

The idea of the stone has to do with its **supportive** quality when it functions foundationally. The idea of living has to do with its **active** quality by

which it accomplishes something. Thus, *living stones* live in a daily relationship with the Living Stone, Jesus Christ, by reading His written Word with the desire to obey it and live it by the Holy Spirit's power. Jesus even used this foundational picture when He described *a wise man as one who built his house on the rock*, referring to *everyone then who hears His words . . . and does them*—puts them into practice!

As difficult as it may be under persecution and rejection, you stand on the foundation of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ Who has become the cornerstone of the whole building. Ephesians 2:21-22 says that in Christ *the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit*. It is the Holy Spirit Who gives life to His Church and empowers us to be *living stones*—not “dead” stones, lying around doing nothing because of a reluctance, fear and refusal to offer sacrificial service to the LORD.

The first time the word “Church” is mentioned in the Bible was in Jesus' words to Peter from Matthew 16:18. Following Peter's great confession of faith in Jesus, **given by the Holy Spirit**, Jesus told Peter *on this rock*—that is, the faith which he confessed in Jesus as the Christ—*I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. Functioning as *living stones* in the world will never take away your eternal life even if it threatens your temporal

life because Jesus rose from the dead and lives for you!

We have gathered in this place today to be renewed through God's Word and Sacraments so that we can be *living stones* in our daily vocations of life. We have gathered in this place today to *offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name!* We have gathered in this place today to celebrate the stone of death being rolled away from the grave of Jesus so that we can witness His resurrection and know the certainty of life with Him eternally!

Faith in Jesus is what determines your being *living stones*, actively involved in Christ's work while bound for eternal life! Notice we are referred to in our text as a *holy priesthood*. We, as the living believers in the living Lord of all, are set apart for the specific purpose of bringing the Gospel of Jesus to people so the Holy Spirit can bring them to Christ and they can know that life that is Life indeed! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Amen.