

"The Stone Met with Rejection"—Matthew 21:42-46

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "The Stone Met with Rejection", is Matthew 21:42-46 → *Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest Him, they feared the crowds, because they held Him to be a prophet.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

"Take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!" This statement is meant to be a word of encouragement to the discouraged. The intension of such "encouragement" is to tell a person to view their negative experiences in life as opportunities for good! There are many "stumbling blocks" in life—those challenges, sufferings and undesirable experiences

which seem to “trip us up” while walking life’s path each day. Such “stumbling blocks” are usually experiences which make us angry, frustrated, irritated, sad, incompetent and so forth. In the midst of such overwhelming feelings, hearing someone say, “Take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!” could possibly produce the opposite result desired by driving a person further into despair and making them feel like the stumbling blocks are crushing them instead of simply tripping them up.

In our text Jesus referred to Himself as a “stumbling stone” of sorts while speaking to Jewish religious establishment of His day during Holy Week. By the use of a parable Jesus revealed the sin of the religious leaders, as well as revealing Himself as the Stone of rejection over which many do stumble.

His parable was about a man who planted a vineyard, leased it to tenants and went into another country. When it was time he sent servants to collect the fruit which rightly belonged to him. The tenants mistreated all the servants sent to them and finally killed the son of the owner. This parable pictured Jesus’ own upcoming death at the hands of these religious leaders because they continually rejected God’s Will for their lives given through the proclamation of the prophets and now in the presence of His Son.

This parable harkens back to the prophet Isaiah as he described God’s people as a the choice vineyard of Yahweh’s own planting. When He came

looking for good fruit He found only bad fruit displayed in selfish, self-absorbed, self-righteous, self-centered deeds. Isaiah 5:7 says: *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant planting; and He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!* What the LORD experienced in the Church in Isaiah's day was the same some 700 years later! Now Yahweh's very Son was standing before them and they were *they were seeking to arrest Him* to kill Him.

Jesus' purpose in His parable is consistent with His purpose for all of His teaching and living—to bring sinners to see their sin, accept responsibility for their sin, repent and trust in His Person & Work for the forgiveness of their sins. The parable even provided the opportunity for those who were rejecting Jesus as the Christ to condemn themselves in their hardheartedness. After telling the parable Jesus asked in Matthew 21:40-41 → *“When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to Him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”* Busted! They condemned themselves!

God's Law is used to break our sinful rejection of His Will for our lives by revealing our sins which we protect, hide, minimize and justify in an effort to

find some kind of relief amidst our guilt. The LORD used a picture in Jeremiah 23:29 to describe this breaking power of His Law: *Is not My word like fire, declares the LORD, and **like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces**?* The hammer of God's Law falls on your sinful heart to break and crush your rejection of His Word and Will, to feel crushed under the load of guilt and shame **so that your heart is ready to experience the Rock of rejection—**  
**Jesus and the forgiveness which only He can bring!**

In verse 42 of the text Jesus quoted from Psalm 118 to define His Person & Work: *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.* More literally the word means the “head of the corner.” It was the stone used at a building's corner to bear the weight or stress of the two walls. It would have functioned somewhat like a “keystone” or “capstone” in an arch or other architectural form. It was the stone which was essential or crucial to the whole structure. It refers to Jesus being exulted as the Savior of the world through the rejection of the Jewish religious establishment.

Immediately these religious leaders knew He was speaking about them as “the builders” in God's Church. He condemned the very ones who would cling to their own faith system to justify their existence! Thus, the hammer of God's Law came down on the selfish hardheartedness of these people and hit hard to the very core of their sinful soul. Jesus said in verse 44 of our text: *The one*

*who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.* If “Jesus falls on you” by bringing words or experiences which reveal your sin and thus, your need for Him, those words and experiences must humble you, crushing you so you may be lifted up by His grace. If you “fall on Jesus,” coming to Him for help, guidance and deliverance, you must come in humility, as a broken and contrite sinner. When it comes to a relationship with the LORD 1 Peter 5:6 must stand: *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.*

It was at this point where those present chose to continue in their rejection of Jesus and devised their plan to kill Him. Encountering Jesus should “break” a rebellious, unbelieving spirit with the “crushing” affects of His revealing the sinful heart so that His forgiveness of sin can be applied to your sinful heart! His desire for these people was for them to feel the crushing load of their sins, drop to their knees and confess their sin and their need for Him to grant forgiveness of those sins through faith in His Person and Work. Then the burden of guilt is lifted! Then you can see in this offensive work of the cross, which causes many to stumble in faith, the embracing love of your heavenly Father! You can look at it and confess: *This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!*

Jesus met rejection with obedience to God's Will for your salvation, providing the way for you to receive the benefits of His Person & Work so that you can produce the fruit of good works which bring praise to the LORD and serve others. He wants all people to be people *producing . . . fruit* in His Church, the *fruit* of obedience to God's Will as evidenced by repenting and trusting in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of sins. The *fruit* of works which uphold God's Will and Word toward our neighbor. Hebrews 13:15 says that through faith in Christ we can *continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.*

The Stone met with rejection was Jesus. Yet, through that rejection the LORD worked salvation for all people, including those people who rejected Him all the way to the cross! He is the Rock of our salvation as the Holy Spirit moves us through God's Law and Gospel to accept responsibility for our sin, repent and believe in Jesus Christ. The new direction which He gives our lives is the only path that leads to eternity with Him! Amen.

*We preach Christ crucified,  
a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,  
but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks,  
Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

(1 Corinthians 1:23-24)