

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 14, 2017

1 Peter 2:4-10

You are like Living Stones Built into a Spiritual House

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Dearly loved by God in Christ Jesus,

Many ancient buildings still stand though covered with the dust of ages gone by. This temporary permanence, if we may call it that, is because the builders built well. One element in that construction was the use of the cornerstone. In the case of arches, it is the keystone. Both of those imparted strength and endurance. These ancient buildings and arches continue to speak to their builder's knowledge and skill.

There is a unique building from which we remove the word temporary and leave the word permanent. God is the builder. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone or keystone. We are the building materials; chosen, regal, and holy. We continue to speak the mighty and glorious deeds of the builder. This spiritual house is the holy Christian church, the communion of saints.

The apostle Peter says to the believers scattered throughout Asia and to us, **You are like Living Stones Built into a Spiritual House.** We are built on Christ, the precious cornerstone. We are built for specific purposes.

Peter used a simile to describe us as building blocks. We are not literally "blockheads." We are like stones as if they were alive. As the builder puts his stones together, so God puts us together. We are not a house human hands have built. We are a house the Holy Spirit continues to build and are therefore a spiritual house.

God had chosen Israel to build his house. He gave them the most important part, the cornerstone or keystone first in promise and then in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. Foolishly the builders rejected the only stone on which the church would stand. For those who did not believe Jesus became something else, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." This fulfilled Isaiah's words in the eighth chapter of his prophecy.

Here's what happened. The Jews as a nation examined the cornerstone of the building or the keystone, the middle stone in the rising sides of an archway and rejected it as unfit. They disobeyed the message of their Savior, i.e. did not believe. As a result of their unbelief they stumbled over Christ, were offended by him. Such stumbling and offence is what all are destined for who do not build on Jesus.

The building would continue to rise. In this building Jew or Gentile did not matter. God created people from everywhere as living stones. He chose them and us as his generation. He made us ruling priests. He created a holy nation of souls. We were unfit as building stones. God made us suitable by forgiving our sins in Christ. He called us out of the darkness of sin and unbelief. He brought us out into the light of Christ's righteousness and Spirit worked faith.

Under those believers and under us, Zion, God has laid Jesus Christ as "a chosen and precious cornerstone...The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," here the keystone. Our building, the church, is permanent because it is built on the binding main stone, Jesus Christ. We "will never be put to shame," as a building that falls down reflecting poor construction materials, or poor skills in its builder.

Before God chose you, you were not "the people of God." Now, "you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." For what purpose? Peter

mentions two; to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, and, that “you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Builders build for a specific purpose, don't they? The Holy Spirit has built us into a house, first to offer sacrifices from our hearts. We offer God our worship and praise. We offer one another charity, our mutual sharing, which is our offering of our particular graces for the common good in the body of Christ. We offer our financial resources, our interests and abilities, and our time. We are to do all of this not outwardly, or begrudgingly but from the heart as fruits of faith. God accepts them all for the sake of his Son, our Lord and Savior, who is “the living Stone.”

God chose Jesus for this work of being our cornerstone. God's Son is precious to him. Yet he sent that Son, laid him in Zion, that he might build a living house on his Son. That cornerstone is alive. He gives life to the other stones. It is Jesus' life through his resurrection from the tomb that makes him the quality stone on which we build, just as real foundation stones have strength and other qualities they need.

Houses do speak, don't they? They witness to the wisdom, or lack of wisdom of the builder. A house speaks to its builder's skills, or lack of skills. A house or other building speaks out as to its fitness to accomplish the purposes for which the carpenters and others built it. The church does the same. What is our purpose? We declare the praises, the mighty and glorious deeds, of him who built us; who called us out of darkness into the light.

We do that by sharing the good news of Jesus as those at Pentecost heard the disciples, “declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues.” [Acts 2:11] We do that as in Bible study we heard Paul's words to the Ephesians, “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” [4:1] God chose us in Christ. We rule with Christ as we go directly to our Father as priests through Christ. We are holy in Christ's righteousness as God's people who have received his mercy.

We look at a house or building and say, “Good builder, good construction materials, it serves its purpose well.” May others always say that when they look at us in Christ. Amen. <SDG>