

1 Peter 2:4-10 May 18, 2014

This section of 1 Peter gives you the chance to soak in: who you are, as a believer in Jesus - what you are part of - and the purpose you have in life. Pray with me: Holy Spirit, sink deep into our hearts the magnificent truths of your Word. Amen.

Read 1 Peter 2:4-10.

4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ 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. ⁶ 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.” ⁷ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” ⁸ and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ 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.

What's the purpose of your life? Career? Marriage? Family? You and I have those as part of our lives. And it is God's desire that we use our abilities to provide a livelihood, that husbands and wives love each other, that each of us lives out the place in our families which God has given us: children respecting & obeying parents, parents providing & caring, brothers and sisters (& beyond) doing good toward one another.

But God has a greater purpose for you – what he desires for all people: to come to know Him, our Savior; and having him, to declare His praise.

You have been blessed with that. You have been blessed to know the answer to life's deepest questions: How does one get to heaven? What is the only way to have the Father-child connection, where God is your dear Father in heaven and you are his own child & heir? What is the only way to experience God's awesome answering-of-your-prayers anytime, anywhere? The answer to all that, and more, is...

You have been brought to the Living Stone, and continue to come to Him.

The Living Stone endured hell's fury – his body felt the cold sleep of death - and on the third day he rose triumphant from the grave. Standing again, the Stone is “living” and “life-giving”. Here we are in the days following Easter. And God's imagery, brought to us through Peter's pen, is the assurance: Jesus is alive and he is the source of life – now, on to eternity – for all who believe in him.

Read vs.4 & 5 again.

We are living Stones - “born again through the living and enduring Word of God” (Peter writes in 1:23) - with our life coming from Jesus.

With our heads still lingering, dizzyingly delighted, over that truth... Peter swiftly advances to giving the wonderful “purpose” in life believers have been given. Notice what Peter states. He states who “you are...”

You are a “holy priesthood”: “holy” because you stake your claim to holiness upon the Holy One, the Living Stone, Jesus. With this new, God-given identity, comes a new purpose for your life: declaring his praises. That’s also part of who you are. You are engaged in the most wonderful activity: offering service to the Lord.

Ok, bring this truth to the context of our setting. We so often see people come and go here – today drives that home. But we are living stones: walking and moving stones. Your opportunity to declare God’s praise and offer your thankful service to him is only limited by wherever your feet take you (even further than that, if you include the reach of technology at your finger tips). And so even when distance separates us – one family moves to IN, another packs for WI & Korea, and others stay here – the identity and purpose that our Lord has given to us remain... for all of us.

But what has the potential to interfere with us living out our purpose? We may get discouraged when we share Jesus, and people don’t care.

Why do people reject like that?

The Greek word used for “rejected” in vs.4 & vs.7 – in reference to Jesus – paints a picture of: a person examining an item, in order to put it to the test, but finding it deficient or undesirable in their eyes, and so he throws it away.

Why do people reject? It all comes back to Jesus. Do they deny their need for him? Do they feel life-the-way-they-like-it is too precious to them? Do they think God’s Way is too illogical – too different from their idea of what is right?

People “get tripped up over” & “fall at” the Living Stone Jesus and his exclusive place. As you see this picture rise up from the page of Scripture, don’t get in your mind the image of someone stubbing their toe on a small pebble. See instead something like: an image of people bashing themselves against a solid slab of stone. ...it’s painful to watch! Can you see this? A scene of people trying to budge or break through or break down a rock-solid, immovable mass of stone. Hurling themselves... repeatedly... in futility at it. If you see it like this, it’s not easy on the senses. ... the self-inflicted carnage (shielding eyes from the sight). It’s painful!

Your mind might reflect back to the wounded bodies and spirits of 450 individuals standing at the scene in 1 Kings ch.18. As the events unfold, it’s evident: the false prophets of baal are not just awaiting an empty and painful time afterlife. They are experiencing the frustration and impotence and emptiness of putting their confidence in a false god. Look at what’s happening on Mt.Carmel ... They are seeking access / they are asking for help / they are striving for approval or acceptance from god. They lack the way to these... look at their unanswered prayers, see their worship in vain.

The baal worship of today is: Islam & Mormonism – attempts at self-righteousness; materialism & hedonism –chasing after self-gratification. As you hear that list, do you see the image? People bashing themselves against the Stone.

We could delve into different reasons “why” people reject Jesus and forfeit the grace that could be theirs. But for our purpose today, let’s go right on to a closer look this direction (at selves).

When people reject God, it pains us. It frustrates us.

And that tempts us. It may lead us to think: “I don’t want to even bother. I don’t want to go through all the hard work. I’ve tried before. ‘The onus’ should be on them now.”

But feelings of frustration or weariness aren’t the only things that keep us from sharing. Maybe it’s Flat-out selfishness or self-centeredness. Or, you just don’t care to share in certain instances – I’m talking about prejudice & bias. The prophet Jonah had some weakness with this, when the Lord sent him to those Ninevites. The problem still exists among God’s people today. Superiority is a temptation. Fear, and where it can lead, is another: being suspicious or judgmental of individuals or groups of a different culture or color, or from a different land, or who speak a different language.

[The remedy] But right here – today – you and I encounter once again God’s design – God’s description – of His Church: an eclectic gathering.

Look around you. I mean it. Take a moment to look at those seated around you. Look this way too. What you are looking at is: a group who once was not a people (because of our rebellion), but now – “you are the people of God.” You lay your eyes upon the sight of ones who at one time had not received mercy, but who now have received the mercy of God.

God called you to faith in Jesus. Now, you are his own, members of his family, preserved & loved by him.

You rise to face each new day with direct access to God through Jesus. Coming in repentance, your prayers – “Lord, I’ve sinned in my actions and with my inaction; forgive me, for Jesus’ sake” – are answered, “You are declared not guilty – you have no reason to fear shame now – you are holy in my sight,” says the Lord who has compassion on you.

And you rise to each new day with wonderful meaning to your life: to offer service that is pleasing to God.

It’s God’s utter grace to us that works an empathy in us for those who do not yet know him. By His Word, God gives us the experience of seeing “through his eyes.” Precious souls are lost and dying, whom He wants to come to a knowledge of His saving truth. And by God’s grace we have that knowledge of His saving truth to share. ... an awesome purpose to serve in life: to tell the goodness of God to all the nations.

[Look at what God is up to in the world & what you are part of]

I challenge you when you hear the word “Church” not to see an image in your mind of a brick building with yellow siding tucked back on 3 acres along 71st School Rd. Envision the multi-colored, multi-language “building,” that stretches from city-to-city, & continent-to-continent. A building that breaks through cultural and class barriers. This building is not made of *bricks*, every one looking just like the next. No. This building is made of *living stones*, each one different – a broad spectrum of shades, variations in size, variety in shapes. When the expert Craftsman pieces them together, the result is a magnificent sight & a masterpiece of structural strength. Each stone is placed in just the right spot, pieced together to form

God's Church of living stones. God creates a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-cultural Church – with Jesus as the precious cornerstone.

See how you are part of a huge and growing building, which someday you will see in its entirety. Right now, know what you are a part of: the great house of God, the invisible assembly of believers.

For now, see what God reveals to us here, in unmistakable terms: you are God's holy people, and you have this united purpose –to declare God's praises.

You are “stones”, but you are free (and able) to speak. As living stones, you are founded, yet you are free (and able) to roam the world. As living stones, we are a temple. We are also an army. The mission? Proclaim God's glory wherever God stations you in life.

Listen once again. Soak in the truths as the Holy Spirit speaks: who you are , as believers in Jesus – what you're part of – and the purpose you have in life: **Read vs.9-10 again.**