

Living Stones

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Cornerstone; Precious stones; Spiritual House; Church: Fellowship and Unity / 1 Peter 2:2–10

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Resurrected King. Amen.
- › Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Today we should have been celebrating with cake the work of our two confirmands as they worked through the public examination, one week prior to Confirmation Sunday. That is what we should have been doing today. The Church would be fuller for that reason and for the other fact that today is Mother's Day.

Today is now the 8th Sunday that we have been apart. I never thought this was going to this long. You and I so desperately want to be together in the same building again. Let me tell you this. You are in the same building – the spiritual building. You are still the Church.

You are who he says that you are.

Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary Fifth Sunday of Easter

you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession

His Word defines who you are! You heard that a few weeks ago:

English Standard Version Chapter 1

“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you were not always his people. He was not always your God! You had once not received mercy. Now, because of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are his people. You are the people belonging to God! You have the Lord as your God!

And mercy? You have mercy upon mercy through Christ! Today in our Epistle, Peter calls Christ the living stone rejected by men. He was shown no mercy by God when He died on the cross for you! For you, the wrath of God fell upon him as it should've fallen upon you. For you, he suffered and died!

But he is not a dead stone. He is the living stone for you! God the Father raised him from the dead on Easter morning. The stone that the builders rejected has become the first-laid stone of the Church's foundation. The stone on which the whole building depends, the cornerstone.

He is chosen and precious in the sight of God. You are chosen and precious in the sight of God in him. Through him, you, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house. A house not made of bricks or stone, but of living stones. A Church made of a holy priesthood offering up sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Yet, life doesn't always fit into that beautiful picture of all of us being built together into the Church, does it? There is suffering and pain. Real pain. Real loss. Today even though we desire to gather in the physical building that many of us call the church, you are still gathering together with brothers and sisters in Christ in a different way, but yet, no being able to gather, there is real pain. There is real loss. We all know this.

Pain is real. Our older generation is stuck without social visitation. Some of them are in lock down. Those of us that love them and care for them, hurt because we can't go in to see them. More of us are suffering in silence. More of us are in despair. Depression and Anxiety are rising. The pain is real! The need for human contact and conversation is very real. Tomorrow and Tuesday I was supposed to be going to Pastor's Conference to be refreshed, but that's not happening.

The pain can feel like we are getting pummeled with stones. And then there are the other stones around you. They are no help. In fact, doesn't it feel like sometimes these stones are being torn down instead of being built up. They should be supporting you, not hurting you. There's so much friendly fire going on. Sticks and stones may break my bone, but their words...they still hurt. Those sharp stabs that are being thrown around at home, during the zoom meeting, the Facebook jab. Each one of these land for maximum effect from the very people who shouldn't be throwing stones at you.

The thing is, if you are honest with yourself. You hit people with stones too. They hurt you, you hurt them back. You are hit with stones, so you hit others with them. Do unto others, stone others, before they stone you.

What does Peter tell us...we are being built up into spiritual houses, but amidst this. Bad stuff happens. Really bad, unfair stuff is going on all around you. Loved ones are getting sick...and not just with Covid-19. Maybe you aren't feeling well, you know you should get checked out, but you don't want any more bad news. You have lost a job. Your retirement appears to be shredded. You look to the daily Covid-19 updates in the state of Wisconsin and hope you see

the percentage of cases keep going down...and then it sky rockets...and your hope is dashed. Sometimes it appears we are putting more hope, trust, and faith in the numbers of the virus and whether those going up and down. Or we are putting more trust in ourselves. Or putting trust in the government. None of these things can we build anything on. These are all stones that will break and splinter and fail. We have a Cornerstone to be built upon that is far better. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone. He is the one that we are building built up on. He is the true living stone. Yes, the living stone was rejected by men...but in the sight of God He is chosen and precious. As he was rejected...he became the cornerstone. He became the living stone when he rose from the dead for you.

This cornerstone, Jesus Christ is on whom the whole Church of God is built. We are being built up on him as a spiritual house. Yes, you find your identity in him. He's the living stone for you! You are living stones in him. But not just you as an individual. All of you worshipping in your homes, right now, our living stones, being built up into a spiritual building through him.

I have seen the Church of God do some amazing things over the last two months. I have seen Virtual Choirs. I have seen Virtual Sunday Schools. I have heard of parents stepping up and teaching the faith in their homes. I have seen outreach in so many ways outside the walls of the church. There are many ways that we can let the love of Christ shine as the spiritual house of God.

You are His Building. You are His People. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You are the ones receiving the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

Apart from Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone, the Living Stone...you are just dead rocks. You are not God's people apart from Christ. You are unholy priests who deserve no mercy. Just people stumbling around, disobeying His Word.

But dear Church, in Him, through the sacrifice of Christ—God considers you precious. His death for your sins! His resurrection for your resurrection. And you are made alive, living stones, built together into His Holy Church. Not just stones, tossed around or hurled like missiles at others!

He is working among you even now as you are apart. He is building you together. His holiness has become your holiness. His kingliness is now your kingliness. His priesthood, your priesthood. His mercy showered upon you in his gifts.

All of this so that you might proclaim the glorious deeds of the one who brought you out of darkness into his glorious light. In order that you might praise and sing to him. To let all know, that the stone builders rejected has become the foundation. You, I, all living stones connected to him building a great big giant building that praises and magnifies the Father.

In Him, you really do offer up praises and thanksgiving. In Him, you offer up your bodies of as living sacrifices for those around you. What does this look like? No longer living in your sins, your despair, your evil, your deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander, or whatever stones you toss at one another. But loving others, for others, for the sake of others, He takes the stones that fall around you. He builds you up together. He makes you a building. His Spiritual building. His Church. He is doing that even now even while we are separated! He continues to build you up. So let's live like we are living stones! let's live not just like we are living stones. Let's live as living stones as we think the best for our neighbor. Let's serve our neighbor in love in creative ways!

His Word is the final Word on who you are and who you will be.

English Standard Version Chapter 2

you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

You are God's People now receiving mercy and you are a living stone based on Christ's Death and Resurrection!

In Jesus Name. Alleluia Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior our Risen King, our Cornerstone! Amen.