

March 10, 2019

Sermon: Living Stones

Text: 1 Peter 2:4-10

Discussion Questions:

Stones, rocks and buildings are quite obviously the prominent metaphors in this passage!

- How much do you know about rocks?
- How many different kinds of rocks can you name?
- What's the difference between a cornerstone, a capstone, and a keystone?
(being a Pennsylvanian should at least give you a head start on this question!)
- Why do you suppose a properly selected and placed cornerstone so important?
- What if someone asked you to build a building—could you do it? What if you didn't have access to many of the modern building supplies available today (lumber, nails, bricks, prefabricated roof trusses, etc.)—and had to resort to using rocks and hand-mixed mortar...how effective do you think you would be? Why or why not?

Examination:

- Read **1 Peter 2:4-8**
 - What goes through your mind as you read these verses? Do you have an overall positive internal response—or a somewhat negative emotional response? I have to agree with a commentary I read regarding these verses:
 - *“That’s part of the problem, for us, about reading this splendid passage in which the word “stone” occurs six times in five verses, with a “rock” thrown in for good measure. For us, stones are simply a nuisance. They get in the way.”* (N.T. Wright)
 - Do you agree? (If you've tried to clear a garden, or dig a hole—and realize that the soil is filled with rocks—do you wonder why in the world God created so many rocks...and put them right in your way!?)
 - How might this passage relate to the parable of the four soil types that Jesus described (Mark 4:1-20), specifically the rocky soil?
 - Peter's name is actually a nickname, given to him by Jesus when he began following as a disciple. It's the Greek word *“petros”*, which means “stone” or “rock.” What do you think ran through Peter's mind as he wrote these words about Jesus?
 - Peter calls Jesus *“the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him.”* Why do you think Peter emphasizes the fact that Jesus was a “living stone” (as opposed to dead or inanimate)? What does this mean?
 - For visitors to Jerusalem, a must-see is the Temple Mount—specifically the “Western Wall” or the “Wailing Wall.” It's the holiest site for modern-day Jews, and is part of the ancient foundation of Solomon's Temple—with some of the stones likely placed by Nehemiah (400BC). Each stone is approximately 3 feet tall and 8-10 feet wide, weighing over 100 tons each!
 - For Peter's initial readers in the first century (even those as far away as modern-day Turkey), they would have thought about the Jerusalem Temple (ultimately destroyed in 70AD, just a few years after Peter wrote this letter) when Peter described stones that built a “spiritual house.” How are “living stones” different from temple stones?

- Peter is calling each new believer—whether Jew or Gentile—a “living stone” that God is using to “build” a spiritual house! Think about what a shift in thinking this represented. For many centuries, God “lived” in the Temple in Jerusalem. Now, God is building “His Temple” through the lives of each individual believer—wherever they lived! How does this impact the way you think about your life?
 - If each individual believer is a “living stone,” what does it mean for these believers (us!) to be a “holy priesthood,” who offer “spiritual sacrifices”?
 - In verse 6, Peter quotes **Isaiah 28:16** (“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”). Do some brief research on the function of a cornerstone (Google it!), and discuss what it means for Jesus to be our “cornerstone.”
 - In the second of three consecutive Old Testament references (v. 7), Peter quotes **Psalms 118:22**: “*The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*” Why was Jesus the stone the builders rejected. In what ways was Jesus NOT the “stone” that they expected Him to be?
 - The third quote in verse 8 is from **Isaiah 8:14**: “*A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.*” In what ways did and does the stone (Jesus Christ) cause some people to stumble and fall? How was this destined, or “sure” to happen?
 - How could your disobedience cause another person to stumble? How HAS it?
- **Read 1 Peter 2:9-10**
 - What status did Peter ascribe to believers in Christ? What does he expect of believers? (2:9)
 - Peter says that believers have four characteristics. Talk about what you think each one means (it might help to look up the related verses):
 - A Chosen People (Isaiah 44:1; Ephesians 1:4) –
 - A Royal Priesthood (Exodus 19:6) –
 - A Holy Nation (Deuteronomy 28:6) –
 - A People Belonging to God (Exodus 19:5) –
 - How does being chosen by God for a special task make you feel? (ie: honored, worried, confused, conflicted, reassured, or something else)
 - We have been chosen and made to be the holy dwelling place of God—and a royal priesthood called by God—in order to declare the praises of Him who sent us. What are some practical ways that we go about this (see also Isaiah 43:2; Acts 2:11 & I Timothy 5:25)?
 - In what ways were you in darkness before you became a believer?
 - How does your past compare with your present condition? (2:10)

Application:

Thinking back to the parable that Jesus told—of the various “soil types”—regarding how we RESPOND to the truth of God’s Word: How would you describe the condition of your own heart? Is your heart “rocky” or “hardened” (you really don’t care very much about all of this—or you’re just too busy to stop and think about it)? OR, does the fact that you are a “Living Stone” that God is using to build HIS Kingdom excite and inspire you? Make it your prayer this week that God will give you a soft heart.