

Rev. Shaun Arndt
Sunday, May 7, 2023
1 Peter 2:4-10
See What God is Building

The Stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this! Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

More than 150,000 men labored seven years to build it. They cut prized aromatic cedar from Lebanon, quarried massive stones from the mountains. They masterfully assembled it according to the plan given by the Holy Spirit Himself!

Literally tons (as in hundreds of thousands of pounds) of precious metals - gold, silver and bronze adorned the courtyard, pillars, storerooms and furnishings of the house of the Lord, the Old Testament temple in Jerusalem. 40,000 pounds of gold alone covered the Most Holy Place of the temple.

All around there was art - carvings of palm trees, pomegranates, flowers, oxen, lions and angelic cherubim recalled the Garden of Eden and pointed ahead to the New Heavens and New Earth. Truly, the Temple Solomon built for the Lord was a truly awesome, amazing sight.

And yet that temple can't even begin to compare the infinitely more important and grandiose structure the Apostle Peter describes in our second lesson today.

To see this far greater building, you don't have to travel anywhere, for the foundation of this most magnificent structure is found right here today where He comes to us in Word and Sacrament! You can glimpse some of its stunning stonework right here, in this worship space as you look around at your fellow believers.

Yes, God is raising a portion of this far more glorious building right here, this very day. To see it clearly, you need God's Word. So let us listen to the Apostle and **See What God is building:**

As you come to Him, the Living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, you also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house...

It says God is building a **house**, that is a temple. You see, throughout the Old Testament, the temple Solomon built was called *the house* of the Lord

Now the Old Testament house was a teaching tool pointing believers ahead to the coming of Jesus Christ. At the temple the Lord came to live with His people and speak of how He saves them.

But Jesus came as the fulfillment of what that Old Testament temple was all about. He is true God who became true man to literally live among us as a human being to save us.

Christ made that clear when He said 'destroy this temple in three days and I will raise it up again.' Of course the temple He was talking about wasn't the building in Jerusalem, but His body and life He would give on the cross to pay for the sin of the world. And then on the third day, on Easter morning He would raise the temple of His body back to life again, conquering the power of death (John 2).

All this was foretold in Psalm we sang earlier have heard quoted in two of our lessons: **The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...**

The religious leaders of the Jews rejected Jesus and tossed him aside and killed, but He is God's promised Savior who was raised up from the dead to be the foundation of what God is building – a new temple, **a spiritual house** where God lives with His people and speaks of how He saves them!

Listen again to **What God is Building** – and see how it involves you. **As you come to Him the Living Stone... you also like living stones are being built as a spiritual house...**

All who trust in Jesus are part of this New Testament Temple, the **House of the LORD** where the Lord Himself lives with us! This **House** is not made of wood and stone but of all who believe in Jesus, who is called **the Living Stone... a chosen and precious cornerstone.**

In ancient times, **the cornerstone** was the most important stone in the entire building. Put down first, **the cornerstone** was a perfect stone used to line up and construct the rest of the building. Without the **cornerstone**, the building would fall apart.

Today, we would talk of a *solid foundation*. In God's **House**, this most important **Cornerstone** is of course Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, our only Savior.

Jesus is called the **Living Stone**, not just because He is alive, risen from the dead and lives forever, but also because He is the One who gives us life.

As we hear throughout the Bible and as we've heard throughout our readings today, Jesus is the only **Way**. He is not a way to life with God, He is the only **Way, Truth and Life**. Christ is the only name by which we are saved.

Any other way, any other faith, any other religion or path of self-help will lead to eternal ruin. There is only one rock solid foundation that saves us – everything else is sinking sand. If you do not build on Christ, Peter says you will **stumble and fall** and will do so forever.

For you see, no matter how well we may think we have built up our lives, we all have sin and sin brings shame. You know, that guilty feeling, that deep down in our hearts says all isn't as good with God as we might like to think.

There is the shame of when the little child can't look mom or dad or the teacher in the eye because they know they've done wrong. There is the shame of when we are seized by a horribly guilty conscience that says we've blown it big time. It's the shame we have over things we've said and done and thought that we desperately hope no one else would ever find out about.

And this is just the shame we're aware of and that we feel. Like damaged nerve endings, our sin before the holy God is so bad we don't even feel it all, but if God were to confront us in all His glory and justice we could not hide it nor look Him in the eye but would be left trembling and ruined.

And that's why we always need Jesus, the **cornerstone, the Living Stone**, the saving foundation of this New Testament House, the Church that God builds. For listen again what happens when the Holy Spirit connects us to Jesus through the gift of faith: **and the one who believes in him will certainly not be put to shame.**

Certainly not be put to shame. In the original Greek of this verse, this is the strongest possible way of saying *Absolutely Not*. In Jesus, all that we are ashamed of, all that we should be ashamed of, all of it is forgiven, removed, gone, our record clean and shining. After all, the whole reason Jesus died on the cross was to suffer for all our sin to remove all our guilt and shame – forever!

Trusting in Jesus, you will *never be put to shame*. While we may still struggle with feelings of shame, and the devil may even use it to try to keep us away from church, yet the unchangeable, rock solid, Christ-solid fact is, all who trust in Jesus **will not be put to shame**.

You will not be found guilty before God's judgment throne. No matter how dark your past, no matter how horrible that sin or secret may be, it is gone, erased, forgotten in the blood of Jesus Christ! You will live with God in perfect peace in the unending life to come.

Oh **See what God is building!** In Christ, our Saving Foundation you are forgiven! So forgiven in fact, that Peter uses the same words to describe you who believe in Jesus as He uses to describe Jesus Himself: **As you come to him, the Living Stone... you also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.**

Jesus is *the Living Stone*, through faith in Him, we are now **living stones** for we are covered by His holiness and washed clean by His forgiving blood. He is the Christ, we are Christians. He is the Great High Priest, we are now **holy priests** of God. **See what God is building** – He builds us up in Christ to be a precious and holy **spiritual house**.

And God's church of believers is called a **spiritual house** because it is built by God the Holy Spirit. You see, we didn't build ourselves into God's wonderful **house**, no more than a stack of lumber can build itself into a house. No, you need a builder.

And God the Holy Spirit builds this church of people who trust in Jesus by taking us who were once spiritually dead and lifeless rocks of unbelief and making us alive through the Gospel. In Baptism, He showered us with the **mercy** of God paid for at the cross of Jesus and made us precious and beautiful in God's sight and built us upon Christ our solid foundation.

Yes He is doing this throughout the world wherever the good news of Jesus is proclaimed, but don't miss how He does it right here at Peace, in worship, in Bible classes and Sunday School, and in the classrooms and hallways of our school and in our early childhood center as little ones hear the voice of the Savior and sing about His name in their homes.

After all, that's what the Church is for! Every building has a purpose. A carwash washes car, a restaurant makes food. And the purpose of Christians built upon Jesus is this: **that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**

We do this through our work together as a congregation to bring the good news of Jesus to the people in this building, to our community and to the world.

But this doesn't just happen here. We serve and praise our Lord as we reflect His love for us in words and actions to our families, our neighbors and coworkers and whoever we meet so that by our actions and words they might also come to know this amazing and saving God who **builds us** into His glorious **spiritual House** – a temple of believers in Christ that will stand forever for He will raise up our bodies to endless life with Him at the last day!

See what God is building – out of us, in us and through us! Amen.

You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. Amen.