

Sunday Sermon May 21, 2017

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 2:4-10

Sermon Theme: **Who you are in Jesus is pretty amazing.**

<sup>4</sup> *As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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.”*

<sup>7</sup> *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,”<sup>8</sup> 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.*

<sup>9</sup> *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. <sup>10</sup> 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.*

Over the last few months we have looked at the many different ways that the Bible tells us who Jesus is. We started at Lent and we saw Jesus work. His perfect life and innocent suffering and death showed us that Jesus is our Savior who takes away our sins. At Easter, we saw God’s stamp of approval on all that Jesus did. Because our Savior lives, we will live on in heaven as well. Over the last few weeks we have heard Jesus tell us in his own words who he is. We heard Jesus clearly say that he is the only gate through which his sheep, his believers, will enter heaven. Last week, he again said clearly that he was our God and Savior when he said I am only Way, Truth and Life that leads us to heaven.

In a time when any truth is questioned, when we are skeptical about anything before we believe it’s true, hearing these simple, yet clear, declarations about Jesus in the Bible help us to see and believe that Jesus is our Savior and the only way to heaven.

Yet, all that Jesus did, he did not do for himself. Jesus did not suffer and die for himself. He did not declare that he is the gate and the only way through that gate for himself. Jesus did all that he did for us, that we would know the way to heaven. Jesus is who he is so that he could make us who we are. This morning we are going to see that through Jesus suffering and death, Jesus makes those who believe into something truly amazing

Picking a cornerstone for a house was a pretty important task when houses were built of rocks, stones and mortar. The cornerstone set the size and shape for the house. A cornerstone had to be picked with precision or else the house would not turn out the way it was supposed to. Choosing a cornerstone could be a lengthy process; many cornerstones had to be rejected until the right one was found. Some were too big or too small. Some were not the right shape or color for the house. The search went on until the right cornerstone for the type and style of house was found.

What is the spiritual cornerstone of faith? Today, people try to build their faith and hope of heaven on many different types and styles of cornerstones. There are those who build on the cornerstone of a named god like Buddha, Allah, Vishnu or another named deity. There are those who build their foundation on the cornerstone of me, myself and I. There are also those who build their cornerstone of faith on money, success, and possessions. There are even those who say they are building on the cornerstone of Jesus, but instead of a solid cornerstone, what they believe in, their cornerstone, is full of cracks, chips and holes. It is crumbling because they have added or subtracted to what the Bible says to make it more palatable and appealing and they no longer have the cornerstone of Jesus.

Jesus is the only cornerstone on which spiritual houses are built because he is the only one who offers forgiveness and heaven freely. This house of faith is only secure and strong if it is built on the full council of God, not bits and pieces of a torn apart and remade Bible.

There may be times that we feel like we don’t fit with the thoughts, feelings and actions of other people. We may feel like that people are against us and what we believe. Revelation warns, that there will be times where relatively few will be about the truth of the Bible.

These differences we notice are because Jesus has built us on a completely different foundation than the world is built on. Even though we may feel different, we are not misfits and outcasts. Jesus tells us we are the

perfect size, shape and quality because he has made us living stones, built on his foundation, in his spiritual house. That's pretty amazing.

As living stones, we are not built on one of the improper foundations of the world. We are built on the solid foundation, the chief cornerstone of Jesus. We are built straight and true no matter where we are laid in framework of the house because Jesus, the cornerstone is straight and true. This house, this church, is God's church. It is made of people who believe and are going to heaven.

Being a living stone built in the house that Christ builds is pretty amazing. But Jesus has done more for us.

The Old Testament Jews held very tightly to their status as God's chosen people. They clung firmly to the thought that as a chosen people God would love them no matter what they did and he would always be there to bail them out of any jam they got themselves into. They did not realize that their sins separated them from God. They did not understand that because of their own unbelief and unrepentant sin, God no longer called them his chosen people, he called them a people who were lost in unbelief and sin.

Jesus calls all those in whom the Holy Spirit works faith his chosen people. This is a pure Gospel statement. God did not choose us because we were good at being his children, or good at obeying him. We are all sinners who cannot satisfy God. The fact that God chooses anyone is amazing. The fact that God chose us to be part of his people shows us his great love for sinners like you and me.

God has chosen us to be his people who live in faith for him. Because we are chosen people of God, we are also a royal priesthood.

The Old Testament Jewish religious system was constructed to show the separation that man's sins had caused between God and man. The Temple and synagogue were set up to have a place for God and a place for people. The people could not go where God was because of their sinfulness. They could not approach God's throne because he was holy and they were not. The priest was the only one who could approach God, and even then, he could only approach God once a year to offer a sacrifice for the people's sins. In Judaism, the people could not approach God's mercy seat, they could not approach him directly, they needed the priest to be their intermediary.

Through Jesus everything is different for us. Through Jesus we have a new and different status before God because our sins are gone. We are made children of God who have special honor as heirs of eternal life. We are children of the heavenly King which makes us royal ourselves.

We do not need an intermediary anymore, we can approach God's throne, his mercy seat, without fear because Jesus has taken away those sins which separated us and has made us holy like himself.

Jesus has made us a holy nation which is set aside for God. God does not see national lines and ethnicities. He is not like the Jews who considered themselves the only nation going to heaven. Through Jesus there are simply believers and unbelievers.

There are those who are blessed by Jesus to be some amazing things: living stones, chosen, royals, priests, holy, a people which is set aside and apart for God. There are also those who have none of these blessings which Christ has won for them.

What Jesus has made you is amazing. Jesus has built you on his foundation. You are a new person, different from many of the other people you may walk and talk with every day. Jesus did this for a reason; **That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** He did this so that you could take part in the important work that Jesus has for us.

We like the parts about being special in God's eyes, don't we? We like the part that Jesus has made us something new and awesome, but the how quickly do we forget what kind of special people we are when we are asked to take part in the work of declaring those praises that Jesus asks us to do? Don't bother me with worship or Bible Study, don't ask me to serve on the council or elders, don't ask me to give any more, don't ask me to participate in a canvass or evangelism activity, don't ask me to do any of the work that I have been created to do, let someone else do it.

Jesus doesn't call us holy, chosen, priestly stones so that we feel good about ourselves. He does it so that we understand that his people have work to do and if we do not do it, no one else will.

We are the ones whom God has chosen to do his work. The team's best basketball player does not sit in the crowd during the big game, the best player is in the game, playing to win. The CEO of the company is not sitting at home when the decisions are made, he is there doing the work, so that the work is successful. If a fire

is raging in the fire house, the firefighters are not roasting marshmallows waiting for someone else to show up and put out the fire, they are hard at work to make sure the fire is put out.

We will declare that Gospel to others. We see what Christ has done for us in our life. He has called us who don't deserve it. He has made us holy through his own blood. He has called us to be a part of his spiritual house all of whom are going to heaven. All of this he has done, when we did not deserve anything from him. How can we turn away from the work he asks us to do, when he has done so much for us?

As we live this life, we do so proclaiming the praises of our Savior, Jesus. The Holy Spirit will work through those Gospel words to call those who are built on the wrong foundation. Through that Gospel, the Holy Spirit will call many more and make them living stones just as we are.

Jesus is who he is, our Savior and King, in order to make us who we are, something amazing. Let us praise and thank him for his grace and mercy to us, that he has loved us enough to make us his amazing people. Amen.