

Sermon followed by Service

September 17, 2023

1 Peter 2:4-10

Which is easier for you? To imagine our Father who art in heaven in the new world with a cell-phone loaded with pictures flipping through his pictures, showing off his pictures? Or to imagine our Father who art in heaven at home with the walls, and the bookcases, end tables, and refrigerator all decked out with pictures and more pictures? Picture your Father who art in heaven with his pictures. What does your Father keep pictures of? Fish, flowers, waterfalls, Rocky mountain majesty, Florida sunrises, California sunsets, castles and cathedrals? Nope, not unless you're in those pictures. His walls, his refrigerator, his phone are all filled with pictures of you, you with Jesus.

And as he looks at his pictures of you, what does he see? What does he remember about you? What does he say? With a great big smile, he says: "Mine!" He sees you connected with Jesus, covered with Jesus, walking and talking like Jesus, living and loving like Jesus. He sees you in your baptism pictures, your confirmation pictures, his family pictures. He sees how you stand with him. He sees you putting sin and Satan in their place. He sees what you do for him and his church; he sees you making him and his church look good. He sees you and remembers you as Champion, Winner, Saint, Ambassador - his Champion, his Winner, his Saint, his Ambassador to the world. And with you in his heart, he says: "You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased."

We don't always feel that way; we don't always act that way, do we? This world sure doesn't treat us that way, does it? Sometimes we feel more like the people Peter was writing to. Like strangers and outsiders, we feel out of place. Because we're different with Jesus, because we live differently, because we live for Jesus instead of living the life of the world for our self, we don't fit in. Scattered, we might feel outnumbered and alone. And so, instead of feeling like Champion, Winner, Saint, Ambassador of the Living God, how often don't we feel beaten up and beaten down by the world? And perhaps more often, instead of living like Champion, Winner, Saint, Ambassador, we let ourselves get sucked in to the sin of our past and the empty life of the world around us.

So how can our Father who art in heaven have these pictures of us as Champion, Winner, Saint, Ambassador? How can he smile: "You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love, with you I am well-pleased"? And when we are beaten up and beaten down, how can we see ourselves as Champion, Winner, Saint, Ambassador? When we feel out of place and alone, how can we see ourselves as God's special people with God's smile: "You're mine!" How? It's not by living the life of the world. And it's not by us living our best lives. The answer is in Jesus.

Listen to what Peter says about Jesus. Peter doesn't picture Jesus as Shepherd; he does that in the next chapter. He doesn't picture Jesus as Redeemer; he did that in the chapter before. Here Peter pictures Jesus as Stone, a living, life-giving Stone. You know how people hunt to get just the right stone with just

the right look - the right stone for their ring, the right stone for their landscaping, the right stone for their kitchen counter or their fireplace. God chose Jesus as just the right stone for his house, his church.

And not just for looks. God chose Jesus to be the cornerstone. Today a cornerstone doesn't mean much, doesn't do much; it might be inscribed with the date the building was built; it might be hollowed out with a time capsule inside; it might be the last stone set in the building with a special ceremony. In the ancient world, the cornerstone would be the most important stone, specially measured, specially cut, specially placed in just the right way to set the direction for the rest of the building. If the cornerstone was off, the rest of the building would be off. If the cornerstone was right, the rest of the building could be set right. God chose Jesus to be the cornerstone of his church.

But God's people - some took a look at Jesus and didn't like what they saw; some listened and didn't like what Jesus said. They rejected Jesus, not only as cornerstone, but as any stone in their lives. Why? Jesus got in their way. As people of the world, we like to be our own judge, our own boss; we like to live for our self. And if or when or because Jesus says otherwise, he gets tossed off to the side as an old stone that's broken and good for nothing.

But God chose Jesus, and just because somebody doesn't want Jesus, that doesn't mean that they can rid themselves of Jesus. No matter how far they try to toss Jesus off, Jesus still stands in the way, if not as Savior and Shepherd, then as Judge.

For those who won't have Jesus as cornerstone, Jesus becomes the stone on which they stumble, the stone on which they fall into ruin.

But that's not you. You don't want that to be you, do you? You've tasted the hurt, the heartache, the bitterness of life in this world. And, as Peter says, you have tasted that the LORD is good. You know how good it is to see Jesus and his cross, Jesus and his empty Easter tomb; you know how good it is to hear Jesus say: "I forgive you." You know how good it is to see Jesus heal the sick, and feed the 5000, and drive out demons; and you know how good it is to hear Jesus say: "I've got you." You know how good it is to see Jesus with his pictures of heaven, and to hear Jesus say: "I have a home for you with me in heaven." And you know how good it is to hear Jesus invite you: "Come to me. Walk with me. Live with me. Work with me, and see if I don't bless you with more than all the world." Yes, with Jesus, "you have tasted that the Lord is good."

And now, Peter says, as you come to Jesus for more of Jesus, what does God do? Instead of looking at us and seeing us as broken and cracked and tossing us off, he sets you with Jesus. He chose and set Jesus as the cornerstone of his church, and now he chooses you and sets you as living stones on the cornerstone. Sometimes I like being a stone, sitting silent, not doing anything. But God has so much more for us in this life than just being stones. As he sets us with Jesus, he makes to be his holy priesthood. We could talk about how, out of all the people, in the world, we get direct access to God. We could talk about how we get to share the treasures of heaven with the people in our lives.

Peter talks about how we get to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. What? We get to be part of God's inner circle, working with God, living the God-Lived Life, with God smiling on what we do for him with Jesus.

This past week I heard people on the front end of life stressing about what to do with their life. I heard people on the back end of life stressing about what to do with their life. I heard people on the front end of life, the back end of life and in the middle of life stressing: "What am I supposed to do? Whatever I do is never good enough." They want to do something worthwhile, something with meaning; and - instead of never being good enough - they want to know peace. Sound familiar? When we remember who we are - the people of God; when we remember why we are - to show and tell the greatness and grace of God; what we do for God doesn't need to have us stressing; what we do for God with Jesus has God smiling on you. Amen.

September 16 & 17, 2023

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we have so much we can do to comfort, encourage, and aggrandize our self.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see that our Lord has an even better way to comfort, encourage, and “aggrandize” us - by connecting us with Jesus to serve for the glory of God and the good of his people! Our Lord makes us great by giving us a better life than the pleasing of self; as he connects us with Christ - his person, ministry, and mission - we have our greatest value as people and our greatest value to the world.

OPENING HYMN

“Built on the Rock”

Hymn 856

Built on the Rock the Church shall stand even when steeples are falling.
Crumbled have spires in ev’ry land; bells still are chiming and calling,
calling the young and old to rest, but above all the soul distressed,
longing for rest everlasting.

Surely in temples made with hands God, the Most High, is not dwelling;
high above earth his temple stands, all earthly temples excelling.
Yet he who dwells in heav’n above chooses to live with us in love,
making our bodies his temple.

We are God’s house of living stones, built for his own habitation.
He through baptismal grace us owns heirs of his wondrous salvation.
Were we but two his name to tell, yet he would deign with us to dwell
with all his grace and his favor.

Here stands the font before our eyes, telling how God has received us.
Th’ altar recalls Christ’s sacrifice and what the sacrament gives us.
Here sound the Scriptures that proclaim Christ yesterday, today, the same,
and evermore, our Redeemer.

Grant then, O God, your will be done,
that, when the church bells are ringing,
many in saving faith may come where Christ his message is bringing:
“I know my own; my own know me. You, not the world, my face shall see.
My peace I leave with you. Amen.”

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves
and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Sung*)

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST (SUNG)

CW 176

Refrain: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. *Refrain*

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer. *Refrain*

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen. Amen. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God, in your infinite love, you have entrusted to us the knowledge of your truth and the gifts of your goodness. Help us use them as good stewards, giving generously, praying urgently, and working diligently, that we may share in bringing others to your truth and hastening the coming of your kingdom; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FIRST READING

1 Peter 2:4–10 (EHV)

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 to be a holy priesthood, in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it says in Scripture:

See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who believes in him
will certainly not be put to shame.

Therefore, for you who believe, this is an honor. But for those who do not believe:

The stone which the builders
rejected has become the cornerstone,
and,
a stone over which they stumble
and a rock over which they fall.

Because they continue to disobey the word, they stumble over it. And that is the consequence appointed for them.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. At one time you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 118A

Refrain



This is the day the LORD has made, let us re-joice and be glad!



This is the day the LORD has made, let us re-joice and be glad!

Tone



The LORD is my strength and / my defense;

he has become my sal- / vation.

The LORD's right hand is / lifted high;

the LORD's right hand has done / mighty things!

I will not / die but live,

and will proclaim what the / LORD has done. *Refrain*

I will give you thanks, for you / answered me;

you have become my sal- / vation.

The stone the builders re- / jected

has become the / cornerstone;

the LORD has / done this,

and it is marvelous / in our eyes.

Glory be to the Father and / to the Son

and to the Holy / Spirit,

as it was in the be- / ginning,

is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain*

SECOND READING

1 Peter 4:7-11

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

1 Peter 2:9

Alleluia. You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Church of God, Elect and GLorious”

Hymn 854

Church of God, elect and glorious, holy nation, chosen race,
called as God’s own special people, royal priests and heirs of grace;
know the purpose of your calling, show to all his mighty deeds,
tell of love that knows no limits, grace that meets all human needs.

God has called you out of darkness into his most marv’lous light,
brought his truth to life within you, turned your blindness into sight.
Let your light so shine around you that God’s name is glorified
and all find fresh hope and purpose in Christ Jesus crucified.

Once you were an alien people, strangers to God’s heart of love,
but he brought you home in mercy, citizens of heav’n above.
Let his love flow out to others, let them feel a Father’s care,
that they too may know his welcome and his countless blessings share.

Church of God, elect and holy, be the people he intends,
strong in faith and swift to answer each command your master sends.
Royal priests, fulfill your calling through your sacrifice and prayer;
give your lives in joyful service, sing his praise, his love declare.

SERMON

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Lord God, from whom all blessings flow, we praise you for everything you provide to sustain our lives. Lead us every day to be thankful for your gifts and content with what you have given. Today we pray that you would guide us to manage your blessings wisely for the good of your kingdom. **As we use your gifts to meet our needs, move us also to support the ministry of the gospel with our offerings.**

Before your Son ascended to your throne, he called us to preach the good news to every creature. In grace you created the public ministry so that we may answer his call by sending others in our place.

Impress on us the immense importance of the task you have given us to proclaim your Word to the world.

In our words and in our offerings, move us to be faithful witnesses of your grace.

Work in our hearts so that our gifts do more than support a cause or meet a need. Move us to give out of love for you, our King and Redeemer.

Lead us to bring our gifts first to honor you, the Giver of all things.

Teach us to give as an ongoing part of life since the work of the gospel continues every day. Forgive us for the sins of apathy and carelessness and for giving that reacts only to urgent pleas or crises.

Help us see the wisdom of planning our offerings as a regular routine of our faith.

Teach us determine our offerings in view of your blessings to us. The widow's coins were meager, but they were all she had. Move us to believe that to whom much is given, much is also expected.

Give us courage to bring gifts that reflect your gifts to us.

Teach us to give our offerings as a cheerful response of our faith in you and your Son. Spare us all feelings of obligation or resentment as we give. Help us to see our offerings as the vehicle that carries the gospel to the lost, and lead us to rejoice with the angels of heaven over every sinner who repents.

Help us to balance our duty to give with the joy of giving.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Precious Lord, all our blessings come from you. Lead us again and again to thank you and then move us to be wise and faithful stewards of your gifts. May our gifts and offerings bring souls here and far away to the gracious gift of Jesus and his love.

Lord, hear us and grant us this blessing. Amen.

INSTALLATION OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)



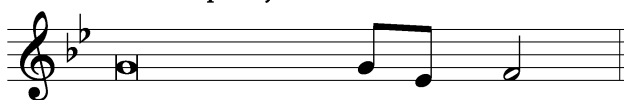
The Lord be with you.



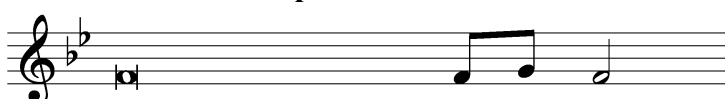
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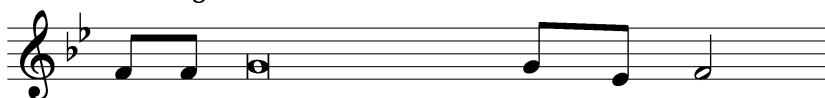
Lift up your hearts.



We lift them up to the Lord.



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (SUNG)

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my T body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my T blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

JESUS, LAMB OF GOD (SUNG)

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

“Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s Head”

Hymn 861

Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s head, you are her one foundation;
in you she trusts, before you bows, and waits for your salvation.
Built on this rock secure, your Church shall endure
though all the world decay and all things pass away.
O hear, O hear us, Jesus!

O Lord, let this your little flock, your name alone confessing,
continue in your loving care, true unity possessing.
Your sacraments, O Lord, and your saving Word
to us e’er pure retain; grant that they may remain
our only strength and comfort.

Help us to serve you evermore with hearts both pure and lowly;
and may your Word, that light divine, shine on in splendor holy
that we repentance show, in faith ever grow;
the pow’r of sin destroy and evils that annoy.
O make us faithful Christians.

And for your gospel let us dare to sacrifice all treasure;
teach us to bear your blessed cross, to find in you all pleasure.
O grant us steadfastness in joy and distress.
Lord, for your mercy’s sake, let us by grace partake
of endless joy and glory.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.
We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you
have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith,
nourished our hope, and strengthened our love.

By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way”

Hymn 737

Lord, help us walk your servant way wherever love may lead
and, bending low, forgetting self, each serve the other’s need.

You came to earth, O Christ, as Lord, but pow’r you laid aside.
You lived your years in servanthood, in lowliness you died.

No golden scepter but a towel you place within the hands
of those who seek to follow you and live by your commands.

You bid us bend our human pride nor count ourselves above
the lowest place, the meanest task that waits the gift of love.

Lord, help us walk your servant way wherever love may lead
and, bending low, forgetting self, each serve the other’s need

OFFERING

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan this code
with your mobile device.*



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