

## Outline

### Sermon on Community

Theme: We are living stones being built into a spiritual house where we can access God directly, shine light in a dark world, and be empowered by the love of Christ to serve even in the midst of the world's rejection.

#### I. Scripture Reading (1Peter 2: 4-10)

**4'As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 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.**

**6 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.”**

**7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.**

**9 But 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. 10 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.**

#### II. Introduction

- A. Last of a three part series — Bible based, Christ centered
- B. What that has to do with being a caring community. What particular kind of church does scripture call us to be?
- C. According to Gallup, 90% say they believe in God
- D. 70 years ago, 80% said they attended church regularly — frequently
- E. Today 38% admit attending any worship at any time
- F. 60% plus say they will not enter a church this year
- G. Why? Don't like people, rules, being called sinners
- H. They're depriving themselves of knowing the God that 90% of them claim to believe in.

#### III. Three aspects of Community

- A. What it looks like inside?
- B. What it should look like outside?

C. Where do we get the strength, wisdom and grace?

IV. What's the particular kind of church scripture calls churches to be?

A. **1 Peter 2: 5.** Living stones, being built into a spiritual house

B. Not bricks, not engineered, uniform based clay, but unique and imperfect

C. Every stone dependent on other stones

D. Why congregations and not agglomerations?

i. **1 Corinthians 12: 13-14 'For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. '**

ii. And in, **Romans 12: 5; when it says, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.**

iii. We are organically connected.

iv. Implications of belonging to one another ... no room for hate, aggression, arrogance. The foot doesn't divide from the hand. The arm doesn't hate the leg.

E. What's a spiritual house?

i. The Temple

ii. The Holy of Holies

iii. Worshippers couldn't get in. Couldn't know the presence of God.

iv. All that changed thanks to Jesus. **Hebrews says in Chapter 10 v.19, that we enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus.**

v. Under the temple system, they couldn't experience the transforming presence of God.

H. C.S. Lewis and The Four Loves, three friends: He, Robert, and Charles. **"In each of my friends, there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself, I am not large enough to call the whole man completely into activity. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald's reaction to a specifically Charles joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him "to myself" now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald."**

i. He's saying there was a part of Ronald he could only see because of Charles' presence. His grief is two fold, Charles is dead, and that part of Ronald only Charles could access is denied him.

ii. Lewis continues: **"we possess each friend not less but more as the number of those with whom we share him increases. In this, Friendship exhibits a glorious "nearness by resemblance" to Heaven itself where the very multitude of the blessed increases the fruition which each has of God. For every soul, seeing Him in her own way, doubtless communicates that unique vision to the all the rest."**

iii. He's saying, to know another Human Being you need a group of human beings. How much more true is that in knowing God?

D. The 60% who say they'll won't step in a church this year, can't really know God, because they're not in deep community. They can only know a small piece of God. And they deny to others the part they know.

V. What does that particular kind of church look like?

A. **Acts 2: 44-47.** Three words, "they were together."

i. Where: Everywhere.

ii. When? "everyday continuously."

iii. Thirsty to know Christ and they did that by being together, seeing what God was doing in their own lives, and in the lives of those with whom they were together.

D. That's how the transforming reality of God works on you — through and with each other.

E. **Hebrews 10:24-25** "24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

i. **Hebrews 10** says we're to do a number of things, but let's focus on two of them: spur and encourage

ii. Spurring — painful

iii. Your worst sins are the ones you don't want to think about, or even believe exist

iv. Granting access to someone to spur you is hard, but you can't grow without it.

v. Encouraging is opposite of spurring. It's coming alongside, building up, empathizing.

F. Small Groups is where it happens.

G. C.S. Lewis: "**Men are mirrors, or 'carriers' of Christ to other men. ... That is why the Church, the whole body of Christians showing Him to one another, is so important. You might say that when two Christians are following Christ together there is not twice as much Christianity as when they are apart, but sixteen times as much.**"

VI. What's our responsibility to the culture?

A. **Matthew, Chapter 5 v. 14,** Christ says, "**You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.**"

B. **1 Peter 2:9** **But 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.**

i. **Peter says we used to live in darkness, but He's brought us into the light.** It says **He's replaced the lie** we used to live with the truth of God.

- ii. He says we're supposed to live that truth out in a way that those still in the darkness can see it no matter how far away they may be.
- C. The problem with modern culture.
- i. No universal truth
  - ii. Right and wrong are defined as right and wrong for "me"
  - iii. It's a community "killer."
- D. Scripture disputes the modern notion of truth.
- i. **1 Peter 2: 11-12 "11. Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."**
  - ii. Right or wrong exist and wrong will "war against your soul."
  - iii. That's why we're foreigners and exiles.
- E. We're to engage the culture, not surrender and accommodate, and not attack and withdraw
- i. Only engagement shines a light in the darkness
  - ii. Not only be the light, but serve so the pagans will see "our good deeds."
  - iii. We should do it despite their "accusing" us. It doesn't say "if" they accuse us. It says "they will" accuse us.
  - iv. They can't help it, their world view is opposite our's.
  - v. But they'll both accuse and recognize. When we show truth through obedience to Christ, it'll be accusation. When we show the love of Christ through good deeds it will be recognition.
  - vi. Then even pagans can glorify God.
  - vii. That kind of engagement is nearly impossible to walk perfectly. But we'll get better at it as we go.
- V. How do we do it, where do we get the grace?
- A. **1 Peter 2:4-8. 4'As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 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. 6 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." 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," 8 and, "A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.**

- B. We have to come to the chosen and precious living Stone.
  - i. **1 Peter 2:7** 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, **“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”**
  - ii. This says we’re all building on a foundation, but the builders rejected the chosen and precious cornerstone through disobedience.
  - iii. We all have a cornerstone.
  - iv. Martin Luther said your cornerstone is your identity. How you rationalize yourself when things are hard.
  - v. If your cornerstone is based on anything other than Jesus then it’s based on what makes you feel good about yourself. It’s about you. It leads to pride, transactional relationships. It kills community.
  
- F. **1 Peter 2:6. 6 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.”**
  - i. If anything other than Jesus is your cornerstone, you will be put to shame.
  - ii. If your cornerstone is Jesus, you will take some hits, but your identity will survive.
  
- I. **1 Peter 2:7. 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious.** But it’s not enough to intellectually assent. You have to find Him “precious.” He has to be more important than anything else in your life. Until everything else is expendable compared to Him, he’s not your cornerstone.
- J. To make Christ that “precious,” you first have to understand what it means that He was rejected.
  - i. **1 Peter 2:7 But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”**
  - ii. You have to see what it means that He was rejected. By His own people, by His family, by His own father.
  - iii. When He had to choose between His life and your’s, He chose you.
  - iv. You are “chosen,” and that by grace, not because of your own worth. It wasn’t what we did to merit His love. He loved us though we were His enemies.
  - v. And because He found you precious, you can now find Him precious.
  
- F. You also have to understand the paradoxical basis of salvation. What Tim Keller calls, “The upside down nature of the universe.” A major theme of scripture
  - i. If you want to be first, you have to be last. If you want to find your life, you have to lay it down. God has brought down rulers, but lifted up the humble. The meek, not the proud, inherit the earth.
  - ii. Jon Bloom: “Satan wants us to grow up and be like God, but God wants us to grow up and be like children.”
  
- G. And you also have to understand how much He loves you.

H. Example of bringing a friend to church.

- i. You're worse than you think.
- ii. But you're more loved than you can imagine.
- iii. Despite our flaws, we can show the world a hope they couldn't bring to imagine.

I. Once we replace our cornerstone with the "precious" cornerstone of Christ, it solves every problem.

- i. We can put others first because He put us first.
- ii. That's the community we're called to be and the love we're called to show the world. And that's where we get the power, the grace, the wisdom to do it.

## VI. Application

- A. Are you a living stone woven into all the other stones; are you in a small group where you support, spur, encourage, and share with one another? Would anyone miss you if your stone fell out of the wall? Are you in a small group?
- B. What light are you showing the outside world? Do you withdraw? Do you accommodate? Or do you accept rejection while being recognized for good deeds?
- C. Are you getting the power to put others ahead of yourself? What is your cornerstone? Do you understand how precious you are to Christ? Do you understand the price He paid — the rejection, aloneness — He experienced for you? Is He that precious to you?