

1 Peter 2.4-10 for COB [07.21.13]

Introduction

† [Slide 1: Title] PRAY

- † I would like the children to come up and help me this morning. Here is what we are going to do. I am going to tell you about four children's programs, and I want you to tell me whether you would want to go try them out, ok? If you really like it, say, "two thumbs up!" You want to try it right now? "Two thumbs up!" If you really don't like it, say, "two thumbs down!" If it is so-so or you are not sure, say, "half and half!" Ok... here we go...
- Church A: [silence]... did I convince you to go?
 - Church B: We have a children's program. You should go... what do you think?
 - Church C: I like our children's program. We learn about God and talk. It's ok; you should come... would you try it?
 - Church D: Our children's program is the greatest! we have so much fun! we sing songs, we learn about God, we eat cookies, we play games, we watch videos and skits, we go out on the swings, we have contests and win great prizes, it's the best hour of my week! ... does that sound more attractive?
- † Thank you children, those of you up to age ten may now go to Children's church. It might not be as fun as I just described, but we are working on it. For those of you who are staying in the sanctuary, whether you have children or can imagine having children, how would you like to describe you when they talk with others?
- Little children can be hilarious when talking about their parents. I have not been blessed with children, but I do have a niece and a couple of nephews. When my niece was two, she had a pink floppy stuffed animal that I playfully put on my head and called my little pink hat. I have kept the joke going for the past seven years as a way to reignite our banter after months apart. One day, while waiting to pick up my nephew from preschool, I heard him start to tell his class that his uncle Will wanted a pink hat, a pink coat and pink boots, and that he cried at movies... without meaning to, he made me out to be quite effeminate, not how I would like to be portrayed.
- † Last week, one of the points we discussed was that God created us and saved us to become like him, to become pure in character, like Christ. This week, one of the things we will learn is that God is saving us to become his people so that we will sing his praises! And that's not just here in church where it is safe, but out in world.
- † If you have a Bible with you, you can look in the table of contents to find where 1 Peter begins and then turn to chapter 2, verse 4. I will be reading from the NASB today, but you can follow along in whichever translation you have handy.
- † Peter wrote this letter to some Christians who had been deported from their homes and exiled in various parts of what is now Turkey. The believers were suffering. Not only had they been uprooted and moved to a new land, but the locals in that land were pagans and were persecuting the Christians.
- † Peter explained that suffering should not make us feel ashamed. Suffering does not mean God has stopped loving us or caring about us. God allows Christians to suffer, but he uses that suffering to strengthen our faith and develop us to be more like Christ, if we continue walking with him.

- Peter says we can always be sure that God loves us and hasn't forgotten us, because we know God the Father himself chose us to be his people, Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins, and the Holy Spirit set us apart to be saved and obedient.
 - So Peter wants us to expect suffering; and when suffering comes, he wants us to persevere in faith and dependence on God, instead of doubting God and turning to the world's ways of coping, which are sinful and destructive.
- † Last week, we learned five ways Peter wanted us to respond to these truths. Anyone remember one?
- [1] get our minds ready and stay focused on God's grace, so we can put all of our hope and trust in God's deliverance, instead of in worldly or evil ways.
 - [2] obey God: we try to become pure and obedient, so we reflect God's character and represent him here on Earth.
 - [3] show God reverence: even beyond obedience, we try to show respect to God by singing songs of worship, praising him to others, considering his values when making decisions, and learning to depend on him instead of on ourselves or worldly ways.
 - [4] love one another fervently: we are not to have just a passive fondness for each other, we are to seek ways to show love. Love in the Bible is not an emotion, it is a decision. The emotions of love come and go, even in a marriage, but we can be constant in our decision to show love.
 - [5] seek nourishment from God to be renewed in mind and transformed in character. We do this by certain disciplines God has given us, like reading the Bible, praying, participating in the community of the church, worshipping God, serving others, and sharing the gospel. We open ourselves up to God's work within us, so that we get renewed in mind and transformed in character, to better represent and reflect God and to be better equipped for life. That brings us to our passage for today...

The Cornerstone

- † **[Slide 2: 2.4-5]** *1 Peter 2.4-5 NASB: And coming to Him [that is, Christ] as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
- † In v.3, Peter had been talking about taking refuge in God, meaning we depend on God to help us persevere through our struggles and we depend on God to nourish us to spiritual health and growth. If we put our hope, trust, and faith in God and his plan of salvation, then that means we are coming to Christ, to depend on Christ for his sacrifice on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to depend on Christ for his righteousness which God attributes to us when we believe.
- † Peter calls Christ a "living stone," perhaps reflecting his resurrection back to life. But the Greek word translated "living" can also mean "life-giving," and that fits Christ too: we come to him for spiritual life, and he makes us into "living stones." We are made alive spiritually and we begin to take on Christ's nature of a sanctified, resurrected, life, as the Holy Spirit purifies our characters and renews our minds.
- † We also become part of God's building project, stones God uses to build his church, the spiritual house. The church community is the new temple in Peter's imagery, with the Holy Spirit residing in us and true worship being offered by a holy people, which means a people purified and separated out for God's purposes.

- And as part of the church, even if we are alienated from our secular cultural community because of our faith, like Peter's original readers were in Turkey, we are part of another, better, community in the church which God is building. This is where we can experience being friends and neighbors the way God intends.
- † Note Peter did not say that we are *individual* spiritual houses! To Peter, we *collectively* are the spiritual house for God. We each are a part of the structure; thus we must participate in the church to be a part of what God is building.
- This means more than just going to church on Sunday: we must be an active part of the church community by joining a small group Bible study, serving in the ministries of the church, and supporting the church with prayer and money.
- † Notice also that the purpose of this spiritual house is to offer spiritual sacrifices. What comes to mind when you think of spiritual sacrifices that God would like today?
- I think some good answers would be praising God, being devoted to him, depending on him, and sacrificially obeying him, including obedience to the positive commands about showing fervent Christ-like love within the community of the church and sharing love and the gospel outside.
- † Peter noted that Christ largely was rejected by mankind. How many true followers did Jesus have after three-plus years of ministry? Anyone want to throw out a number?
- Thousands loved his miracles and praised him for them, and he appeared to over 500 people after being resurrected from the dead, but in the end, after Christ ascended to Heaven, only about 120 people gathered to pray and wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon them and begin the church age [Acts 1.15]; about how many chairs we can fit in here today.
 - So most of Israel rejected their promised Messiah or Christ, the promised deliverer whom God had sent to them. And almost all of the religious leaders of Israel rejected Christ.
 - Yet to God the Father, Christ is choice and precious. Peter elaborates on this next.
-
- † **[Slide 3: 2.6]** *1 Peter 2.6 NASB: For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."*
- † Peter quoted here from the prophet Isaiah [28.16] in the Old Testament. Isaiah explained that God was going to bring judgment on the nation, but God had said he would place a cornerstone in Zion, which is the hill on which Jerusalem was built, and those who believed in this cornerstone would escape judgment.
- † Christ is this cornerstone. If we do not put our faith in him, then we are not a part of what God is doing, we are not connected to God in relationship, and we are not free from the guilt of our sins.
- † But for those of us who do believe, with Christ as this cornerstone, we can trust in our ultimate deliverance out of God's judgment. Any present suffering does not indicate judgment from God.
- That's what it means when it says we who trust in him will not be disappointed, or put to shame as some translations have: we can trust Christ has made us righteous in God's sight and will deliver us through our struggles here and into our glorious inheritance in Heaven; he will not disappoint us and leave us in guilt and shame!

- The Greek text is very emphatic, which does not come out in the English translations well: “the one coming to Christ, believing in Christ, *certainly* will not be disappointed.”
 - This continues Peter’s teaching from the previous chapter, that suffering is not a sign of divine abandonment if you have come to faith in Christ. No matter what happens to you in this life, no matter how much you struggle even to walk in faith, if you trust in who Jesus is and in what he did on the cross for you, then you will not face God’s condemnation at the end of time, guaranteed. That is the good news!
- † This verse begins with the Greek word *διότι*, which indicates Peter here is giving the basis for his statement in the previous verse: we collectively are the spiritual house which offers up spiritual sacrifices, and these sacrifices are acceptable to God through Christ, *because* God the Father has made Christ the cornerstone of the church.
- The cornerstone in those days was the first and most important stone laid in construction. Upon it all the rest of the structure depended. Christ is the cornerstone upon which all else will be built in this time period between when Christ came the first time and when he will return. So if we do not have Christ then we are not a part of what God is building.
 - And our sacrifices are only acceptable to God through Christ, so if we have not put our faith in Christ, then nothing we offer God will be acceptable. I think of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, and the Unitarians. who try to live righteous lives, but they do not believe in who Jesus really is, they do not believe in what he accomplished in his death and resurrection, so their efforts are unacceptable to God.
- † We might extend this thought for those of us who are believers: if we offer to God something done by our own will or for selfish motivations, then we are not acting through Christ, but through ourselves, and this will not be acceptable to God.
- Thus, if I am preaching for my own glory instead of God’s or because I wanted to be a pastor rather than because God called me to it, then my sacrifice is not acceptable to God. If you are on the worship team or some other ministry of the church, and you come to it with your own agenda, seeking to satisfy yourself, then your sacrifice is not acceptable to God.
 - To do something in Christ’s name means we do it by his will, by his authority, under his direction, and for his glory.

† **[Slide 4: 2.7-8]** *1 Peter 2.7-8 NASB: ⁷ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," ⁸ and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

- † Christ largely was rejected by mankind, as we saw in v.4, and he is the cornerstone which the human “builders” rejected. The latter comment is a quotation from Psalm 118.22. In that Psalm, the nations outside of Israel rejected God’s cornerstone. In Jewish tradition before Jesus was born, the cornerstone was understood to represent the promised Messiah – which is the Hebrew term for Christ – the promised anointed deliverer from God.
- † When Peter spoke to his fellow Jews right after the Holy Spirit first came to indwell believers, he explained that Jesus was the Messiah and he quoted Psalm 118.22 to say that they had rejected the Messiah by crucifying Jesus, so they needed to repent by putting their faith in Jesus if they wanted salvation [Acts 4.8-12].

- Jesus already had identified himself as this cornerstone [Matthew 21.42-44], and judged the religious leaders of his day for trying to “construct a building” for God without the true Messiah [see also Romans 9.32-33].
 - So Peter is pointing out in his letter what he already had spoken aloud: Christ might be rejected by most people, but he is the pivotal part of God’s plan for salvation.
- † Peter also says that Christ is a “stumbling stone” and “rock of offense” to those who do not believe in him. This is a quotation from Isaiah 8.14, in which God is seen as a sanctuary for those who fear and trust in him instead of turning to the nations or the world, but God is a source of judgment for those who do not rely on him in faith.
- Christ is not only the cornerstone of what God is building among the faithful, but he is a source of stumbling for those who reject him. Indeed, the very act of rejecting Christ and his gospel is to stumble and sin, and to accept judgment for all your sin.
 - The Greek verb translated as “they stumble,” προσκόπτω, can also mean “they take offense.” Peter’s readers were being persecuted by the local pagans, because those non-believers took offense at the gospel truth. When people reject you because of your faith, understand it is their pagan reaction to the gospel.
- † In v.8, to disobey the “Word” probably means to reject the gospel, based on the terminology used elsewhere in the letter [see 1 Peter 3.1; 4.17]. God determines the ultimate destiny of those who come to faith in Christ and of those who do not. This is part of God’s judgment on mankind for going astray from God in the first place.
- We are responsible to choose faith in God through Christ, even though we are not able to do so without divine empowerment, just as we are responsible to choose to be righteous even though we are born with a corrupted human nature due to the sins of our ancestors. All of mankind deserves God’s judgment and condemnation; the miracle is that God chooses to save any of us.
- † Peter’s readers were suffering at the hands of non-believers, but Peter assured them that they were the ones destined for salvation, while the non-believing persecutors would face God’s judgment.
- We too should find this reassuring. We might face hardship because of our faith today, as non-believers are provoked by Christ and his gospel. But we can be assured that our suffering does not negate our ultimate deliverance by Christ, while those who torment us will face judgment.

† **[Slide 5: 2.9-10]** *1 Peter 2.9-10 NASB: But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.*

- † Peter calls the group of believers four things in rapid succession. A “chosen race” [or people] reflects what God said about Israel in Isaiah 43.20-21. In that chapter, God was forming a people who would proclaim his praises, and God would be their only savior who would deliver them out of exile.
- Peter says believers are a new race in Christ, transcending traditional nationalities and skin colors. We are all one together in the church, but we also are one distinct from the world. And just as in Isaiah 43, God’s purpose in forming this race of people is so we will proclaim his praises, or excellencies.

- † Peter calls us a royal priesthood! Reflect on that for a moment: what does that say about God’s view of you? What does it say about how you should live?
- † A “royal priesthood,” a “holy nation,” and a “people for God’s own possession” all reflect Exodus 19.5-6. We have a New Covenant which replaced the Mosaic Covenant of Israel. Still, as with ancient Israel, if we keep our covenant with God, we will be God’s representatives to the people groups outside the church.
 - We are to be holy, set out for God’s purposes and obediently living sanctified lives;
 - we are to be a priesthood, mediating God’s blessings to people who do not yet know him; and
 - we are to be God’s own, intimately walking with him every minute.
- † Peter reminds us that we praise God inside and outside the church because he brought us from the darkness into his light. This refers to our “conversion” when we accepted Christ in faith, and thus were forgiven of our sins, declared righteous in God’s sight, made alive spiritually, and set apart for God’s purposes.
 - But note also that this is why God has shaped us into his priesthood, this is why he has built us up into a spiritual house: our purpose is to praise God inside the church when we worship together or encourage each other, and outside the church when we testify to our faith and share the gospel.
- † In v.10, Peter again turns to the Old Testament, alluding to the prophet Hosea [1.6-9; 2.23]. In Hosea, these words refer to God restoring his people after their failure to obey the covenant and their subsequent destruction and exile. God extended mercy to them again, and again gathered them to be his people.
 - Most of us in this room are Gentiles, meaning non-Jews. Gentiles were even more firmly in the darkness, not deserving or receiving God’s mercy or inclusion; but through the gospel of Christ, we now all can receive God’s mercy and be included in his people. That should be great motivation for us to sing God’s praises!!!

Summary

- † **[Slide 6: Summary]** Let me summarize...
 - First, we must have Christ as our savior to be part of God’s plan now and in eternity.
 - Second, we must be participating in the life of the church to be part of what God is doing.
 - Third, even if the world is hard on us, we can know we are loved by God, we can be a part of the church community [which includes all types of people], and we can trust God will deliver us to Heaven because of Christ.
 - Fourth, together as a church, we are to offer God spiritual sacrifices through Christ. At the least, this means we praise God’s name, both inside and outside the church. If we really are God’s people, if we really have been given new spiritual life, if we really are experiencing renewal and transformation, we will be eager to shout out, and praise our gracious God!
- † **[Slide 7: title] PRAYER**
- † **Benediction:** χάρις ὑμῶν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη: may grace and peace be multiplied to you!