

Pastor Graham Pfeffer Sermon for Parish Camp, 7th May, 2023

Text; Peter 2:2-10

Yesterday we journeyed with Jesus through scripture as he did with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. A journey that revealed all that is spoken about of the coming Messiah, Jesus fulfilled in his life, death, and resurrection. The writers of the New Testament often drew on the psalms and prophets to tell of Jesus, as we will see in second reading 1 Peter 2:2-10.

First though, in chapter 1, Peter writes in verse 20-21, *He (Jesus) was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

Peter goes on to tell us, now that you have been purified by obeying the truth, love one another sincerely because you are born again through the living imperishable seed, which is the enduring word of God. Therefore, Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:1, Therefore rid yourself of all malice and deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Then we get to the beginning of today's reading. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Peter gives an image of the importance of milk for a newborn. It is impossible for infants not to crave milk. Therefore, Peter uses this analogy to show that just like a newborn baby desires milk, as Christians who have been born again through water and the Spirit, we should have a regular craving for spiritual milk. Tell me, how often did you feed your newborn babies? Likewise, the reading this morning tells us that since we have tasted that the Lord is good in his word and sacrament, then we are to regularly desire spiritual milk.

What is the reason Peter gives? So that by it you may grow up into salvation now that you have tasted salvation. Peter no doubt draws this thought from, Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him."

As you feast on the word of God, as you are filled with this spiritual milk, as you taste salvation and see that the Lord is good, you will notice the word is founded on Jesus Christ. He was and still is rejected by all who reject the word of God. Peter recalls what was written by the prophet Isaiah 28:16, ¹⁶ *So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic.*

Therefore, Peter writes in v6, God chose Jesus as the precious cornerstone, so that the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Peter gives a warning though in Vv 7-8; *but to those who do not believe the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, is a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.*

Have you ever been walking down a track and while you're looking around at the scenery, all of a sudden, you're stumbling trying to regain your balance or you have fell, because you've stumbled on a rock or a stone in the path.

In Matthew 21:42, Jesus himself quotes from Psalm 118:22-23, ²² The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; ²³ the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is where Jesus told the parable of the tenants in the vineyard where the owner of the vineyard sent his son, but the tenants killed the son.

Jesus quoted this Psalm to reveal to the chief priests the elders, and the pharisees that he is the stone the builders rejected. They realise that Jesus is talking about them, and they seek a way to arrest him.

Jesus knows he is a stumbling block to them. The builders' rejection of the stone is a reference to Christ's crucifixion. In regard to the cornerstone, God chose His Son, who was despised and rejected by the world, to be the foundation of His church. That's why Peter and other New Testament writers, say that anyone who rejects and disobeys the word of God, where Jesus himself says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, unbelief is like a stone that causes them to stumble.

But for all of you who believe, because of your trust in Jesus as the cornerstone of your faith, you become living stones yourselves. Through faith, you have become God's chosen people, you are part of the royal priesthood, you are a holy nation, God's special possession. The reason you are included, is as Peter writes in Vv 9-10 that *you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*

Surely Peter is referring to Hosea 2:23, who said those exact words to Israelites, *"Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*

In quoting from the psalms and the prophets, Peter shows the Christian community is based on what God had in mind all along. That the church is built on the solid foundation of God's word. Just as the tenants of the vineyard rejected the vineyard owners Son, the word become flesh, the people of Israel rejected the Son of God. Even now people reject the son of God through unbelief.

Yet this stone the builders rejected, became the cornerstone upon which God's church is built. The Christian church is built upon the proclamation of God's mighty acts in Israel's past, which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Peter writes in Vv4-5, 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.

Which means, while faith is personal it is also communal. We belong together, united in our faith with Christ as the cornerstone and we as the living stones which make up the spiritual house. The picture in mind is also that of Paul where the church is the temple of God, bound together by the Holy Spirit. When we are baptized into God's holy name, it is much more than saving us from our sins. We are baptized into a community of faith, a spiritual house, a holy priest hood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession. In the Old Testament, priests made sacrifices to God. Peter describes this image to describe the work Jesus as the sacrificial lamb. Peter also speaks of us as a holy people offering spiritual sacrifices to God.

Firstly, the spiritual sacrifice of repentance and seeking forgiveness and mercy. Secondly, when we put our faith into practice, and look out for the wellbeing of people, then we live the love that God gave to us in Jesus. In doing so, we fulfil our purpose as God's church. As God's Church, as part of the temple made up of living stones, our desire can only be that of Jesus Christ. To proclaim God's message of salvation to all people. To offer spiritual milk, so that by it, they too will grow up into salvation, and taste and see that the Lord is good.

So how does it make you feel that you are a living stone? How does it make you feel to be a part of a spiritual house? How does it feel to taste and see the Lord is God? May that give you security and peace. Amen