

A Chip Off the Old Block©

1 Peter 2:1-10

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World Communion Sunday at Echo Grove Retreat Center

Memory verse: 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.*
(NIV)

We began this retreat Friday evening consecrating the stone pillar as a reminder that God is in this place, just as Jacob proclaimed after his dream of the ladder that went up to heaven with angels ascending and descending.

“Surely the LORD is in this place--and I did not know it!” he said. ... “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, ... the gate of heaven.”

Have you experienced God’s presence here in this place this weekend? I certainly have! Not just in this room with the pillar of stone to remind me, but everywhere we’ve been – in conversations, both fun and serious – in our free time - doing crafts, walking, resting – at our meals, nourishing our bodies and fellowshiping together.

I have experienced God’s presence in the sunrise/sunset over the lake, in the smell of the hay as we rode together on the hayride, in the campfire, watching it burn, hearing it crackle, and listening to your voices.

Whether we have a rock with us as a reminder or not, as long as we are together, we have a constant reminder of God’s presence through one another – we who are living stones.

We have been saying our memory verse all weekend now. How many of you can say it by heart? I’ve been working on memorizing it since the last of August and still have trouble keeping it all straight!

I think it might help if we unpack the points that are in this passage from 1 Peter.

Peter compares our hunger for God’s word with a baby’s unrestrained hunger. Being hungry (truly hungry) is a good thing – especially when you have healthy food to satisfy that hunger. Being hungry is a signal that it’s time to give your body nourishment so it can continue to grow and be strong.

Peter says we should be hungry for spiritual milk. That is, we Christians ought to find ourselves having an eager desire for spiritual food. That is the mark of a believer. When

we are hungry to feed on God's word, we take in more nourishment for our spirits and we grow up to be more and more mature, strong people of God.

We have such great food before us! The Scriptures, part of our spiritual food, tell us about God, our Creator and Redeemer, gives us God's covenant of love and mercy that tell the story of the chosen people of God – our rich legacy. The more we study the Scriptures – the more we eat of this food – the more we come to know God, our Rock, the closer we become to Jesus, who is our Savior and the reason we, as the church, exist.

Peter says we are living stones being built into a Spiritual House. Thank the Lord we are living stones – made alive in the Holy Spirit – and not dead rocks that either lay around causing people to stumble or being used for destruction instead of construction.

We sing the song Sanctuary which indicates one way to be a spiritual house. Will you sing it now with me?

*Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, strong and true.
With thanksgiving I'll be a living sanctuary for you.*

The Apostle Paul reminds us that we are God's temple. In 1 Corinthians 6:19 he asks "Do you not know that your body is a temple? And in 2 Corinthians 6:16 "For we are the temple of the living God."

But, not only are we a spiritual house for the living God – each of us in our own bodies, hearts, minds – but we together as the church are a spiritual house.

Sometimes I think we forget that. We get caught up in the tasks we are committed to doing, in solving the flood of problems that come pouring in – especially with an old building – we get irritated at someone who has a different opinion that we have – you know – we act like humans.

I've often said, when someone expresses frustration with other people, "the problem with the church is that is full of humans!" but then, we wouldn't be the church if we weren't.

We are people – humans – and we are diverse in personalities, dispositions, the way we deal with things, just who we are. But let us always be mindful that we are also living stones being built into a spiritual house that is far more than all those problems and human issues.

We are more because we are a chip off the old block! Jesus, the founder of the church, the first living stone that rose from the dead, sends us his spirit so we can continue

being those building blocks for his spiritual house. And what is it all for? For the offering of spiritual sacrifices:

Spiritual sacrifices are:

¹**Bodies offered to God** (we are God's holy temple.
God dwells in us.

Money and material goods – we recognize that all we have belongs to God and we offer a portion of what we have back to him and his service.

²**Sacrifices of praise** – Our worship is important – for us and to God. To come together and praise God is pleasing to him and gives us strength and joy in being together and giving thanks.

³**Sacrifices of doing good** – As we follow in Christ's footsteps as his disciples, we offer our time, compassion and care for others by doing good deeds. We don't do good things as if we think we can earn salvation. We know that only comes through Christ by grace alone. But because we love the Lord, we obey his command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Peter says these sacrifices are to be Acceptable to God. And all of these mentioned are according to God's command. Jesus said the most important commandment of all is to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might. And the second greatest is to love your neighbor as you love yourself.

I want to take this time share a beautiful illustration of loving our neighbor. This video shows what happened in a town when a very small boy developed Leukemia. Singer Matthew West tells the story in his song. Please watch.

Loving others as we love ourselves is about our humanity. It's is when we realize that relationships truly are above all the other concerns we have in life – whether it be in the church or in our daily routines.

We are living stones in the world, spreading the love of one who is our Cornerstone out to others in so many ways.

¹ Romans 12:1

² Hebrews 13:15

³ Hebrews 13:16

⁴Jesus is the precious Cornerstone of the Church. He is that stone in the foundation which determines the design and the orientation of the building (says the commentary for the NIV study bible).

We are living stones derived from Christ, the original living stone. All over the world, Christ's living stones – the church – is working with joy and faithfulness to keep the foundation strong and durable.

But this is not a foundation that is focused on a building as much as it is focused on a spiritual house. Let us remember, when we get so tied up in worrying about what to do to preserve a physical building, that to God, the more important thing is how we act, how faithful we are in loving God above all else and in loving others as they are loved by God.

If we put anything else – a building, our determination to do things a certain way – our pride, our resistance to forgiving or changing – anything else that is above loving God (as the greatest commandment says) and others, (as Jesus said is the second greatest commandment), then we are not building, but we are tearing down the spiritual house. We then become stumbling blocks instead of living stones.

Isn't it exciting to look at one another and to see the gift God has given? How might we be re-formed as the church that Christ intends us to be, if we looked at each person with eyes that could see into their hearts and with insight that saw their great talent, their passion for a particular service in the church? And we rejoiced and encouraged and affirmed each one to use that God-given gift?

My prayer is that we might become more and more "in tune" with our passions, our gifts, and Holly Presbyterian church will draw in more people with new gifts and we will grow – a genuine, authentic spiritual house that has living stones for its foundation and of course, Christ as the cornerstone.

Yes, you are definitely a chip off the old block! Thanks be to God.

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⁴ Psalm 118:22, Matthew 2:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, acts 4:11