

Fifth Sunday of Easter
“Your Precious Living Stone – Jesus! (1 Peter 2:4-5)
May 7, 2023
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Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our precious Living stone in whom we are made alive!
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Fifth Sunday of Easter is from 1 Peter 2:4

“4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
Here ends our text.

Chosen by God and precious...Peter writes about Jesus.

Have you ever tried skipping stones on a lake? You look around and choose a flat smooth stone to get the most hops possible when you throw it.

On the other hand, couples choose a precious stone that they don't want to throw across a lake, but where on your ring finger. I was reading an article about the most extravagant engagement rings that famous women wear. Someone took the time to research the cost and find pictures of smiling ladies discreetly displaying their rings in various poses. Of the two hundred women who made the list, Mariah Carey seemed to have the most expensive ring at 10 million dollars. Most were in the million-dollar range. As rare and precious as these stones are, our text speaks about THE most precious stone – Jesus.

Yes, Jesus is called a stone – a living- stone. For diamonds and rocks for skipping are inanimate. But Jesus is living. He rose from the dead and has become the Chief Cornerstone of the church which because it is built on Jesus is also -living!!

God's Word here speaks to His believing people that He has chosen and made a part of His living spiritual church!

“you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

There is a connection between a woman and the engagement that ring she wears. It represents the love and affection of her fiancée. Yet, still the ring itself is just a stone. It's not alive.

But, for the Christian, there is a deep connection between the Living Stone, Jesus and the believer. Jesus is so connected to a believer that He lives in a believer's hearts and makes the believer alive! No wedding ring can ever make a person spiritually alive. Only Jesus can. Every person needs to be wedded in faith to the Bridegroom Jesus or else one is spiritually dead.

Listen to how our text describes every man, you and I included before we were connected to the Living Stone, Jesus.

“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,”

Rejected by men. That describes all people, including you and me – lifeless, hopeless, people with hearts of stone.

We were, in fact, enemies of God until He reconciled us to Himself and connected us to the Precious Stone Jesus.

Romans 5:10

“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Our epistle tells about the 180 change that God has made in your heart through His great mercy.

“who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”

God's Word is all about what He does in each person's heart through Jesus. Listen to God speak to your heart in Ezekiel 36:26.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

God alone changes our sinful hearts of stone into living, forgiven hearts where He Himself would even dwell! How?

That's what Good Friday and this Easter season is all about, isn't it? God the Father sent His Son Jesus to bear all the evil that comes out of every person's heart. **"It is finished"**, Jesus said and died (Luke 19:30). He paid for the sins of all people with His precious blood! A big stone was rolled in front of His tomb to leave no doubts that Jesus was indeed dead.

The Bible's message, however, is not about a big, lifeless stone in front of a tomb, but an open empty tomb! For three days later, the precious Living Stone, Jesus, rose from the grave! Jesus is alive! This is Good News for everyone! Jesus' victory over sin and death means there is hope and life for all our sinful stony hearts who are destined for the grave.

Jesus is the **"chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."** (1 Peter 2:6)

That means that God will never disappoint you! Believe in Jesus and God will build you upon Him as a "living stone" (1 Peter 2:5). Best of all, because Jesus lives, you too will rise again from the dead! (Romans 8:11). That's why you, believers in Christ, are also called living stones, because you are alive in Christ!

St. Paul tells us this Good News in Romans 10:8-9.

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." God always keeps His promises, and you will never be put to shame!

In fact, now that you are connected to Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, confessing that Jesus is your Lord, God has big plans for each of you!

For God gives you new titles and new services to perform. 1 Peter 2:9 from our epistle was so important to Dr. C.F. W. Walther, the first president of the Missouri Synod, and our most influential theologian, that he would write 1 Peter 2:9 below everything that he signed.

Listen to this most beautiful verse once again.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"

Here God speaks to His people, His living stones, the Holy Christian Church. He speaks to you and me – all believers. For God just spoke about the unbelievers who reject Jesus.

“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,”⁸ and “A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.”

They stumble and fall into eternal punishment. They are crushed by the Living Stone instead of being connected to Him. (Luke 20:18)

But, to those who believe, who see the crucified and resurrected Jesus with eyes of faith, it is a marvelous sight.

“Matthew 21:42

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

How marvelous is it to you? You are chosen by God, called and washed of your sins in your baptism. So that you are now a holy nation, wearing Christ’s robe of righteousness! And most importantly, you are called priests of King Jesus! Yes, all of God’s people are priests. For as Paul says in Romans 12:1, we offer ourselves back to God as living sacrifices.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

Your lives, your mouths, your prayers declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light! You declare to your families and friends and all who would listen what is most praiseworthy, the work of Jesus on the cross for the whole world. It is the most precious work for all people, the salvation of all men.

Our service in the priesthood therefore is not to make sacrifices to atone for our salvation. No, it’s been done, once and for all on the cross. We offer our sacrifices of love in thanksgiving for all He has done for us...for all that He has made us – precious living stones!

Maybe you remember back in the 70’s there was fad, a craze, about pet rocks. People were sold rocks in a box and were to take care of them as if they were alive. Pretty silly wasn’t that? Yet, when we talk about stone cold hearts of men, it’s anything but silly. It’s very serious. It’s the work of the priesthood, you and me, to tell others about Jesus that

they may repent of their rejection of Him, and be made alive by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Back when I was in Saltillo learning Spanish, I also took a guitar course since the city is well-known for its romantic “rondallas”. One of the songs that I learned was “Corazon de Roca” (Heart of Stone). It’s a song about a man’s affectionate love for a woman and his efforts to transform her heart of stone into a heart that would love him back. Whether he succeeds or not, the song doesn’t say.

The greatest love known to all people, though, is God’s sacrificial love through His Son Jesus – Agape Love. The Easter message changes cold, stony, dead hearts into living stones built into God’s spiritual house! That’s why Jesus, the Living Stone, is precious to His Father, to the world, and to you too, believers in Jesus, precious living stones!
Blessed Eastertide!

“I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore.” Psalm 86:12

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)