

EASTER 5-YEAR A
ACTS 7:55-60
1 PETER 2:2-10
JOHN 14:1-14
MAY 13, 14, 2017

The other day at our Cedar River Forum the intern from St Stephen's gave the devotion. As part of the devotion time she asked us to reflect on the reading from 1 Peter 2. As a couple of us talked about various things in the reading I thought about the living stone that is Jesus. I thought about stones or rocks and how they are mostly lying around. They don't have ability to get bigger or smaller in size but are shaped by the forces around them. They can't do anything unless someone or some force causes them to move.

As I reflected I also remembered a time when I was a kid. One summer day I decided to throw some rocks I found. It does no good to just throw rocks. You need to have something to throw at. My target for those rocks was our chicken house. More specifically the targets were the windows in that chicken house. I discovered that I am a pretty good aim, usually hitting what I am throwing at. Before I was done all of the windows were broken out. Needless to say, my father was not impressed with my ability to throw rocks at windows.

1 Peter 2:4-6 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Peter writes and speaks to the people of God that continue to be outcast among people. They were not experiencing the love of the people around them. These are new Christians that were seeking to grow up into the

body of Christ. Peter invited these new Christians to come to Jesus. He invited them to come to the living stone that was rejected but is the cornerstone of our lives and of our faith. They were to come to the one that loved them enough to die on a cross for their sins and rose again that they might have life. They were to become a people that are moved by the living stone who is Jesus. They could do nothing as the people of God without being moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Through faith in the Lord Jesus they would be moved to bear fruit in the body of Christ.

The Jews had a history of wandering and of being despised among the nations of the world. They had a history of being hated by others that sought and in many cases still seek their destruction. The church of Jesus Christ and Christian people are very much like our Jewish ancestors. We are outcast among the nations. Christians are persecuted and we are asked to conform to the society around us. When we live our lives reflecting the love of God through Jesus we are likely to be despised or ignored. We might be rejected even as Jesus Christ was rejected.

In our gospel lesson from John 14 we have that important teaching of Jesus telling the disciples to not let their hearts be troubled but to believe in God and believe in Jesus. They were to believe in the one that is the Way and the Truth and the Life. When we are asked to conform to our society we look to the word of God for our guidance. When we are searching for direction in the church we look to the word of God. We build our lives upon the cornerstone and we build our lives into a spiritual house. Peter invited the new Christians into the household of God. He invited them to experience the love of God that comes through Jesus Christ. Peter taught that they were to cling to the living stone that moves us forward as children of God.

1 Peter 2:9, 10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

The household of God is a chosen people. We are royal priesthood. We are a holy nation. The household of God is a place where Christians receive spiritual nourishment. We are fed and we are nurtured by the word of God through preaching and teaching the word of God in honesty and in truth. Our witness is a bold one. The psalmist declares in Psalm 31, that the Lord is our rock and our refuge. He prays that God would lead and guide him. He asked God to provide for him. Like newborn infants who cry for their mother's breast, the Christians to whom Peter is writing must partake daily of spiritual milk. Spiritual milk is milk that does not deceive. It is milk, a direction or a teaching inviting them to not fall back into their old habits and pursue the ways of their old ineffective traditions but to cling to the one that will not put them to shame. It is nourishment that helps them before the living stone in faith.

We are built into a spiritual house as we continue in the teaching and the life of our Lord. God calls us out of darkness into God marvelous light. As we experience the light of God we also experience the mercy of God. We are God's people. Peter says that once we were not a people but now we are God's people. In baptism we come into the light and into the body of Christ. At the Lord's table, we are fed and nourished by the body and blood of the Lord. Through the power of Jesus Christ made known through the Holy Spirit we become God's people.

We are created in God's image but broken by sin. We are broken just as the windows in our chicken house were broken. We are created for relationships. Because God loves us we love each other. We love God and

we love our neighbor. Because of sin relationships are broken. Because of sin the relationship between Adam and Eve was broken. Because of sin the relationship between Cain and Abel was broken. Because of sin our relationship with God is broken. Our only way back into a right relationship with God is by God's grace and mercy that comes through faith. God chooses us to become a chosen people, a royal priesthood and a holy nation. Through Jesus Christ we are reconciled with God. Through God's love we are reconciled with our neighbors.

Because God shows us mercy we also show mercy to one another. Because we are the people of God we go to the Lord in prayer and God gives us what we need. Our prayers are answered because we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. You are a people called out of darkness and you have come into God's marvelous and brilliant light. We are fed daily as we read and study God's word. We grow in faith as we hear God's word proclaimed at our church services and we grow in love as we spend time together with other Christians. We go from our place of worship to bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, that he is our source of life. AMEN