

Easter 5      Text: 1 Peter 2: 2-10  
 May 10, 2020  
 Trinity Lutheran Church, Fairview Village  
 Pastor Stacey-Kyle Rea

Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house. – I Peter 2: 5

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The cornerstone. Every building has one. Sometimes it is called the foundation stone.

It's the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. It has an important job – all other stones are set based on this one stone's location. The cornerstone determines where all other stones will be placed to create a solid foundation. To connect two walls.

And since we read about foundation stones in the Bible, we know that cornerstones have been around a long, long time. Today, we create ceremonial cornerstones. We usually place the date the building was erected into the cornerstone. Trinity has cornerstones in Norristown and in Fairview Village. These cornerstones tell a story.

They tell the generations to come when a community came together to build a building. In Trinity's case, the community moved to a new location. And then they extended that building. The date on the cornerstone locates the time a building came to be.

As important as the cornerstone is, it does not define the building. It is not a living stone. It does not tell the story of the people who decided to build, the community that makes a home in the building. It simply lets the world know when it was built, when it officially became a structure.

Peter uses the analogy of the cornerstone because it's something we understand. Peter also understands that buildings are of human construction. They don't last forever. The stones of human made buildings cannot tell their own story. The cornerstone of the building cannot save us from the building's destruction.

But what about God's cornerstone?

In today's second reading, Peter's letter was written like a sermon. It was written for people living in severe danger. The followers of Christ were being persecuted by the Roman empire. The people knew that the safety of a building could not save them from persecution, oppression and death. The careful placing of a building's cornerstone, even when etched with a date, cannot guarantee that the building will stand forever.

But God's cornerstone is different. And Peter is telling the people of ancient times who are scared out of their wits. Scared they wouldn't live to see the next sunrise. He reminds them that Jesus was a stone rejected by the builders. To the Romans, Jesus was a useless rock that is totally in the way.

But to the people, Jesus is the only cornerstone. No matter where they go, no matter what they do, Jesus is right there. With them in prison, with them in sickness, with them in all the places that buildings can't go. Perhaps we can relate in this time of pandemic. Jesus is our foundation, not the church building.

Jesus is the cornerstone of a new kind of building...a building not made by rock, but made of us. Followers. Believers. The people of ancient times and today are the living stones. Peter is giving hope to an oppressed people, the living stones of Jesus. Whether they are laughing, crying, singing or dancing, the Lord remains their cornerstone. He is referencing Isaiah chapter 28 v. 16 in scripture, which ends, “one who trusts will not panic.”

Peter is also talking to us today.

Today, we sit in our homes, isolated from each other for the sake of the whole community. The cornerstone of the building we meet in for worship can't tell the story of the people of Trinity. The cornerstone of our building simply marks a certain time. Jesus tells the story. And the only way to hear about that story is to listen to the living stones. You. Me. The neighbor down the street. Our synodical partners in Tanzania. The people of the past and the people who will enter our lives. The stories documented in the Bible.

Living stones tell the story. And living stones share the glory. Living stones know all about Jesus and his love. Now, more than ever, we have to tell the story. Because a building can't do what we, the true church, the living stones can do.

Right now, the whole world needs the hope of Jesus. And YOU and I are called to share that hope. We do that by sharing with others how Jesus works through us. Jesus works through our hands to feed the hungry through programs like Cecil and Grace Bean's Soup Kitchen, Daily Bread Community Food Pantry, the Norristown Hospitality Center, Haws Ave Community Dinner. Living stones do this because we have a sure foundation in the Lord.

The stones on the outside of our building don't tell our neighborhood that we are a community who includes beloved students from Gemma Services/Silver Springs – Martin Luther School. The stones don't mention that our confirmation students are learning to serve God and their community in this place. Or that sweet babies await baptism.

Only living stones can share the hope.

We are the living stones. Together, we know that the cornerstone of our lives, Jesus Christ, is the strongest foundation there could ever be. We are built together, as a community, we are built for longevity through God's grace and mercy, and we are a force to be reckoned with when we tell the story of Jesus to anyone and everyone we come in contact with.

We are the living stones. We reveal a glimpse of Jesus' story every time we volunteer and share our time, our talents, our treasure with the world. We are the living stones when we continue to offer our tithes to God abundantly, even in the fear of scarcity. We are the living stones...the ones who become God's people. How will we tell the story of Jesus this week?

As we miss gathering together, I guarantee it is not the stones of the building that you miss. We miss the living stones...each other. But we need not miss Jesus. Jesus our cornerstone has made a home with us, wherever we go, and no one can remove that solid foundation in us.

Now is the time to build on that solid eternal foundation. You are a living stone. **Go and LIVE.** Share the hope of Jesus. Do not be afraid. Let the Lord's cornerstone always be our first formational stone, strengthening our relationships and all that we say and do.