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*Walking With Jesus - Our Proclamation!*

July 24, 2022

1 Peter 2:1-10

THEME

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of God’s dream for the world, and this is what we declare and celebrate.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR LIFE GROUP TO KNOW?

Jesus is the cornerstone of all things. As the church looks to the future, it is our proclamation that everything is referenced in alignment to Christ, his activity in the world, and his call to the Kingdom.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR LIFE GROUP TO DO?

Daily proclaim Christ in words and actions, and give ourselves over as building material, trusting in the strength and alignment of the cornerstone who is Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION: CORNERSTONE

The cornerstone (or foundation stone) concept is derived from the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. It’s important because all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure.

Over time, cornerstones have become ceremonial masonry stones, or replicas, set in prominent locations on the outside of buildings, with inscriptions indicating the building’s construction dates, the names of architects and builders, and other significant individuals. The rite of laying a cornerstone is an important cultural component of eastern architecture, and metaphorically important in sacred architecture. Some cornerstones even include time capsules. *(– from wikipedia.org.)*

ICEBREAKER

What makes a cornerstone so important? If someone were described as the cornerstone of a community, what does that mean?

PRAY TOGETHER

God, we know that what we say and do can really make a difference in the lives of others. You call us to proclaim in word and deed that you are the living Christ and the cornerstone of all that exists, and your presence gives direction and focus for our future. Teach us how to be those who bring light and mercy to a world that is in darkness and pain. Help us to daily give ourselves over as building material to be used in the new temple, for which you are the cornerstone. Amen.

Content

The author of 1 Peter is writing to two different groups of people, or churches, who share some very important common experiences. They are Jewish converts to Christianity, and pagan or Greek-speaking Gentile converts who, most likely, live further inland in Asia Minor.

The letter describes their alien status as similar to the Jewish Diaspora, and the alien status the Jews in exile would experience. Jerusalem has been destroyed, and the Roman Empire is cycling through varying degrees of persecution of the Jews, this new sect of Jewish Christians (Messianic Jews) and Gentile converts to Christianity.

The animosity between Jewish people and the early Christians is great, but this letter is sent to the inland rural population, where it may be easier for Jews to convert to Christianity. The major Jewish populations are concentrated in the coastal cities.

1 Peter includes references to Old Testament texts that are familiar to the Jewish converts, and also assure the Gentile converts that they, too, are heirs of God’s promise to Israel. The main thrust of the letter is to keep those congregations strong in the face of harassment from the local community.

The reading begins by naming five sins that are major roadblocks to the Christian life: malice (wickedness), guile (deceit), hypocrisy (outward show), envy (ill will), and slander (evil speech). These are all sins that reveal untruth.

The new Christian begins by rejecting untruth (Satan) and realizing the truth (God). It is by moving ever closer to Christ that we come to live more and more in truth, which gives us a fullness of life. Moving ever closer to Christ is like a newborn drinking nourishing milk. A new Christian drinks spiritual milk, which leads to salvation. Salvation, in our context, has been twisted to point to a time after death. Salvation in this instance would lean heavily into deliverance or preservation, as these people live in the midst of pagan harassment.

1 Peter 2:1-10 NLT So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. (2) Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, (3) now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness. (4) You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but He was chosen by God for great honor. (5) And you are living stones that God is building into His spiritual temple. What's more, you are His holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. (6) As the Scriptures say, "I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in Him will never be disgraced." (7) Yes, you who trust Him recognize the honor God has given Him. But for those who reject Him, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone." (8) And, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them. (9) But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light. (10) "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."

As a baby cries for life-giving milk, so should a new Christian cry for pure milk. But what is the pure milk that they should drink? There is some fraying of thought in our Bible translation community. Most translations will interpret the Greek word “logikos” as spiritual. However, the word is rooted in “logos” and is better translated as “logical,” or “reasonable,” or even simply as “of the word.” Logikos is a link back to 1 Peter 1:23. Many translate logikos as “spiritual,” as does our NLT. Other texts will translate this phrase as “pure milk of the word.” The problem our translators have is this: what is this word?

Since the author uses many Old Testament phrases in this letter, are we talking about the Hebrew Scriptures? That doesn’t seem to work. Or is this word pointing to the later New Testament? That doesn’t seem to work, as 1 Peter is specific to this community’s current needs. Is the word Jesus? Does the author of 1 Peter think of Jesus as the Word of God?

In 1 Peter 1:23, the word causes the people to be born again, and it seems logical that this same word then would be their sustenance, their pure milk. This word is the word about Jesus. At that time, the word may have not been completely understood as we read it in John 1, but again the word that is spoken about Jesus is strong enough to bring about conversions.

DISCUSSION How is a new person of faith like a newborn baby? What do you think this spiritual milk is? Why? At what point do we need to move beyond milk to other foods in our spiritual journey?

Then, when we bring in 2:3, we see that to experience the word is to experience the kindness of God. We see that the word of God is goodness. This, then, leads us to put the puzzle back together. “If you really have tasted the goodness of the word of God, then you should long to respond by living in truthful ways.”

DISCUSSION In what ways do we “taste” this goodness of the word of God? What kind of change does this bring about in us?

By living in truthful ways, we allow ourselves to be used as building material for the new temple of which the cornerstone is Jesus, or the word. It is belief in this word that leads us to proclaim that this word leads to light and mercy.

DISCUSSION Have you ever thought of yourself as building material? What is this new temple? How is it different from the old temple? How can proclaiming this belief lead to light and mercy?

GOING DEEPER: PERSONAL

What we believe and tell others really makes a difference in our world. We have the power to bring light and mercy to a world that is in darkness and in pain. Our proclamation is made through our words, and also our actions. We daily give ourselves over as building material, trusting in the strength of the cornerstone. We daily seek out the pure milk. Jesus is the word, and it is God who transforms us, not because we are good, but because God is good. That is our future, and what it means to be a future church.

DISCUSSION Do you tend to proclaim Christ more in words or actions? Why? Give an example of how the words you tell others have the power to transform. Has anyone ever spoken transforming words to you? What were they? What did that mean to you?

Application

This week, pick one person to whom you will either speak words of light and mercy, or do acts of light and mercy. Report back to the group on the results of the past week.

PRAY TOGETHER

God, help us to not cut corners, looking for the easy way to our destination when we’re planning for our future. We often build our lives on the shifting sand of popularity and success. We trust the false gods of power and accumulation. Teach us how to believe that you are our firm foundation. Show us how to align our living to your dreams for us and your world. Together, help us to boldly declare that you are the cornerstone on which we can trust and depend. Help us to proclaim with our words and actions: “Jesus is alive and our sin is forgiven.” Amen!