

May 10, 2020

Sermon: I Peter 2:1-10 “*A Living Stone Sanctuary*”

Hi everyone! Happy Mother’s Day!

Today we celebrate Mother’s Day! Let us thank God for all of the moms in our lives. For the love that mothers give. It reminds us of Jesus’ loving sacrifice for us. Happy Mother’s Day! Thank you for giving us life and helping us grow in faith. May God bless you to be healthy and strong.

Do you remember the song “I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together?”

Today, we will talk about how we are the church together. Church’s not a building, but we are the living stone church together. In order for us to do that, we will be talking about stones, rocks, bricks.

So, let’s talk about stones!

In today’s scripture, Peter says. “*Come to the stone, and be a stone, and live inside those stones.*” How can we live inside the stones!

There was a boy who wished that he could be born as a stone. He thought that stones do not have any responsibilities. Nothing to do! Just lie around all day and no one will tell them what to do or make them move around. What a wonderful life, he thought.

Well, that is not the same reason that Jesus wants us to be a stone. This boy wanted to be a dead stone, doing nothing. But Jesus wants us to be a living stone.

Stones and rocks are used to describe strength in a person’s character. We often say, ‘solid as a rock’. **God wants us to worship with strong and solid faith. That’s what it means to be a living stone sanctuary.**

The living stone is Jesus Christ, who was rejected and crucified by his own people.

The bible says: “As you come to Jesus, the living stone – rejected by his own people but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a **spiritual house.**”

God wants us to be a living stone sanctuary, a temple, a church.

So again, what is a living stone sanctuary? We know that the church is not just a building. Church is where worship happens. When we say we are the church, we are saying that worship happens inside of us. We are both the building, our body being the building, and the worship that takes place inside that building, inside of our heart. We want to make worship take place in us.

And we want to build the church together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

God wants living stones who are active and grow in their faith. A living stone's capabilities are beyond measure and manifest themselves in countless ways, in so many ways.

Not every living stone is the same. Some may be loud and energetic. Others may be quieter and gentler. But every living stone is precious and important. Because if the church misses any one of its stones, it is not complete. Then the church's foundation will crumble when it is missing just one of its precious living stones. All pieces of living stones are needed to build a strong solid church.

God is calling us to be a living stone. A stone that is moving and alive.

"Let yourself be built," Peter says to us. We want to be built to our greatest potential so that God may use us.

Be built into something greater than what you believe you can be. God is still working on you. He is not done with you yet.

But some of us might say, "But I am not good enough". I might be a stumbling block. Yes, maybe some of us might be just stumbling blocks. But you know what? We don't want to become stumbling blocks. When we stumble, we stumble because we disobey.

The good news is that we can be better **than** stumbling blocks because **we have received God's mercy.**

As Peter says, all of you are chosen by God, by Christ, to be a part of God's plan, to build a better kingdom of God.

So, Come and **be alive!** Let us build the sanctuary together. We can all work together to build something bigger than ourselves. Because when we are together, we are stronger.

Peter tells us to be built into a spiritual house, offering spiritual sacrifices to God, through Jesus Christ.

We can help each other and encourage each other into a new way of living. By doing this, we become a living stone sanctuary.

So, we will not say “Oh I am not good enough, I’m not worthy of being a living stone! Because, we all are worthy of **being a sanctuary!** Because of God’s grace.

We have God’s mercy. So more we put aside our own desire **in praising God**, the more we will be able to grow as living stones. Let’s all go of our comfort zones, and limitations. To allow us to be more effective, complete and alive.

The temple was a place where people went, to understand **God’s plan of salvation.**

*And Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build the temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was **his body, his body being raised from the dead.** Jesus came from heaven to earth to live a perfect life, and he built **a new temple of the Lord**, made **with his unconditional love.** John 2:19-22*

God is love and God loves us. God loves all of us. And we were made in God’s image. And when Jesus came to this world, he brought God’s perfect love to us. He became the High Priest. He went around to minister to people in the temple and **to rebuild** each of us to have His character.

He heals us back into God’s image. And through this healing we become living stones built by Christ into His temple. God restores us by the Holy Spirit. He brings harmony between us and God, between you and me.

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of this holy sanctuary. And are the building blocks of His temple! Apostle Paul says, “you are not strangers, but the citizens of God’s kingdom. Jesus Christ himself is the chief cornerstone.

*In him **the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.** And in him you too, are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.* Ephesians 2:19

For we are God’s fellow workers; we are **God’s temple** ... and God’s Spirit lives in us.... for God’s temple is holy, and we are called to be holy by faith through God’s grace. (1 Cori 3:9, 16, 17)

After Jesus' victory over death, he ascended into heaven and is **preparing us** for His eternal sanctuary – the place where He dwells:

Revelation 3:11-12

*I am coming soon. **I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. And you will never have to leave it. No one will take away your crown.***

Do you see? **WE ARE THE TEMPLE.** We are the church! We are a part of the temple and that is why we never leave it! Because we are the temple.

This time of pandemic. is a good time to understand the true meaning of “I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together! And church is not a building.”

At this difficult time, we worship online. But we are still connected as a body of Christ. We are the church. The church building is now temporarily closed, but the church is not closed. Because, I am the church, you are the church and we are the church together. We build the church together, the spiritual house. Of course, the church building is important, that's where we gather as brothers and sisters in Christ as one body. **WE still worship. We still give. We still continue with our ministries.** Each of us being one precious stone work together to build the kingdom of God. **Amen!** Isn't that wonderful! God is bigger than our church building.

This is also a good time to practice Wesley's three simple rules: Do no harm to others, do good to others and stay in the love of God.

Yes, we stay at home most of the time, but as we do that, we will not do harm to others, do good to others and at the same time, we will stay in the love of God. And Together we are building a loving church. Soon enough we will be physically united and come together at the church to worship. Until then, we will continue to be the church on our own. We are all “A living stone sanctuary,” pure and holy. Be strong and remind yourself, “I am the church.” Through these times, we will mature and grow.

When we get back to the church building, together we will see that we keep our temple has been kept pure and holy. Our temple will not be filled with judgment and hatred. We will be living stones, not dead stones. We will be living stones that will reflect the image of God. As a body of Christ, as living stone sanctuaries, we will worship the Lord our God in spirit and in truth. Together, we make our sanctuaries beautiful.