

1 Peter 2:4-10

Nowadays there are lots of **buildings** which are going through changes. Some of the oldest buildings are being **torn down**, in order to make room for more modern and **more useful** structures. Others are receiving **facelifts** by remodeling their interior, exterior, or perhaps even both. That was the situation for the **spiritual** building mentioned in our text today. While in one sense that building remains much the **same**, since it is built on a solid **cornerstone** - on the other hand, the building is going through much **change**, as it is **enlarged** and **improved** day after day. Today let's look at **God's Extensive Building Project**, and as we oversee the project let's note especially its **beginnings**, its **foundation**, and its **superstructure**.

It is very clear that the building in our text is a **stone** building. Therefore, in order to investigate its beginnings we must venture into a stone **quarry**. What do we **find** there? **Rock** - and lots of it. **Rough, hard, cold** rock - rock which is not **pretty** at all in its **unrefined** state. Yet, we only need to think of stone **houses, churches, statues, or sculptures** in order to realize how beautiful quarried stone **can** be, once its **facing** has been **exposed**. All by itself the beauty is **there**, but it takes the hand of a skilled **craftsman** to **bring out** that beauty.

When God began His **Extensive Building Project**, He found a quarry **filled** with rough, hard, cold stone - stones which **didn't fit** into place. Our text says, "*At one time you were **not** a people, but now you are the people of **God**. At one time you were **not** shown mercy, but now you **have** been shown mercy*" God found us in our **rough** state - **lost** in sin, and **unwilling** to come out of our **darkness**. But by His **grace** and **mercy**, we became His **people**. He **transformed** us into individual **building blocks**, forming us into **beautiful** and **functional** stones.

Yet, a pile of beautiful stones is useless unless it is employed for a specific purpose, like a building project. **God's Building Project** is a temple - and this is where the stones would be used. However, first a foundation had to be laid. Just as the Jewish temple of the Old Testament was built on a solid rock, Mt. Zion - so also **God's Building Project** in the New Testament is established on an immovable stone. It's built on Christ. Peter called Him, "*the **Living Stone**,*" and God had spoken about Him hundreds of years earlier through the Prophet Isaiah. Peter paraphrased the words of the prophet in our text, but the actual words from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah were, "*Look, I am laying a **stone** in Zion as a **foundation**, a **tested** stone, a **precious** cornerstone to provide a **sure foundation**.*"

*Whoever believes will **not** be put to shame.*” God chose the picture of a **stone** to represent Christ, because a stone is **strong** and **stable**. It is certain to endure all kinds of assaults, including even the most severe weather. This is the kind of foundation God wanted for **His Building Project** - one which could not be **moved** - one which would never **waver**, even in the most **trying** circumstances.

For most of us, that strong and stable foundation was laid, at least in part, by our parents. In our early years, they brought us to the feet of our Savior to receive Baptism, and to participate in Lutheran Elementary School, Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School, as well as to worship regularly at weekly church services. We would not be the **people** we are today - and we would probably not have the **faith** we have today - if it had not been for the faithful and tireless efforts of those wonderful Christian **parents**, who assisted in laying the **foundation** for our faith.

But notice that the foundation of Christ doesn't have the same effect on **all** people. Peter said, *“The one who **believes** in him will certainly not be put to shame.”* Unfortunately, not all people **believe** in Jesus. Not all people **trust** this Rock for their safety and salvation. They would rather trust **something else** - perhaps their own **reason**, or maybe some other **person** - but **not** Christ! That reaction is a trait which immediately separates Christ from everything else - there is no such thing as **indifference** toward Him. There is no such thing as a **lukewarm** Christian. Either you are completely **for** Him, or you will completely **oppose** Him. And those who choose to **oppose** Christ will be put to **shame**, for all **other** foundations offer no real **support**. They are like building on **quicksand**.

Again St. Peter paraphrased the words of Isaiah. He wrote, *“The stone which the builders **rejected** has become the cornerstone, and, a stone over which they **stumble** and a rock over which they **fall**.”* The very thing which these men rejected as being **worthless** to them, is the same thing which has been **elevated** by God to the highest possible or most **important** position. Where does Jesus fit into **our** lives? Will He be our firm **foundation**, or will He be the **stone** over which we **stumble** and **fall**? Will we **see** Him for what He **is**, the **Savior** who purchased our souls with His own **blood**, and who **gives** us eternal life in **heaven** - or will we be **unable** to see Him, and consequently **trip** over Him and **fall** into everlasting **despair**? Let the person **beware** who continually finds Jesus is getting in his **way**! All too **soon**, and yet too **late**, he will realize that Jesus did not **block** his pathway, and to his **dismay** he will find himself in **hell** for all eternity.

By the grace of God, we are **different**. Peter wrote, *“But you are a **chosen** people, a **royal priesthood**, a **holy nation**, the people who are **God’s** own possession, so that you may **proclaim** the praises of him who called you out of **darkness** into his marvelous **light**.”* Each one of those phrases which describe the Holy Christian Church could easily have an entire sermon devoted to it. But today, we’ll have to settle for just a few words on each. First of all, we are a **chosen** people - chosen by **God** before creation - chosen **not** because of our own goodness (which can’t even **exist** apart from God) - chosen to **hear** God’s Word, and to **believe** it, and to **live** it. You and I have been **chosen** to spend both time and eternity in God’s **presence**.

Second, we are a **royal priesthood** - we are **royalty**. We are **rich** beyond compare because the **King**, Jesus Christ, is our **brother**. We are all **princes** and **princesses** both in **this** world, and in the **next** because of God’s great **love** for us. And not only are we **royalty**, but we are a royal **priesthood** - kings **and** priests all at the same time. You and I are in an **intimate** relationship with God. We have the blessed privilege of **talking** to Him - bringing our **requests** and **intercessions** to Him - at any **time**, and from any **place**. And we also have the privilege of bringing our **praise** and **offerings** to Him as royal priests within His house.

Third, we are a **holy** nation - a group of people whose sins have been covered with a robe of righteousness. We are holy through the merits of Jesus Christ alone. And finally, we are the people who are God’s own **possession**. We are **owned** by Him, because we have been **redeemed**, or **bought back** from a sinful existence which leads to hell, by the blood of His Son. Even though we were utterly worthless, God placed the highest value on us which the world has ever known. God’s own Son had to **die**, in order that we might **live**. And now we make up the **superstructure** in **God’s Extensive Building Project**. Peter said, *“As you come to him, the **Living Stone**, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, you **also**, like living stones, are being **built** as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through **Jesus Christ**.”*

Once again the Easter message is being proclaimed - because **Christ** lives, we **also** live. We are no longer **dead** in sin, but are **alive** by the working of the Holy Spirit in us. We are the **living** stones which God uses to build His holy **temple**. Paul explained it to the Ephesians very nicely when he said, *“So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household. You have been **built** on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the Cornerstone. In him*

*the whole building is **joined together** and **grows** into a holy temple in the Lord. In him **you too** are being **built** together into a dwelling place for **God** by the Spirit.”*

Yes, God laid the **foundation** for His temple, He provides the **living stones** for its **superstructure**, and then finally He lives **within** those stones to daily **strengthen** them and **keep** them united with Him forever. May we all continue to be **built up** in our faith, through the hearing of God’s **Word**, and through receiving the Lord’s **body** and **blood** in Holy Communion - and in this way, we will continue to remain **healthy, active, living** stones in **God’s Extensive Building Project**. Amen.