

“Living Stones”

Introduction

- Continue series, “Holy Cow, Living for God in an ungodly culture”
 - Acknowledge it’s challenging Living for God in today’s world; competing priorities; culture defining what is acceptable and what one needs to be ‘successful’
- Last Week: Holy Living is NOT Sin Management (trying harder)
 - Sin Management= outside in
 - Holiness = inside out
 - Jesus talked about this in many ways= not the things we put in our body that defile, but out of the heart
- Holy Living IS the ability to “love one another deeply, from the heart” resulting from time spent with Jesus & doing the stuff that Jesus did, which enables us to become more like Jesus

Tension: Instruction continues in 1 Peter 2 on the concept of holiness, specifically around the idea of being ‘living stones’ in service to God...stones don’t ‘live’ really, though, so what does that mean?

1 Peter 2 1-8

1 Peter 2:9-12

- Opening verses - Peter instructs people to get rid of the ‘bad’ (malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander), to crave the ‘good’ (spiritual milk and maturity), for you have “tasted that the Lord is good”
 - As continue to lean into holiness, these opening verses speak to the driving motivation behind striving to be holy: it’s the fact that those in Christ have “tasted (and seen) that the Lord is good...”
 - life WITH Jesus is a million times better than life WITHOUT Jesus
 - And as stated in Vs. 9 - God has “called us out of darkness into his wonderful light”, meaning...
 - Numerous metaphors for God’s people throughout today’s passage: “Royal Priesthood” “Holy Nation”, “Chosen People”, but again, the one we want to lean into today is “Living Stones”

Living Stones - in order to understand, we need to first trace back a little bit and look at how ‘the presence of God’ resided with God’s people throughout the Bible

- OT = presence of the Lord (tabernacle, ark, Temple)
- NT=living stone, us, oikos, collective group
- Hewned
- Living Stones - stones prepared for Temple
 - Set Cornerstone (everything tied into it) - people tasked with building the Kingdom, rejected the One upon whom it all depends (not gonna work without the cornerstone!)
 - Ray Vanderlann - Building of the Temple
 - Stones Hewn at quarry and numbered for a particular placement
 - God hewns us; shapes us, molds us, chisels us into a perfect shape to be counted amongst the
- Sound glorious; I don’t feel like a well-shaped, hewn, perfected rock; feel broken, misshapen, far-from perfect, going to point at me and say we ‘need to take out that reject one there (no comment) and replace it’
 - Grace - smooths out the edges, enables us to fit and do our ‘job’ despite our weaknesses and imperfection
 - God’s grace is the mortar that binds us all together

- Imperfections and all, We are the people of God!
- Becoming living stones individually and coming together collectively we are becoming the spiritual house of God; God's presence is in the world today is in God's people today; God's LIVING STONES! We need to act like it!

Not gonna learn much from a stone - Bible calls us 'LIVING' stones, and while there may be some life force in rocks (maybe?), stones are way too passive...

What sets you apart as Living Stones:

- **Living Stones are precious to God; You are Precious to God! [Identity]**
 - Jesus precious to God; "precious":
 - Occurs only 5 times in NT, twice here in 1 Peter 2
 - Luke 7:2 - slave 'highly regarded' by centurion
 - Luke 14 - more distinguished, like a seat of honor at a wedding
 - Philippians 2:29 - worthy of bestowing honor
 - If Jesus so precious to God, why was Jesus sent to die why?
 - Because we are precious to God; of great value; highly regarded, worthy of honor
- **You are glory-inducing instruments of God [You bring God glory]; Like a stone marker, You make a way for the presence of God to be recognized and discovered (like a Temple stone...)**
 - **Verse 12: We are to** "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong [Doing evil; an evil-doer, bad-doer; a criminal - lots of suspicion around Xnty especially because they would often meet before daylight, and surrounding the Lord's Supper - that Christians were actually eating flesh and drinking blood (rumors that it was the blood of children); also charges against Christians regarding their lack of purity...malice,deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander.], they may see your good [virtuous] deeds and glorify [to render glorious] God on the day he visits us." [inspects us]
 - 'Deeds' are not needed for salvation (can't earn it)
 - Good 'Deeds' flow out of relationship and love and gratitude for what the Lord has done for us
 - Good deeds - our acts and conduct - as well as deeds of power (healing/deliverance) through the work of the Holy Spirit, result in people recognizing God is present, and to people being open, and even drawn towards, Jesus; the end result is glory (God is glorified)
 - Example: Debbie Cornelison (Outpost) and all she did (deeds) that made a way for the Africa trip and people far and wide (those in Africa, those who went on the trip, those with an opportunity to give and pray) to experience God's presence and God's blessing - God was glorified!
 - Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV):
 - See your deeds, and give glory to God
 - See how you react in certain situations = can only be God
 - God always gets the glory, now and in the age to come
 - **You ARE glory-inducing instruments of God**

The rest of the Scripture verses in 1 Peter 2 are instructive as to some of the ways we can live practically as Living Stones that will draw people to the Light which is Jesus; Things to keep in mind in whatever context you find yourself and around whomever you find yourself - believers, and especially, yet-to-be believers

From verses 13-25 - instead of reading, going to give you the bullets:

- Submit yourselves to every human authority...
- Do good...
- Live as God's slaves...
- Show proper respect to everyone...
- Fear God...
- Endure suffering while doing good (commendable before God)...

You are not just Living Stones; You are 'significant' stones

- You are precious; You bring God glory; You draw people to the Light that is Jesus! People are watching
- You play a SIGNIFICANT part in the building of not a Temple or just a church, but God's Kingdom
 - May not feel precious, significant, or useful, but like we said before, God's grace smooths out the rough places and enables us to be living stones in the locations in which we are placed; like the placement of the stones of the Temple was not random; your location/placement is not random - God has you where you are for a purpose - a living stone, a Temple, one full of the presence of God
 - Claim it! Act like it!

As followers of Christ and "Living Stones" we all possess 3 things: an identity, a calling, and an assignment.

1. Our identity is the same and is never-changing, which is that we are all children of God. Nothing we've ever done or ever will do can take that truth away. Our identity is what we should rest in and have hope because of.

2. Our calling is what makes me uniquely me and you uniquely you. We can think of it as a way to emphasize the message this morning. Each living stone is different in shape and perfectly formed to fulfill a specific task. This calling is the way God made you. Your personality, your gifts, and your passions that God has bestowed upon you work together to form your unique calling. Your calling in this sense is more general; you may think your calling is simply spreading joy to others, or bringing people peace and comfort in times of need, or sharing the gospel with others, or maybe being bold and standing up for what's right, or leading, or maybe even following who have been called to lead is actually your calling, etc... The cool thing is that our calling matures and changes with us as we grow closer to the Lord. Your ability to be the living stone God has called you to be reveals itself more and more as you seek Him.

3. Our assignment is the way in which God uses our "calling" to fulfill His purpose in our lives. It's the way by which we become vessels for the Kingdom of God and live out that calling He equipped us with. It's important to understand and embrace the fact that our assignments can regularly change. Your assignment changing doesn't mean your calling does. It just means the "where" or the "when" or the "how" or the "to who" might change. It requires faith, selflessness, listening ears, and discipline to stay true to our assignment! However, when we listen and obey, the Lord blesses us just like He says in Luke 11:28!

Additionally, it is critical for people to understand that WHO we are is totally defined by our identity as children of God... NOT our calling or assignment. People who mistakenly rest more on their calling and successes or failures in their "assignments" often get trapped in a rut of some kind or another.... our identity should be at the forefront of it all

SO, in the places and spaces in which God has placed us, how will you be a Living Stone this week?