

2A / Parish Retreat 2018: Following Jesus in a World that Doesn't

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[0 : 00] Come to me, Jesus says. Come to me if you're weary, heavily burdened. Be a reminder. I've just eaten dinner. I feel pretty full. I imagine you do too.

So we might do a little more kinesthetic teaching than perhaps we're used to. I'm going to start by reading God's Word. If it would be helpful to you, and I suspect it would, perhaps we should stand for God's Word.

I'm continuing in 1 Peter, so we're at chapter 2, and we're beginning at verse 4. And we're reading to verse 12.

This is God's Word for you. As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen, precious.

You yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[1 : 20] For it stands in Scripture, behold, I'm laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen, precious. Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.

For the honor is for you who believe. But for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.

They stumble because they disobeyed the Word, as they were destined to. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you're God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You can be seated. Helpful to keep your Bible open.

[2 : 40] I'm sorry. Close mic. I have it written down. What is God doing in the church today?

You ever ask yourself that question? What's the plan? Does He see what's happening in the church today? Who's driving this thing?

Our society is seemingly progressing beyond traditional biblical faith. People feel our culture is now liberating itself from the constricting confines of Christianity.

And in this evolution, they feel there's no longer any room for religion and rules. So is God still at work through His church in Canada?

And if so, why does it feel like this plan is failing? Like the gates of hell are seemingly pervading?

[3 : 41] Tonight we look to answer two questions from our text. One. What is God doing? What's the plan?

Two. What should we do? How can we participate? What? What? So first big question.

What is God doing? Our passage tonight, perhaps the climax of 1 Peter, tells us the great unseen plan of God for His church.

This text zooms out from our daily challenges to show us in God's great story where we fit and what He's doing in our time.

And the entire narrative I just read, as perhaps you would expect, hinges on Jesus Christ and on what He came to do. And most Christians would say, and I imagine you would say too, that Jesus Christ came to die to forgive our sins so that when we die, we get to go to heaven.

[4 : 44] Individual forgiveness. Justification. Promised salvation. And that's true. Jesus tells us in Luke 19, verse 10, that He came to seek and to save the lost, which is all of us.

But that's not all Jesus came to do. That is not our entire gospel. Jesus came to earth to do more than just save some people and forgive their sins and transport them up to heaven when they die. Forgiveness and salvation are only a part of God's bigger plan. And that's what our text is all about. So look at how our passage starts in verse 4. As you come to Him.

That'd be a really good sermon series. I understand St. John's is doing that sermon series. It was a very clever joke.

It deserved much more laughter. Unbelievable. As you come to Him.

[5 : 55] Amen. Everything Peter is about to say. All the wonderful promises, all the sweeping revelations about God's master plan are useless if you do not first come to Jesus.

Last year there's a major historic gathering of Anglicans from all over the world. They converged in Chicago. And at the meeting an archbishop from Nigeria stood up. He's the spiritual leader of 18 million Christians.

And he said in his sermon, God did not save you to sit in a pew. The goal of our faith is not solely people in pews.

God is calling you and me to so much more than sitting in an uncomfortable chair for an hour a week and trying to get others to join us. Our faith is not merely listening and agreeing to a set of statements.

It isn't merely cognitive, where you hear a story and you believe in it and then poof, you're saved, mission accomplished, on to the next heathen. Our faith is not merely mental assent.

[6 : 58] It involves preparing your minds for action. Our faith must be active. Faith requires action.

As you come to him. The Christian faith is not solely about salvation. Our own Jim Packer famously wrote, The goal of our faith is not just to know about God.

It's to know God. To experience God's presence and God's power in your life. Our faith requires participation. It demands action.

It commands that we come to him. To be a Christian, you must follow Jesus. And to follow Jesus, you must come to him.

If you are unwilling to actively draw near to Christ, then there is nothing he can do for you. Our own brilliant Bruce Heinemarsch wrote a book last year on early evangelicalism, a tradition that we are a part of.

[8 : 09] And he begins by defining an evangelical centrally as someone who believes that through faith, you can experience the presence of God today. That is the core belief that birthed the evangelical movement.

That you can know God today. Our faith involves the expectation to experience the life of God in the soul of man.

As you come to him. As you come to him, you experience intimacy with the Almighty. Now continuing in verse 4. Here is God's plan.

As you come to him. As you come to him. A living stone. Rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious.

You yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house. To be a holy priesthood. To offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[9 : 10] Excuse me. This is God's master plan. This is what happens when you come to Jesus. Here is the climax of creation. The fulfillment of salvation.

The purpose of our redemption. Jesus came to build. To break ground. To create. God is doing a work of creation.

He's constructing a building. That's the plan. That's the goal of Jesus' universal rescue mission. That he inaugurated. God will build his home on earth.

And nothing in all of eternity will prevail against it. And we're told three things about God's plan. The blueprints. The plans. Of God's building.

Firstly, the foundation. We're still in verse four. Jesus is the living stone. Now what does that mean? And to tell us, Peter in verses six to eight points to earlier chapters in God's story.

[10 : 13] Namely the passages of the Old Testament. Where through the lips of prophets and kings. God talks about a cornerstone. A foundation stone. That he's bringing into the world. So to understand who Jesus is.

And what it means that he's the living stone. We need to look at the Old Testament. Which is exactly what Peter does. We're told in verse six. From the earlier words of God.

That a stone will be laid in Zion. In Jerusalem. And that this stone is chosen by God. And precious to him. We're told the stone is the cornerstone. The foundation stone. On which all the stones are going to rest and rely.

And whoever builds their life upon this stone. Will never be put to shame. And then God tells us something shocking. In verse seven. Despite this stone being chosen by God.

And precious to him. It will be rejected by humanity. God's own people. Who are meant to be the builders of God's house. Will trip over.

[11:12] The precious living stone. That God has hand selected. The builders God has appointed. Will reject the cornerstone. That God has provided. And of course they did.

The established Jewish religion. Rejected and killed Jesus. Despite his identity as the son of God. And God's chosen king. And in the same way our culture trips over Jesus.

His life and his teaching. Cause our world to fall flat on our faces. Because he reveals in us our sin. And our shame. And our selfishness. Whoever we are.

However great our reputation. Or important our title. Jesus identifies us. As a sinner. And Jesus gets in the way. Of the modern world.

Living our lives our way. Because he shows how we are broken. And we are empty. And how we desperately need help. We need a savior. We need a good shepherd. To lead us out of the valley of death.

[12:11] Toward green pasture and still water. And the Lord's own table. Jesus reveals our vulnerability. How our life is a house of cards.

A city built on sand. You and me and our world. Hates admitting that fundamentally we're weak. We're selfish. And we're incapable of doing anything about it.

So we reject Jesus. We reject God's precious. Chosen stone. Jesus is discarded by humanity. He is discarded by the world. Despite being chosen by God. This precious pre-planned. Divinely provided cornerstone. For God's eternal home. Has been rejected by the builders.

That God has chosen. His plan seems in total ruins. Doesn't it? His Messiah. Has been murdered. But then Peter adds something.

[13:10] Completely unique to his letter. He doesn't just call Jesus a stone. Or even God's cornerstone. As the Old Testament authors do. He calls him.

The living stone. Peter adds the adjective. Living. And he does this because Peter knows something.

And now he gives his life. To share this incredible news. He is risen. The stone is living. Jesus is alive. Although rejected.

Although discarded. Although dead. He is risen. Even if the world today rejects Jesus and his message. It does not change the reality that Jesus is alive. Right now. Today. The construction in God's house is not halted.

Because the cornerstone has been thrown away. Construction continues. Because the stone is alive. Now. It's back. It's not discarded. And therefore useless.

[14:09] As people suppose. God has retrieved him from death. Jesus is the living stone. Rejected by man. But precious to God.

And he remains the cornerstone. Of the house. God is building. That's the first thing. Jesus is the living stone of this house. And before we move on to number two.

I want to take a moment to notice what is not said in this passage. The author of this letter is a man who goes by the name Peter.

Peter. That is not his birth name. His parents named him Cephas. Peter is the name he was given by Jesus. Peter is being redeemed.

And therefore he's recreated. And he now has a new identity in Christ. Peter. And Peter of course. You know. Means rock. Or stone. In Matthew 16.

[15:05] When Peter confesses that Jesus is God's chosen Messiah. Jesus declares. No longer are you Cephas. You are Peter. Petros. Stone. Rock. And on this rock.

I will build my church. Do you now see what's missing in Peter's letter? He doesn't mention himself. Now if Peter is the rock.

Upon which Jesus is going to build his church. Why doesn't he reference himself here? Why doesn't Peter pull rank. And say I am the stone. Remember.

Upon which Jesus is building his church. That's not what Peter says. I think fundamentally. Because I don't think it's what Peter believes. Peter does not see himself. As the stone. Upon which the church is built. He sees Jesus. Our risen king. As the living stone. The corner stone. In his own experience.

[16:06] And in God's word. So what do we do with that text in Matthew? I think it's safe to conclude that Jesus is saying. You are Peter.

Rock. And on your confession that I am the Christ. On that declaration of faith. I will build my church. And the gates of hell will never prevail against it.

I don't build my church on you. Peter. Peter. I build it on your faith. It's built on me. And I rename you Peter. So that people will forever see you.

As a sign. That points to the necessity. Of faith. Of declaring that Jesus is the Christ. Faith is what the church is built with. With Jesus.

As the cornerstone. Friends. This is crucial for us. The eternal temple of God is not built on Peter. But on Christ. And we join the building.

[17:04] When we confess that Jesus is Lord. Through faith. We are united with Christ and his church. Like Peter. We too are made Peters. We are made stones.

When we declare that Jesus is Lord. The son of the living God. And very conveniently for my argument. If you don't believe me. That's exactly what Peter says next. This is the second thing we learn.

About the blueprints in God's master plan. This is in verse 5. As we come to Jesus. As we come to him. The living stone. We also become living stones.

We become Peters. Rocks. As you come to him. The living stone. Like Peter. You're made into living stones. You're placed into the building. That Jesus has founded.

You are intimately. Inseparably. Connected to Jesus. When you come to him. And declare that he is the Christ. And more than that. When you come to Christ. You're transformed into his image.

[18:06] As you come to him. You are remade. You are recreated. To be like him. As he is a living stone. We too now become living stones. When we draw near to him.

When we come to Christ. We become like him. I have seen this happen. In the most wonderful ways. To the most despicable people.

Perhaps you have to. As you come to him. We become living stones. Like he is a living stone. We are transformed. To become like him.

When we draw close to him. And therefore. We take on all of his attributes. Just like Jesus is precious. We become precious. Just like Jesus is chosen by God.

So too. We are chosen. We are now children of God. Because Jesus is God's only begotten son. We are living. Because he is alive.

[19:06] If we come to him. We will never die. We become living stones. Like him. The living stone. Drawing close to Jesus. Being remade like him. Means you share.

In his resurrected. Eternal life. Now this all sounds wonderful. But the reality is. There's a dark side. To this transformation as well. Because. As we become like him.

It also means. That as Jesus was rejected. By humanity. We will be rejected. As people trip over Jesus. They will now trip over us.

But despite this. If we trust him. If we build our life upon him. Then we will not be put to shame. We will be honored. As he is honored. We will be glorified.

As he is glorified. We will reign. We will reign. With him. So what is God's plan? The plan is to construct. A building. And Jesus is the living stone.

[20:05] And as we come to him. We too are made. Into living stones. And then lastly. Thirdly. In verse five. The living stones together. Are being built up. To form. A spiritual.

House. This is really what I'm getting at here. This is the answer. To what God is doing. This is the answer. To where we find our hope. With St. John's.

What God. Has started. In the church. And will finish. We are told that God. Is taking us. He is uniting us. To Christ. He is transforming us.

Into his image. And he is building us up. To make a spiritual home. Where he will live. And will be known. And enjoyed. And worshipped. For all eternity. That is the great goal.

Of God's grace. Unity with him. Forever. To worship God. And enjoy him. Forever. To come to him. And to ensure that we do.

[21 : 04] God came to us. And he came to lay the foundation. For his eternal home. Jesus. The living cornerstone. And to invite all of us. To come to him. And to be built.

Around him. And did you know this? God's building requires. More than just you and Jesus. As we. Come to him. We. Collectively. Are made into an eternal. Spiritual. Home. A single stone. On its own.

Is worthless. Even two stones. Put together. Can never form. A building. What is needed. Is a collection of stones. Together. To form a house.

God has placed Jesus. The living stone. In our midst. As the first stone. In the cornerstone. Of his home. And as we together. Come to him. God takes us all. Collectively.

[22 : 01] And uses us. Together. To build the rest. Of his structure. Look at how intimate. A picture. Peter is painting. Of our relationship. To both Jesus. And one another.

As a brick. Is laid next to a brick. To make a wall. So we are. Collectively. Placed next to Christ. To make God's temple. And to be the priests. Therein. Without Jesus.

The whole building. Will fall down. We see this today. Churches. Who reject Jesus. Who reject his words. Or his kingship. Or reject that he is alive.

Fall. Down. Churches have rejected Jesus. In order to capitulate. To the social pressures. Of a secular culture. But there can be no.

Spiritual house. Without Jesus. As the cornerstone. That house. Will not last forever. Now additionally. There can't be a house.

[22 : 59] Without Jesus. There also can't be a house. Without one another. You can't be in fellowship. With Jesus. If you're not in fellowship. With other believers. You can't call yourself.

A Christian. If you reject. Christ's church. You can't. Amputate yourself. From the body of Christ. And expect to survive. Because you're now. Disconnected from the head.

God. God. God. This seems harsh. That's what Peter's saying. We collectively. Are being placed by God. To form his eternal dwelling.

His home. And his home. Is built upon Christ. He's the cornerstone. And it's made of living stones. Of followers of Jesus. Who collectively. In communion with one another. In Jesus. Form this structure.

As we approach Jesus. He takes us. And he remakes us. To be the very habitation of God. God's dwelling. Is now with man.

[23 : 54] Because God. Has made his home. God now lives with. And within his people. We experience the presence of God today. Because God is with us.

And within us. We are his temple. His house. Of the Holy Spirit. So God. Peter's main point. To encourage Christians. Who are following Jesus.

In a world that isn't. Is this. God's great purpose. Revealed in Jesus. And alluded to. Throughout scripture. Is to create. An eternal temple.

A spiritual house. A holy city. Where God dwells. With. And within us. Forever. So what is God doing on earth?

What's the plan? God is building. A spiritual house. With Jesus. As the living stone. Upon which it's built. And everyone. Who comes to him.

[24 : 48] Is remade. To be like him. We collectively. In union. With Christ. And one another. Become God's. Eternal home. To bring his kingdom. Upon the earth.

That's God's plan. Unfortunately. That feels like. The end of the talk. Doesn't it? It isn't. Shoot. I didn't plan that better.

If you want to stretch right now. Or stand up. I feel like a lot of you are still feeling dinner pretty heavy. So if you want to stand up. Wiggle around. High five the person next to you. Do a liturgical dance.

All right. ■■■■■■■■ora. Mountain Amanda■■■■ neighborhood. I appreciate your time! Whoops! Where happens? Very hard? I appreciate your surgery. Alternatively, you are feeling guided or that one. It's having a beard over a career. You'd better not have a beard. Thanks.

Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Oh, bye-bye.

[25 : 49] Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye.