United!

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Preacher: John Winter

[0:00] I've got a talk in two parts, not really a sermon, it's two illustrations that would normally make a part of a sermon. Around the theme of...

We are Leeds, we are Leeds, we are Leeds.
We are Leeds, we are Leeds, we are Leeds. We are Leeds. We are Leeds. you can always guarantee that when you bring football into it you will get disunity now when you think about it when you think about it football is quite important isn't it to an awful lot of people it's so important that liverpool are currently trying to steal our center forward for 110 million pounds it's not enough we need at least 500 million for one leg we're not going to get that so people obviously think football is an important thing and you can see that Andy and I well we have a bit of a disagreement about which united is the best united and if you are manchester united fans just a little bit of a rant here you're not the only united in the country whatever the papers and the bbc say amen absolutely preach it you see you could have a name like manchester city or tottenham hotspur imagine hotspur or glasgow rangers or heart of midlothian what about that midlothian or brighton and hove albion or hamilton academicals or you could be so rubbish that you might not even have a second name like sunderland but what brings newcastle united and leeds united together is the word united and that's going to be the theme of our talks today we're going to think about how the believer is united to christ and therefore united to one another in a wonderful passage i'm going to read to you now from 1 peter chapter 2 so if you've got a bible 1 peter chapter 2 we're going to read from verse 4 to verse 12 as you come to him that is to jesus the living stone rejected by men but chosen by god and precious to him you also like living stones isn't that interesting jesus is a living stone and when we come into our relationship with jesus when we are united to jesus we become living stones that's great isn't it you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to jesus christ sorry acceptable to god through jesus christ for in scripture it says see i lay a stone in zion a chosen and precious cornerstone and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame now to you who believe this stone is precious but to those who do not believe the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone and a stone that causes men to stumble and rock that makes them fall they stumble because they disobey the message which is also what they were destined for but you are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation a people belonging to god that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light once you were not a people but now you are the people of god once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy dear friends i urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong they may see your good deeds and glorify god on the day he visits us united a living stone become living stones now here is my temple it's good isn't it it's made of megabricks now you may have heard of lego you may even have heard of duplore but i guarantee you've probably never heard of megablocks sorry megablocks it's probably a cheap version from somewhere else but we got them in sunday school and i said to lisa i need a temple i have to build a temple out of duplore she said we've got just the thing in church and so yesterday while i was doing the cleaning here in church she made a megablock temple put a nice red cross on she said do you like it i said yes um i promised i wouldn't tell this joe but you shouldn't believe me it says no to six no to six so she did well it took her five and a half minutes really good job that was a joke wasted joke so i like to temple but i thought actually i prefer this lovely yellow block this yellow block reminds me of me yeah you can see the you can see the resemblance it's kind of square it's kind of round at the same time it's a bit odd it's kind of tough yeah i could stand on that wouldn't break it it's it's and it's my colour isn't it yellow i mean you often see me in yellow don't you i want to be a yellow brick i want to stand out i want to be different i don't

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want to be part of the temple i'm asserting my independence as a mega block i'm standing on my own two feet i'm my own boss my destiny is in my hands well that's one way of thinking about the christian life or i can be part of this temple indeed i could be there at the bottom or this is dangerous i could be there at the top it doesn't really matter where i am in the temple what matters is i'm just part of something that jesus is building i'm one stone among many you as living stones he says are being built into a spiritual house now you'll know that paul says um or perhaps you know that paul says in ephesians 1 he says jesus is the chief cornerstone sorry chapter 2 of ephesians jesus is the chief cornerstone in him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple to the lord and in him you are being built together to become a dwelling place in which god lives by his spirit now a word about living stones why is it called a living stone it's called a living stone because it's natural in its place if you think of people who build dry stone walls they get hold of a stone and they shape that stone for its particular place and that stone is vital to keep the whole of the wall together

with jesus being the chief cornerstone he holds everything else in place he is the one that the whole building depends upon but you and i who belong to jesus as we're united to jesus by faith in him we become part of that temple we are also living stones that are being built into a spiritual house to be a place that god dwells by his spirit that's tremendous isn't it god has built is built in a holy place and he wants each one of us to be part of that what a great privilege it is to be living stones not for us to stand out but for us together to be part of something that god is building in the world second half coming up the banner actually the banner there is just about to point out to me that it is living stones being built into a spiritual house i didn't remember it was there but it was there and i nearly tripped that would have given you a laugh wouldn't it so there is my temple my living stones and i'm somewhere in there you're somewhere in there and that's wonderful but we are not meant to stand out jesus is meant to stand out peter says to you who believe he is precious and he is called a living stone precious to god and and peter is contrasting the way the church views jesus and the way the world views jesus the church views jesus as precious and chosen by god the world rejects jesus and crucifies him the living stone became a stone of stumbling for some people who don't love the name of jesus but they reject the name of jesus but for those who love the name of jesus he is precious and we are part of god's family part of his chosen possession and we are accepted in him we are precious because of him and we shine and our glory is seen in the world because of jesus in us so let me introduce you to my work gloves look at them they are impressive aren't they very clean josh still clean still clean one confession i think they are joshes second confession he has never wore them but i found them in a bag and i needed a pair of work gloves because i was doing some work some manual labor in the garden and uh and i was working hard and i got them a bit mucky they're good gloves aren't they they're well made well stitched yeah they've been made for a purpose they're really really very very good gloves they're made to work so gloves pick up that bible come on gloves pick up the bible what's wrong with the gloves why won't the gloves pick up the bible they're well made they're well stitched together they're robust they were made for a purpose of picking things up silly gloves pick up the bible i think we're going to have to encourage these gloves we're going to have to help them out well they're in church so we'll give them a bit of discipling we'll we'll share some scripture with them to remind them of their purpose gloves

[12:28] ephesians chapter 2 verse 10 we are god's workmanship created in christ jesus to do good works i'm going to say that again we are god's workmanship created made by god to do good works right gloves pick up that bible useless i'm going to take them back theological training is not going to make the gloves pick up the bible i'll tell you what we've got to give them some encouragement they're discouraged they're down things have been hard let's encourage the gloves let's encourage the gloves come on gloves everybody clap come on gloves pick up the bible no encouraging speak the name of jesus still not going to work what's happening we've got to give the gloves some fellowship when we get the gloves in the family make them feel part of the fellowship they'll pick up the bible okay great that's fine i brought some gloves there you go some more gloves more gloves i like black or a hat new castle hat more gloves more gloves surely in the presence of all of these gloves the gloves will pick up the bible it's not worked so we've given fellowship we've given encouragement we've given discipleship training we've encouraged them to memorize a bit of scripture i tell you the problem with these gloves they're not committed enough we try to encourage them as best we can but now we're going to have to just remind them of their commitments you're a member church member gloves you should be picking up that bible what am i going to do these gloves have been well made they've been designed for a purpose why can't they pick up the bible

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do you know you've got to put your hands in them tony you've been well discipled lad now then now then now then once you put your hand in it's easy for the gloves to pick up the bible what it needed was a living hand in the glove so that it could do the work that it was called to do that's the secret of the christian life really the secret of the christian life is very simple christ in us when he is in us when he lives in us we are able to do what we cannot do next slide please you should have been shown a picture of the gloves really carry on carry on done that one that one yeah they're nice mine are nicer but they're nice next slide please there's a reminder here in scripture that we are united together by the holy spirit through our union with jesus and as the holy spirit fills us and enables us then we can express our commitment to one another to serve him and to love one another next slide please jesus in john 15 says i am the vine you are the branches if a man remains in me and i in him he will bear much fruit but notice what it says apart from me you can do nothing without jesus we are just lifeless

gloves but as jesus is in us through his holy spirit we are enabled to do the works that god called us to do to fulfill the purpose that god created us for to do good works that glorify our father in heaven philippians 1 6 he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of christ jesus notice he who began a good work in you will complete it it's not me it's him in me and then philippians 4 13 i can do everything everything through him who gives me strength i can't do it without him but i can do everything with him next slide please now we have the capacity to do the work of god we might even have the desire to do the work of god but we can't do the work of god without christ in us so does that mean we're just impassive no god calls us to work for him together in unity with one another and paul says in ephesians 4 1-4 i urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received be completely humble and gentle be patient bearing with one another in love make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace why because there is one body and one spirit just as you were called to one hope when you were called one lord one faith one baptism one god and father of all who is over all and through all and in all and this is where we connect the two illustrations god doesn't want a single brick to stand out in the church he has created a church in which we are all living stones together and where we no longer see each other but we see jesus for he is the cornerstone precious to god we can't do that by our own effort we can only do that as christ is in us as his power is revealed in us and expressed through us and then we can live by his power together in union with god and with one another next slide please so the lesson for us to learn is that jesus is everything to you who believe he is precious you can trip over him and lots of people do or you can believe in him and find salvation when jesus was speaking to his disciples in the final week of his ministry he said this a new command i give you love one another as i have loved you so you must love one another by this notice all men will know that you are my disciples if you have loved one for another and i read this in a commentary i was looking at in the 1960s when christian folk music was becoming popular we often sung a song that reported the phrase and they'll know you are christians by our love and they'll know we are christians rather by our love not by the size of our buildings not by the frequency of our attendance not by the multiplicity of religious duties we observe not by ostentation of our
public worship as morgan puts it the measure in which christian people fall in love to each other is the measure in which the world does not believe sorry i'll say that again the measure in which christian people fall in love to each other is the measure in which the world does not believe in them or their christianity it is the final test of discipleship according to jesus christ is precious but christ is vital for us to become the living stones that god wants to be and when christ is in us he makes possible what human beings cannot do he is precious he gets the glory but the wonderful thing is he shares it 1 peter 2 verse 9 says you are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation a people belonging to god that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light once you were not a people but now you are the people of god once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy what a privilege it is to be a living stone in
Jesus

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