

Sermon followed by Service - Nov 10, 2024 1 Peter 2:4-10

Let's start with a set of exercises. We'll start easy. Let down your smile; cross your arms. Easy enough, isn't it? Let's try something a bit harder. Keep your smile down; hold out your arms like this, hands up, palms out. Now something that takes a bit more effort. Keep your smile down; one arm out, hand shaped into a pointer, slowly moving back and forth, and say with me: "You should do it; they should do it; you should do it; they should do it." Just one more. You can let your smile, your God-smile, come back. Raise one arm, hand open, fingers spread wide. That's it. Which one felt the easiest? Probably the first, crossing your arms. Which felt the best? I'm guessing that last one with God's smile.

What does that have to do with our lesson today? Let me show you.

Do you ever feel forgotten or pushed off? Other people get the attention you want; you get ignored. Other people get treated special, but you get taken for granted. Ever feel like nothing more than a body taking up space, getting in the way, a bother to the people around you? Never special, just existing? Our lesson has an answer for that (hand up!).

Do you ever feel bored with life? I don't mean tired bored; I mean "what's the point" bored. You come to school, you go to work. Day after day, you do your work; you do your chores. But no matter what you do, you can never do enough - always more

to do, always better to do. Ever wonder, “What’s the point of life?” Our lesson has an answer for that (hand up!).

When you see other people feeling forgotten and hurt, do you ever think, “Somebody needs to do something”? When you see evil at work, do you ever think, “Somebody needs to do something”? When you hear Christ calling for someone to do something, do you ever think, “He’s right; somebody needs to do something”? Our lesson has an answer for that (hand up!).

The answer is “you!” Not you alone, but you with Jesus!

You weren’t always the answer or even part of the answer. There was a time when we were just part of the problem. If you’ve ever thought, “I’m a nobody,” or “My life is pointless,” there was a time that was true. Peter says, “**Once you were not a people.**” Ever been treated like that? Like a nobody, a number, nothing more than a thing? Have you ever treated somebody else that way?” Why? Why would we treat somebody like a nobody? Perhaps because they can’t get anything right; they always mess things up for us. Perhaps because they aren’t our kind of people? If that’s why we might treat other people as nobodies ... think about it - that’s the way we were before God. What blessing has God given us - food, family, fun - that we haven’t soiled with sin? What responsibility has God given us - family, family devotions - that we haven’t in some way complained about, tried to avoid, and soiled with sin. Our sin made us good for nothing, nobodies. God would have had every right to treat us as nobodies. As Peter said, “**Once you were not a people.**”

That's the way some people treat Jesus, isn't it? They look at what Jesus is about, what he says, what he offers; and they judge Jesus to be a nobody and reject him. And it's not just they and them who treat Jesus that way, is it? When Jesus says things we don't like, when Jesus calls us to do things we don't want to do, when Jesus doesn't do his thing our way, there have been times we've done the same thing and we've treated Jesus as a nobody, haven't we?

And then what? When people decide Jesus doesn't suit their thinking; when they toss Jesus off to the side; they don't get too far. Jesus becomes **“a stone over which they stumble and a rock over which they fall.”** Peter isn't talking about a stubbed toe or scraped-up hands and knees. Those who reject Jesus will fall out of God's favor; as they reject God, they will be rejected by God. In his second letter, Peter tells us there is a place for that; God calls it hell.

But we aren't here today to suit ourselves; we're here because of Jesus, to build on Jesus. God hasn't given us Jesus to trip us up; he's set Jesus before us to be our rock-solid Savior. Peter pulls out his Old Testament; in Isaiah the LORD 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.”** When a stone-mason is building a wall, he needs a stone that is just right, it can't be cracked; it can't crumble. When God set out to build his church he needed the perfect cornerstone, a stone what wouldn't crack or crumble, a stone that would set a straight and solid foundation for his church. He chose Jesus.

And whoever builds on Jesus will never be put to shame. This world might try to knock you down, but when you are built on Jesus, your foundation won't crumble or crack. This life might seem to be going nowhere fast, but when you are built on Jesus your life won't go off the wrong way; he'll keep you set with God for heaven. This world might treat you as a nobody, but when you are built on Jesus you aren't part of this world's outhouse, you are built into God's house. God didn't set Jesus before you to trip you; but God chose Jesus to be the building stone, the cornerstone that sets the foundation for God's house and for you in God's house.

And who are you? You aren't somebody tossed away by God. With Jesus, Peter says, **“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession 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.”** This world might forget you, treat you like a nobody, ignore you, take you for granted, and walk on by. But you are not forgotten – God chose you. You aren't here by chance, you aren't here by your choice; but God chose you. For what? to be his people, his children. Why you? It wasn't just the luck of the draw; God chose you because he wanted you. God chose you because he loves you; God chose you to save you and bless you. God chose you to be someone special; God chose you to do something special.

God has chosen you to be his royal priesthood. As priest's of the king, you get to stand before God, you get to talk with God, you get to bring gifts to God and know that your gifts make

God smile. And as priests of God, you represent God in this world; as his priests, he's given you his authority to speak on his behalf; as his priests, he's giving you his power to hand out his blessings.

Why? Part of the answer is this - He sees what you see. He sees people forgotten, put off, and worse. He sees what evil is doing. He sees: "Something needs to be done." He sees: "Somebody needs to do something." He sees what people like us need, and what people out there need; that's part of the answer. Another part of the answer is this - God wants you to have the privilege, the joy, the value of being the somebody doing the something that this world needs. Let me say that another way - God wants you to know the privilege, the joy, the value of being God's special somebody doing God's special something that this world needs. He wants you to have the privilege and the joy of helping the world see Jesus.

Peter 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 wonderful light."** Do you have a sense of the darkness you were in before God called you out? If so, you have some sense of the darkness that darkens so many people around us. You have people in your life, people with guilt eating them up, people who need to know what you know - God forgives. You have people in your life living scared and anxious, people who need to know that God has saved them and will keep them safe. You

have people in your life facing death, people who need to know that God has given them life.

So do you ever feel like a nobody? Ever feel your life is pointless? With Jesus, you have what hurting hearts, what our messed-up world needs more than anything else. With Jesus, you have what your church needs more than anything else in this world. As God's priests, you have his tools, his authority, his power, the power of God to change hearts. As priests telling the great things God can do - you have what it takes to give hope to the hopeless. As priests sharing the forgiveness of Jesus - you have what it takes to give peace to the guilt-frightened heart. As priests telling the love of Jesus - you have what it takes to heal broken hearts. As priests declaring the promises of Easter - you have what it takes to give life to the dying. So know this - you aren't a nobody and your life doesn't have to be boring - you are God's special people chosen and called to do God's special something - to shine and share his wonderful light. What do we do with that? (Hand up!) "Call on me, Lord; call on me!"
Amen.

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... so many people struggle with two basic questions: "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" (Identity and Purpose)

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we hear the answer to those questions from our Creator, our Redeemer (who bought us free with his blood), and our Sanctifier (who connects us with God).

OPENING HYMN

"Christ Is Our Cornerstone"

Hymn 914

Christ is our cornerstone, on him alone we build;
with his true saints alone the courts of heav'n are filled.
On his great love our hopes we place of present grace and joys above.

Here may we gain from heav'n the grace which we implore,
and may that grace, once giv'n, be with us evermore
until that day when all the blest to endless rest are called away.

Oh, then, with hymns of praise these hallowed courts shall ring;
our voices we will raise the Three in One to sing
and thus proclaim in joyful song, both loud and long, that glorious name.

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, you have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in you. Grant us so firmly to believe in your Son Jesus that our faith may never be found wanting; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST LESSON

1 Peter 2:4–10; 3:15–16 (EHV)

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. For it says in Scripture:

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who believes in him will certainly not be put to shame.

Therefore, for you who believe, this is an honor. But for those who do not believe:

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,
and,

a stone over which they stumble and a rock over which they fall.

Because they continue to disobey the word, they stumble over it. And that is the consequence appointed for them.

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. 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.

But regard the Lord, the Christ, as holy in your hearts. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that is in you. But speak with gentleness and respect, while maintaining a clear conscience, so that those who attack your good way of life in Christ may be put to shame because they slandered you as evildoers.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 100B

1 All peo - ple that on earth do dwell, sing to the
 2 Know that the LORD is God in - deed; with - out our
 3 O en - ter then his gates with praise; ap - proach with
 4 For why? The LORD our God is good; his mer - cy

LORD with cheer - ful voice. Him serve with fear; his praise
 aid he did us make. We are his folk; he doth
 joy his courts un - to. Praise, laud, and bless his name
 is for - ev - er sure. His truth at all times firm -

forth - tell; come ye be - fore him and re - joice!
 us feed, and for his sheep he doth us take.
 al - ways, for it is seem - ly so to do.
 ly stood and shall from age to age en - dure.

SCHOOL CHILDREN SING (SUNDAY)

"In Unity and Peace"
 Hymn 732

Refrain

How good it is and how pleas-ant to live in u - ni-ty and peace.

How good it is and how pleas-ant to live to- geth-er in one Lord.

(Last time only)

to live to - geth - er in one Lord.

*In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, agree in ev'rything you say.
 May there be no divisions among you, but be united in one mind.
 For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all. Refrain*

*Live a life that is worthy of your call, be humble, gentle, and patient.
Bear with each other in ways that are loving, preserve the unity of faith.
For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all. Refrain*

*Share the love that has joined us as one, unite in spirit and ideals.
Never be rivals, do not be conceited, but look to others in their need.
For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all. Refrain*

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:13–16

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Renew Me, O Eternal Light”

Hymn 689

Renew me, O eternal Light, and let my heart and soul be bright,
illumined with the light of grace that issues from your holy face.

Destroy in me the lust of sin, from all impureness make me clean.
O grant me pow’r and strength, my God,
to strive against my flesh and blood.

Create in me a new heart, Lord, that gladly I obey your Word.
O let your will be my desire and with new life my soul inspire.

Grant that I only you may love and seek those things which are above
till I behold you face to face, O Light eternal, through your grace.

SERMON

1 Peter 2:4–10; 3:15–16

HYMN

“Church of God, Elect and Glorious”

Hymn 854

Church of God, elect and glorious, holy nation, chosen race,
called as God’s own special people, royal priests and heirs of grace;
know the purpose of your calling, show to all his mighty deeds,
tell of love that knows no limits, grace that meets all human needs.

God has called you out of darkness into his most marv’lous light,
brought his truth to life within you, turned your blindness into sight.
Let your light so shine around you that God’s name is glorified
and all find fresh hope and purpose in Christ Jesus crucified.

Once you were an alien people, strangers to God’s heart of love,
but he brought you home in mercy, citizens of heav’n above.
Let his love flow out to others, let them feel a Father’s care,
that they too may know his welcome and his countless blessings share.

Church of God, elect and holy, be the people he intends,
strong in faith and swift to answer each command your master sends.
Royal priests, fulfill your calling through your sacrifice and prayer;
give your lives in joyful service, sing his praise, his love declare.

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.



(You heard our school children sing today. Tuition Grant Fund envelopes are available in the pew rack to support affordable tuition for our school.)

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Lord God, ruler of all, we commend our nation and its leaders – past, present, and future – to your care. Bless our president, the members of Congress, and all officials who serve us in state, county, and local governments. Impress on all who are in authority the sacredness of the responsibility you have placed on them. Give them the gifts required for leadership, wisdom to make laws that will bring order and justice to our society, and compassion for the downtrodden and the poor. Purge our land from dishonesty and corruption in government. Teach us to honor all civil authorities as your representatives. Through stable government provide throughout our land an atmosphere in which your Church can do its work in peace.

C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light"

Hymn 713

I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.
God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus.

Refrain

In him there is no darkness at all.
The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God.
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Jesus.
Clear Sun of Righteousness, shine on my path,
and show me the way to the Father. *Refrain*

I'm looking for the coming of Christ. I want to be with Jesus.
When we have run with patience the race,
we shall know the joy of Jesus. *Refrain*

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