TITLE: Living Stones

TEXT: Luke 19:37-40; 1 Peter 2:1-12; James 1:2-4

INTRODUCTION: This morning, I want to talk about living stones. Have you ever thought of a stone as being alive?

**Luke 19:37-40(NIV)**
**37When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:**  **38“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”**  **39Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”**  **40“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”**

So, are stones alive? NO!

 But the God who created them can make them speak if He so chooses. Just as He can make a donkey talk if it were to serve His purpose…

 Yet, Scripture compares us as Christians as living stones….

**1 Peter 2:1-12(NIV)** **1Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.**  **2Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,**  **3now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.**  **4As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—**  **5you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**  **6For 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.”**

**7Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,    “The stone the builders rejected      has become the capstone,** **8and,      “A stone that causes men to stumble      and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.**  **9But 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.**  **10Once 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.**  **11Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.**  **12Live 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.**

 Now Jesus has been described as the capstone.

**The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.**

 The King James version says: “
**1 Peter 2:7(KJV) the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.**

 When constructing a building this would be the first stone laid and it would be the corner stone… and from it all other stones would be plumbed and lined up. So the capstone had to be cut perfectly so the stones that followed would be strait and true.

 I have sided 3-4 houses with vinyl siding plus the Church and old parsonage.

 The first house that I did was my own. I knew absolutely nothing about putting on vinyl siding but the company I bought it from told me it was really pretty easy to do but had one suggestion for success.

 Make sure when you put up the starter strip for the siding to attach to at the bottom that it is perfectly level.

 Start level you will stay level as you go up the side of the building.

 The corner stone had to be cut and placed perfectly in order for the building to stay true as it went up.

 In the construction of the Church, the body of Christ, Jesus is the capstone, the stone in which all the other stones are lined up in the building of the body of Christ.

 Jesus is the capstones; the starting stone and we are the building stones that line up from Him…

**4. As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—
5you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

As a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, our life is to become a living stone that contributes to the building of His body, the Church….

 If you were to build a house out of stones each stone would have to be cut to fit into the shape needed to fit the part of the structure to which it is to go….

 That is one of the things that make the pyramids in Egypt so amazing. Being built as giant dimensional triangles, each of the huge stones had to be cut to very precise measurements in order to fit as perfectly as they needed to fit.

 They had no cranes, no bulldozers, no diamond tipped cutting saws but it was all done with manual labor and hand tools!

 Think of all the angle cuts to make a perfect triangle by hand using stones weighing several tons each?

 Yet each stone cut perfectly to fit!

**5you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

 As a living stone that is being built into a spiritual house to become a holy Priesthood will require a lot of cutting and shaping of our lives…

 And sometimes that can be a painful process for the stone that is being shaped!

 Billy Graham shares:

*I have a friend who during the Depression lost his job, a fortune, a wife, and a home. But he persistently held to his faith-the only thing he had left. One day he stopped to watch some men doing stonework on a huge church. One of them was chiseling a triangular piece of stone.*

 *"What are you going to do with that?" asked my friend. The workman said, "See that little opening away up there near the top? Well, I'm shaping this down here, so it will fit in up there." Tears filled the eyes of my friend as he walked away, for it seemed that God had spoken through the workman to explain his ordeal through which he was passing, "I'm shaping you down here, so you'll* fit in up there."

*"I'm shaping you down here, so you'll* fit in up there."

 Many times, the trials and tribulations that we may have to face “down here” in this life is God shaping us so that we will become a better and more perfect fit when we go “up there” to our eternal home.

 As I was thinking about this, I had the thought that it is not just about fitting in up there though. It is also about the building of our spiritual house down here…

**9But 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.
10Once 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.
11Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.**

**12Live 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.**

As Living stones, we are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood!

 Our being a holy priesthood is all about life down here, not when we go up there….

 When we go to be with the Lord there will no longer be a need for a priesthood!

 The priesthood is for this life not the next one….

 The sole purpose of our current status as a priesthood is to:

**12Live 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.**

 Our priesthood is to represent Jesus here on earth striving to draw men, women and children to Him…

**That they may see our good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**

 The only way anyone will glorify God on the day He visits us, on the day when Christ returns, is for them to know Him as Lord and Savior now…

**James 1:2-4(NIV) 2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.
4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

Let me ask you a question…When is it you have grown the most in your faith, when everything was going well or when you have gone through trials and tribulations?

Personally, I have found that I have grown more as the result of trials I have had to face in life.

 In the 1980’s I had recommitted my life to Christ but my job required me to work a lot of hours. I worked in grocery management and had to work every other Sunday and a lot of nights, so I wasn’t able to attend Bible Studies and Church fellowships as often as I would have liked.

 But looking back it was about this time that God started preparing me for going into the ministry.

 I have only had a couple real fears in my life. One was doctors and hospitals.

 My generation grew up in a time when the doctor office was very clinical. The doctors were more formal back then. Doctors all wearing the same white coats.

 If you went to the doctor back then it almost always resulted in his getting the needle and syringe out and giving you a shot.

 That is how antibiotics, and most medicines were administered back then.

 I don’t believe I had medicine in pill form until I was a teenager.

 Anyway, I came to associate a visit to the doctor’s office with the pain of a shot at a very young age.

 And the thought of going to a hospital really freaked me out.

My other fear was speaking in public…

 Not good phobias for a Pastor to have.

 In the med 80”s my mother who lived in St. Charles at the time had hired a man to come in and panel a downstairs wall. In the center of that particular wall was a chimney covered in plaster.

 I was on vacation that week so I told mom I would come over and tear out that chimney so the man could panel straight across the wall and not have to panel around the old chimney hump.

 I thought I knew what I was doing but found out why most of the time it is better to let someone who knows what they are doing fix things.

 I neglected to consider that the chimney went up though an upstairs closet and had 8’ of chimney come through the ceiling onto my left arm causing a double compound fracture which took 5 years and a dozen surgeries, three of them bone grafts, to repair.

 Over that 5 years I got over my fear of doctors and hospitals….And I drew a lot closer to the Lord as I repeatedly had to depend upon Him to help get through those times…

 You think a person would learn but about 14 years ago I discovered that it is better to hire a tree trimmer to cut large branches out of your tree---I now have a completely messed up right shoulder and arm to prove it along with another 7 surgeries under my belt.

 Now understand this, God did not cause these things to happen---They were a result of my own stupidity…But God did use them to help prepare me for my future calling…

 I no longer actually fear speaking in public, but

 I still have no desire to get up in front of people and every time I do it is the Holy Spirit that enables me to do it.

 What I have discovered in the case of both my fears is that God’s grace is always sufficient….

 And through these times of adversity in my life God was shaping me as a living stone to fulfill His purposes.

 He was shaping me so that I would fit the part of His Body that He had for me.

 He is doing the same with each of you here this morning…

With each trial and each tribulation that you find yourself in God can use that time to shape you as a living stone to fit the place within His body that He has for you that helps bring completion to His body.

 **As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—
5you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

**9But 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.**

We are a chosen people!

 God has selected us! Scripture says that we are adopted into His family.

 And an adopted child is no second-class citizen….

 In Hebrew law if a man adopted a child, it was something very special.

 If one of his natural born children did something to displease the father the father could disinherit them, write them out of the will. But by law an adopted child could never be disinherited!

 Another thing about adoption is that in natural childbirth you get what you get.

 You may want a boy but get a girl or want a girl and get a boy.

 You may want a slim, tall child and you end up with a short chubby one….

 An adopted child is selected! I want that one!

 Folks we are Gods adopted children! He has selected us!

 We are permanent heirs…co-heirs with Jesus!

 And we are part of a royal priesthood!

 The priest of God in scripture were to represent God to the people…Whether the tenant worker in the field or the King in the palace.

 That is the calling of our priesthood as well, but we are a royal priesthood!

 We don’t represent God as an outside spokesman, but we represent God as a family member! As a son or daughter representing the family name!

Together we make up a holy nation, a people belonging to God! **10Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God!**

**A people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**

As a child of God, as a part of His royal priesthood, as representatives of His holy nation, we are to declare the praises of Him who has called us into His wonderful light..

 We primarily declare His praises by sharing Him, sharing what He has done for us, sharing His gospel and what He did for us He wants to do for others, with all those that we possibly can….

One way that we can open the door for that to be done is:

**12Live 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.**

 Glorify God because they have come to believe in Him through our life witness!

One thing that all of us have in common here today, if we have come to Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and allowed Him Lordship of our life, is that we have become a living stone and we are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus.

 The question is: are we allowing God to shape our life into the form that best fits His Kingdom?

 As a living stone are we open to the hammer and chisel of the Holy Spirit to fashion our lives as He sees fit?

Are we thankful for all Gods “shaping” in our life which brings us closer to Him?

 Are we allowing the substance of our life to be fashionable clay in the hands of the master potter?

We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that we may declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light**.**

 That is what we are---the question is: are we acting like it in the part of the world in which God has placed us?

 As Living Stones are we allowing God to fashion us to best fit His body down here and prepare us to fit in up there?

**5you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**