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 Sermon
 July 12th, Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

To Jesus Christ, who washed our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen! The Word of the LORD which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning comes from Peter's first letter, chapter 2, beginning with verse 4:

As you come to him, the Living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, 5 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. 6 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. 7 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, 8 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. 9 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. 10 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.

The Prospect and Potential of the Living Stone

- I. Misevaluation results in stumbling and falling
- II. Proper appraisal leads to honor and mercy

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...

Mercy, Grace, and Peace ARE YOURS from your God and Father and from your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed

How are you at evaluating potential? There are many people who have great wealth due to the fact that they can see value where others can't. Take two of the richest people in our state. Bill Gates grew immensely wealthy because he could see that people needed personal computers that could be easily operated and purchased. Jeff Bezos grew immensely wealthy because he saw that people would buy things online. Both descriptions I gave as to why these two people are wealthy is a very simplified explanation, but essentially they saw value where it hadn't existed before and had the ability to capitalize on it.

We, as a people, pride ourselves on having this ability. Maybe we don't capitalize like a Bezos or a

Gates, but still, we like to think we spot a good deal. We do it when we buy things like groceries. We clip coupons or shop at a particular store because of a deal that they are running. There is something very satisfying knowing that you got a good deal. You attained something that has great value for a low price. It's hard to top that...

As Christians, we all have capitalized on the greatest deal. It's not really a deal (that implies that there was some kind of transaction that took place). We all have the greatest possession possible, yet we had no part in gaining it. We all have our sins forgiven by the innocent blood of Jesus Christ. Talk about a great deal! We sinned against God and deserved His

eternal wrath. But what we got was Jesus' righteousness and eternal life.

When it comes to taking advantage of value or even acting on a special deal, the opportunity is there for everyone. Anyone could have invested in Apple, Google, or Nike before those companies took off. Anyone could see a deal in the paper for 50% off sirloin steaks. The deal is for everyone. But taking advantage of these opportunities is a limited time thing. Those blue-chip stocks still have value today, but you can't get them for cheap any longer. Those same steaks that were on sale yesterday will be at full price the next day.

The same is true about salvation. Everyone has the opportunity to come to Jesus, as our text calls Him here the Living Stone, and to receive what He gives. But this is for a limited time only. The opportunity will not be there forever because our time on this earth does not last forever. The Prospect and Potential of the Living Stone should never be underestimated. Many come to Him and trip and fall. But we know what He really is by the gift of the Spirit. When we come to Him with this blessed knowledge, we receive honor and mercy! -MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O LORD, OUR STRENGTH AND OUR REDEEMER, AMEN!!!-

As you come to him, the Living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious.

This sentence really says it all when it comes to who Jesus is vs. how the men see Him. Jesus (who He is, what He said, and His Father whom He represents) is largely rejected by men. This was evidenced in His ministry by the fact that the chosen nation of God, Israel, largely rejected Jesus as the Son of God. When Jesus summarized His parable of the wicked tenants during Holy Week, He concluded with the same Old Testament verse (Psalm 118) that Peter quotes here in our text: **Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes '?" (Mat 21:42 NKJ)**

Isn't it amazing that Jesus was chosen by God, yet when the world sees Him, it rejects Him? Amazing is the wrong word, it's sad really. But it's not really surprising. The only-begotten Son of God was sent to become flesh and die for the sins of the world. Yet the world did not see Him for who He was. The Apostle John really lays out this travesty well: **He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. (Joh 1:10-11 NKJ)**

Why couldn't they see Him for who He was? They had the wrong expectations. They misevaluated what the Messiah would look like and what He would do. They thought that He would look like a political leader. Even the disciples thought He would restore the physical nation of Israel. Some saw His miracles and saw Him as someone who would provide an abundance of physical blessings. After Jesus fed the 5,000, He departed because He perceived that the crowds **were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king (Joh 6:15 NKJ)** But Jesus never acted like an earthly king. He had to constantly remind everyone what He told Pilate during His trial. **My kingdom is not of this world. (Joh 18:36 NKJ)**

What about today? People still have the wrong idea it seems. They like to misquote what Jesus said to support whatever political point they are trying to make. People still think and teach that if they follow Christ, and believe and pray hard enough, they will prosper and have an abundance of material blessings. People try to make Jesus the solution to all of their small problems instead of seeing Him as the solution to their biggest problem.

The fact of the matter is that if you don't come to Jesus with the God-given faith that He is your Savior from sin, you will trip over Him... **But for those who do not believe: The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, 8 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.**

When it comes to tripping, I think this is something that we all can relate to. I do not consider myself to be an especially coordinated person. This is because, in fact, I am quite uncoordinated. I have tripped over objects both large and small. Even though it is something that happens to all of us, tripping is quite embarrassing. Best case scenario, you look foolish. Worst case scenario, you end up face planting. Tripping, even though sometimes it may be humorous to others, is not a pleasant thing to experience.

When it comes to Jesus, every single person will have one of two reactions to Him. You will either believe in Him, or you will stumble and trip over Him. The issue of Jesus as your Savior from Sin is not an issue where you can sit on the fence. It's an either-or thing. You're either going to trip up or be built up! When the boy Jesus was brought to the temple, and Simeon finally saw His Savior, He prophesies about the child: **Luke 2:34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against**

Yes, in our world and all throughout time, many people have misunderstood and underestimated who Jesus was. But, then there are those who (by faith) see who the Son of Man was. By faith, they see what He did for them. By faith, they see that He was true God and true Man. By faith, they see that He paid for their sin at the cross and as a result, they have His righteousness attributed to them. These are they who have built upon the Rock and have themselves been made into the house of God! **6 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. 7 Therefore, for you who believe, this is an honor.**

At the beginning of the sermon, we mentioned being able to spot value. What has value in this world? Some would say that depends on your taste and opinion. But I am not talking about relative value... What has always had extremely high value all throughout time?

What am I talking about? ROCKS!!! Not the type of rocks that line our church parking lot. We have always known that certain rocks are valuable. Gold, Silver, Gems, Diamonds. Why do these materials have value? You can't really do much with them. They have value because of how they look and they have value because of how rare they are!

Jesus is the biggest Diamond in the rough of all time. Some dismiss Him as simply a good teacher. Some dismiss Him as a hoax. Some say that He was some kind of prophet, but not the Messiah. They fail to see His true worth. But when we see Him for what He really is, our God and LORD, we see His real value. How much credit do we get for seeing His real value? None! It's not like we did anything to receive what He gave us, nor are we somehow superior to be able to know this truth. It is all given by the Spirit. But it doesn't matter how much credit we don't deserve, we still get His value!

Recently, there was a diamond in the rough story that came out of the African country of Tanzania. Someone recently found the two largest stones of Tanzanite ever. Combined the stones weighed over 33 pounds. This amount of Tanzanite is roughly worth about 3 and a half million dollars. The man became a Millionaire overnight.

This extreme transformation is comparable to our new found riches in Christ. Before Jesus, what were we? NOTHING! A people without a country. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were looking down a barrel of a loaded gun of judgment. We had sins that we could do nothing about. But then, we found Jesus, and all of that changed. Except, we didn't find Him, He found us! We are like the man who found the 3.5 million Tanzanite stones if those stones were dropped in our laps.

10 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.

All throughout this text, Peter makes allusions to certain Old Testament pictures. When he says, **See, I lay a stone in Zion**, he is quoting from Isaiah 26. When he says **The stone which the builders**

rejected, he is quoting Psalm 118. When he says, **a stone over which they stumble and a rock over which they fall**, he is quoting from Isaiah 8. In verse 10, he is not making a quotation, but he is certainly calling back to an Old Testament picture...

The prophet Hosea had an interesting ministry. He was called by the LORD to preach repentance to the people. One of the ways in which he was to do this was through his family life. He was commanded by the LORD to marry a prostitute, whose name was Gomer. This relationship was to be a picture of God's relationship with His chosen people. Hosea and Gomer had 3 children. The first child's name was Jezreel, which meant "God sows". The next two children had special names also: "No Mercy" and "Not My People" **"Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, But I will utterly take them away. (Hos 1:6 NKJ) Then God said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God. (Hos 1:9 NKJ)"**

These are interesting baby names. My wife and I are currently expecting, and we are going through names to try to find a special name for our next son. I don't think Lo-Ammi is on the table! In Hosea, it basically says that when Hosea's wife had finished weaning No Mercy she bore him Not My People... These are pretty harsh names for children to bear, but there was a point there. The people had sinned and needed to repent. Whenever they saw these children, they would be actively reminded of this fact.

This verse in our text is a call back to then. At one point, Peter says **you were not a people** and **you were not shown mercy**. But that has all changed now. Now, we have been shown mercy. Now, we are God's people.

As His people, we have certain responsibilities... **As you come to him, the Living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, 5 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.**

Has anyone ever called you "Priest"? I would doubt it. Me on the other hand... It goes with the territory. Of course, in our denomination, we refer to our Spiritual overseers as Pastors, which means "shepherd". But in the Catholic church, they call their leaders "priests". They are called priests because of their false view of the Lord's Supper. They believe they re-sacrifice Christ each time they have mass. They are called priests, because, like an Old Testament priest, they make sacrifices.

This of course is an extreme misunderstanding of the beauty of communion. And, in reality, the real priests of God are not limited to clergy. Peter says here in our text: **you also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood**, The doctrine to which he is referring is called "the priesthood of all believers". The fact of the matter is that our relationship with our Lord is so deep, that we are built into Him. We all have the ability to go to Him with anything. An Old Testament priest would make sacrifices and go to the LORD on behalf of the people. But because of Christ's sacrifice, which was done once and for all, we now longer need to do that. Now, anyone who believes and is built on the cornerstone of Christ can go directly to God about anything. You don't need to offer a sacrifice to cleanse yourself first, for you have the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Yet, we all as universal priests still make sacrifices. But they are not of flesh and blood. **in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

No, now we make spiritual sacrifices. What are these? It is what we are doing now. Worship the LORD in spirit and in truth. It is making prayers on behalf of others. It is giving God thanks for what He has given us. It is as simple as singing a hymn. We are His people and His priests. We are His representatives. When we witness to Him, we are functioning as His priests. You don't need to be a pastor to represent or communicate with your God. Pastor, nurse, homemaker, CEO, retirees... we are His priests! This is our first job, and it is important to remember...

There is value to be found in the Living Stone. Men will not recognize it. But that doesn't mean it's not there. The deal is available to all. Sadly, all don't take advantage of it.

That man who found that rare Tanzite must be experiencing quite a sizeable amount of joy. But can you imagine the person who sold that man that land? I doubt it was purchased for nearly the amount of money that it was truly worth. You almost feel bad for the previous owner. If that person had just mined it like that overnight millionaire did. If that person only knew it's true value...

The fact of the matter is that only those who have the Living Stone know His true worth. To those who believe on the name of Jesus, they too are now valuable. We are new money, beneficiaries of overnight wealth. If Jesus has no value as the world claims, then as Paul says **we are of all men the most pitiable. (1Co 15:19 NKJ)** But if He is what we have been led by the Spirit to believe, we the richest people in the world!

The irony of the situation is thick. The chosen people rejected Him. So, the rejects became chosen. As Peter says here, we have the honor of becoming His chosen people. We have the mercy of God, we have the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life with Him. Those who are built into the Living Stone will never be put to shame! This is our blessed comfort and promise. Therefore, let us offer spiritual sacrifices, for we are His chosen priests. Let offer a sacrifice right now! All thanks and praise be to Jesus Christ, our Diamond in the Rough, for His sacrifice is invaluable and we are now the new money of His mercy! AMEN!!!