

***1 Peter 2:4-10 As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--<sup>5</sup> you 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.<sup>6</sup> 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."<sup>7</sup> 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,"<sup>8</sup> and, "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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.***

See if you can figure out what the following statements have in common: "A leopard can't change his stripes." "A rolling stone is worth two in the bush." "Wake up and smell the music." "It's like shooting monkeys in a barrel."

These statements are all examples of mixed metaphors. A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a direct comparison between two things (like saying that Harmon Killebrew was a hammer of a hitter). A metaphor becomes mixed when the speaker confuses or combines two metaphors that are commonly used to express an idea (for example, combining "it's not rocket science" with "it's not brain surgery" to come up with "it's not rocket surgery").

Mixed metaphors make people smile and English teachers cringe. Mixed metaphors aren't considered good English, and they are almost always unintentional. I

say almost because our text for this morning contains a string of what might appear at first glance to be mixed metaphors. But rest assured that Peter's choice of words is not only intentional, his words are divinely inspired. Addressing believers of the first century and the twenty-first century, the apostle gives us the comforting reminder that as God's special people in this dying world, we can live our hope solid as a rock. And as we consider this special place and solid foundation this morning, please...

The Lord, through the Apostle Peter, begins, ***As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him.*** Peter's first metaphor doesn't have to do with Christians at all. Instead he first gives us a picture of Christ himself, when he refers to Jesus by a fairly common *mixed* metaphor from the Old Testament. He calls Jesus the ***living stone.***

The first O.T. reference is from Isaiah (28:16), where the prophet writes: ***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.*** The second reference is from Psalm 118 which describes Jesus as ***the capstone,*** most likely referring to the wedge shaped stone positioned at the top of an arch to keep it from collapsing.

In either case, Peter reminds us how essential Jesus is to our lives. ♦ ***Christ is our cornerstone (CW 528).*** He is our rock, the foundation of our faith. His Word is straight and true. He is precious, priceless to us. He is worthy of our trust and he will never let us down. Remove Jesus from our lives, ♦ and we will collapse.

Sadly, Peter knew of some people who had done just that. The capstone (Jesus) had been rejected by the builders, the religious leaders of the day. No, he wasn't the kind of leader *they* were looking for, and so they threw him on a pile with all the other rejected rocks. Instead of accepting him, instead of believing in him, Jesus became for them ***a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.*** Only this "fall" is like tripping on a rock that causes you to fall over a cliff, a fall that will end in

certain and eternal death when your body slams into the rocks below.

That is the fate of everyone who rejects Jesus. That is the fate we deserve because we have rejected Jesus. Oh I know, maybe we have never put those three words together, maybe we have never publicly declared, "I reject Jesus." But we are just as guilty of rejecting Jesus when we fail to stand up for him, when we misuse his name, when we disobey his word, when we fail to line up with and fully rely on our corner and capstone, Jesus. We are guilty of rejecting and denying as much as Peter himself. And like Peter, we too are dead in our transgressions and sins...but not Jesus.

No, Jesus is living. That's the message of Easter. That's the message of Peter. That's the message that is so essential in this dying world. Jesus is alive. He is *the resurrection and the life*. He is *the way and the truth and the life*. He is *the living stone* that ♦ has given you and me life.

Peter wrote, *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house*. Like the bricks of a building, each one of us is a ♦ *living stone* that God fits together to perfectly and beautifully form his ♦ spiritual house, a spiritual house built for a purpose: *...to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*.

In order to better understand this picture *and purpose*, let's see if we can review the Old Testament priesthood in fifty words or less: The priests came from the tribe of Levi. They didn't own land, so they couldn't raise crops or tend sheep. They performed all kinds of priestly duties like leading worship and making sacrifices, but boiled down, the priests had one main job, to serve as the go-between between God and God's people.

But if what Peter was saying is true, then every Christian is a priest. And if every Christian is a priest, then the priesthood (at least in its old form) is no longer necessary, right? Yeah, a radical idea! But because of Jesus it's true. Because Jesus offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice, every believer has direct access to God. Because Jesus sacrificed himself for our sins we are

now holy to God. ♦ Because of Jesus we can offer our hearts, our hands, our pocketbooks, our lives, our everything as living sacrifices that are acceptable to God. That makes you *God's special people*. You are priests. You are a *holy* priesthood, created and commissioned to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable and pleasing, *special* to God.

Peter describes this *specialness* by rattling off four more metaphors. He declares, *You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God*.

No, we don't have to share the same bloodline as Jesus. We don't have to make a decision to believe in Jesus. We don't have to lie awake at night worrying if we believe or not...because we are *a chosen people* declared by God to be his own through the waters of baptism, called to faith through the gospel, assured of forgiveness through the body and blood of his Son, and promised in his Word that *nothing*, I repeat, *nothing can separate us from* God's love.

Yes, we are ♦ *a chosen people*, ♦ *a royal priesthood*, reigning with the King of kings and Lord of lords, now in our hearts and some day for eternity. We are ♦ *a holy nation* gathered into a "communion of saints" joined and purified by the blood of Jesus. We are *a people belonging to God* (or as the KJV translates this phrase *a peculiar people*) not because we are strange, but because we are different. Sin and Satan no longer control us. We are God's prized possession. We *are his people*, ♦ *the sheep of his pasture, who will be with* him in the place he has prepared for eternity, just as he has promised. And that makes us look at ourselves differently. That makes us look at life differently. That makes us *special*. That makes us better appreciate metaphors, huh?

Yes, my dear Christians, you are special, because you now live your hope in him solid as rocks. We are who we are in Christ: *living stones* who live *to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light*. Christ is our cornerstone, and on him alone we build! Amen.