

Christ Is Our Cornerstone

† **Crushing rejection by the experts (vv.9-18)**

† **Exalted by the God of love (vv.17-19)**

In the Name of God's dearly beloved Son, Jesus our Savior, dear fellow servants of God:

Time was running out on Jesus' ministry. Back in Luke 9:51, our Lord began His "Resolute Journey" to Jerusalem. Finally in 19:41f, He is weeping over that ancient city: ***"If you, yes you, had only known on this day the things that would bring peace to you. But now, it is hidden from your eyes."*** (EHV¹) Just as Jesus predicts right here, only a few decades later the Roman army would build an embankment around Jerusalem under siege. ***"Within your walls, they will dash you and your children to the ground. And within your walls, they will not leave one stone on top of another, because you did not recognize the time when God came to help you."*** Jesus was trying one last time to reach God's people and bring them back to His amazing grace. Likewise, He's working on us today, building us up in this priceless, saving faith in God's pure grace and eternal wisdom. So who is the **Cornerstone** of your life?

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To ask another way: Where do you go for advice? Which **experts** do you follow? Do you actually take their advice, or are you one who always knows better? Nutritionists and physical therapists have a common complaint: People don't listen. But if you blindly listen, will you get activist teachers insisting your children are really their children to raise in their view of morality? If you trust Disney cartoons to babysit, will your little ones be fed homosexuality as promised lately by that once family-friendly corporation? The world's **experts** reject your world view with God. Who is your **Cornerstone**?

If ever there was a time to be devoted ***"to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer"*** (Acts 2:42 NIV84), isn't this it? We mess up with **the experts** on our bodies. What about your eternal soul? Is there time for experimenting when none of us gets a second chance? One lifetime. One personal *you*. Can you trust someone **Crushing the rejection of the experts**?

Tuesday of Holy Week – between Palm Sunday and Easter – in God's temple **the experts** gang up to crush the rabbi from Nazareth. He's such a threat to their whole way of life. His miraculous powers are a real problem. Raising the dead, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, driving out demons – these are all very troubling for **the experts** in God's Word. Their solution? Get rid of Jesus. Make Him misspeak or commit treason on taxes to the Romans. Life with him gone? So much better!

They don't realize that when Jesus ***began to tell the people this parable***, the Word of God Incarnate, just opened fire on them. He's on offense now. **The experts** will soon be silenced. Jesus goes to work **Crushing their rejection** with a simple story that everyone can understand. If you lease a field to farmers, you expect a return, right? Who are these insane tenants? They don't own this vineyard. But when the owner sends his servants to collect some of the harvest, they assault, torture, and kill them. What sense is that? Now they figure they can steal the inheritance by killing the boss' son?

What does this have to do with you and me? Bad news: This pictures the insanity of our sin. God created all things, so everything belongs to God. Yet each of us talks about, "My time," "My money," "My career," "My body" – as if it all belongs to us. Do you think more about the Creator or created things? Where your heart is, there is your worship. How can we imagine this will work for God?

¹ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

Could we be acting like the “*tenant farmers*” without realizing it? Is that maybe why missions fall short of funds? Why our schools have to keep cutting salaries, deferring maintenance, raising tuition on our future pastors and teachers? Do we expect our teachers to sacrifice their time and salaries to educate our children in Lutheran classrooms with God’s Word? God’s beloved Son *upholds the universe by the word of his power*. (Hebrews 1:3 ESV) He’s still **Crushing rejection by the experts**. Where are we?

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Sin makes no sense. It piles up guilt in hearts and lives just trying the best they can, yet robbing God anyway. A rational human response would be to crumple up this world like a piece of paper and start over. Bring an army against evil tenants torturing your servants and murdering your son! But here God meets senseless sin with amazing grace. **Our Cornerstone is Exalted by the God of love.**

As this landowner keeps sending servants, so God has been sending His prophets and apostles, pastors and teachers to face ridicule and hardship to bring the blessings of Word and sacraments. How could God send His one and only begotten Son, knowing Jesus would be killed in the cruelest way?

There’s a kindness and sweetness in Jesus’ parable that reminds me of huge pomegranates our guide in Israel gave us near Jericho. Not appetizing on the outside. Lots of seeds inside. But, oh, that sweet fruit! So it is with God’s Gospel-goodness, His amazing grace. Sad but true, we killed God’s Son by our sins, yet God gives us His inheritance as a free gift from Jesus’ sacrifice. What we could never earn or steal from God by our rebellion, God gives freely in Christ alone. To sinners! To rebels! To us!

Who can exhaust the wonder of it? *“That being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* (Titus 3:7 ESV) God’s Son came in His designated time, personally blessing by His works, not ours, in the Holy Spirit’s washing of born-again renewal. In that Word-powered water we are adopted into God’s family with all the rights and privileges of sons.

What sad irony that the very religious leaders charged with the awesome privilege of sacrificing for the sins of the people on the great Day of Atonement, here seek to destroy God’s Son. *“That very hour the chief priests and the experts in the law began looking for a way to lay hands on him, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.”* Jesus was the one final offering to which all their centuries of sacrifices pointed. In sadistic hatred they plotted to destroy the innocent Lamb of God. And still Jesus came as promised to be **Exalted by the God of love.**

God put this in writing long ago: *“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”* Odd, misshapen, set aside by the expert builders, but it was just right as the **Cornerstone**. It sets the rise and run of the whole building, or serves as the keystone in an arch holding up the whole building. *“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush the one on whom it falls.”*

Christ is Our Cornerstone, pictured in the solid patience and unflinching kindness of the owner of the vineyard. See God’s determined love as He keeps sending us His servants today, though the world and sometimes we ourselves, treat them shamefully. Marvel at God’s infinite grace sending His own Son to be killed under God’s wrath in our place. God’s love staggers the imagination, so far beyond the limits set by human beings. *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* ³ *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”* (Hebrews 12:2f NIV84) *“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”* (Isaiah 55:6f NIV84) He kindly promises: *“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”* (Jeremiah 29:13 NIV84)

Time is running out on earth’s little day. Build on Christ alone for **Christ is Our Cornerstone – Crushing rejection by the experts, Exalted by the God of love.** Your inheritance. Amen.