

Easter 5

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In our gospel reading of today Jesus is teaching his disciples and like always they have questions. Jesus continue to teach, and in many ways gives them the answer to all their questions by saying, "I am the way and the truth and the life". But they are still learning how to believe, so Philip says, "Show us and we will be satisfied."

Well, Jesus would still show them many things in the coming weeks and months, and after Jesus' resurrection he showed them even more, but I think what Jesus really wanted his disciples to understand was how important it was to build their faith, their allegiance to God, their commitment to living a Christian life, and to build all that on the Word of God.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus teaches

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them is like the foolish who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods, came and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it fell – and great was its fall."

The word of God establishes our spiritual foundation and it would be foolish to cheat on the foundation. No matter what you are building in life you don't want to cheat on the foundation. Whether it's a house, a highway, or a skyscraper you need to have a solid foundation. You can cheat on other things, using inferior materials on other parts of your project, if you're short on money, but if you want whatever you're building to last 50 years you never cheat on the foundation or it will crack, buckle, or sink.

I had a friend who took on the enormous task of building his own house and had all the skills to do it. He painstakingly went over all the plans and got all the necessary building permits and recommendation from other skilled professionals for all the work he did, and he built a wonderful home for his family. But...after a few years he noticed a small crack on the floor of his basement and soon learned that his house had a crack in the foundation. Apparently the footings for the house were not laid deep enough. The depth of the frost in the area he lived was deeper than he had planned for, and the frost had slipped under the foundation causing the foundation to break. If those footings had been laid just 4 inches deeper he would have been in the clear. That's why you never cheat on the foundation.

And likewise never cheat on the foundation of your marriage if you want your marriage to last. You can't have a good marriage unless it's founded in the practices of loving the way Jesus wants us to love each other; where you put into practice forgiving each other and serving each other, where you put into practice Jesus' values and Jesus' Spirit in everything you do.

We've all know couples that fight like cats and dogs, but when friends show up they act all nice and kind to each other. Public appearances of a healthy, loving relationship are not foundational, but what is, is the way we actually treat and care for each other behind closed doors, that is what is important. You cannot have a great marriage without a solid foundation and that foundation is doing and being the love of Christ to each other.

And your children need a good foundation too. Don't cheat on the foundation for your children and family. If you want your children to be able to stand up to the hurricanes and storms of life, they need that good foundation inside their souls. They need a home of security and love and peace and prayer and quality time together. So don't cheat on the foundation you give your child. If you are short of time cheat on other things. Cheat on your recreation time, cheat on your golf game, cheat on your work, cheat on the amount of TV you watch, but don't cheat on establishing a sure foundation where prayer and love and forgiveness and kindness and commitment are practices in your home.

It's no wonder that we chose this passage on building a solid foundation for our capital campaign this year, for we're all in the process of building a foundation based on the word of God. And we need to build that foundation in all aspects of our church, across all our efforts and contributions, for how much stronger will we be as a congregation when we allow Jesus Christ to lay the foundation that we then build upon.

In our reading for today from the first letter of Peter, we find Jesus also using this "building" theme or this "under construction" theme and he makes several references to building with stone. Quoting the Psalms, Jesus says "The stone that the builder rejected has become the cornerstone". Now we know that it was Jesus who was rejected by the chief priests and elders, and put to death on a cross. But on the third day Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God. And now Jesus Christ has become the cornerstone.

The cornerstone is the first stone that is laid when constructing a building and all others are aligned with it. It guides the workers in building. And we are being called to be living stones that are to be built into a spiritual house. With Jesus as the cornerstone, we are being called to be a part of a new order in this structure that Jesus is building

God is calling us to be an integral part of the incredible new thing that God is doing, to accept our place as the chosen ones, as God's own people.

Jesus says, "Once we were not a people, but now we are God's people, once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy"

Yesterday we were living in dark thoughts but today is a new day. Yesterday was cloudy and uncertain, but today we are alive with promise and hope

Resurrection life is like that, it's like we are born again!

Peter wants us to claim our place in this royal priesthood, this holy nation, he wants to make sure we get the message of how special this new community that Jesus is building is! And we need to consider the unlimited possibilities we have with Jesus Christ as our cornerstone.

Nelson Mandela had the gift of seeing the world through the eyes of God. In one of his most famous speeches he grasped what Peter is sharing with us today. He said:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God.

Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Jesus says: You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And no one can take that identity away from you, because it is a gift from God.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it's time to shine! And it's time to build!

God is once again calling his Church into being through us, through a house of spiritual stones. Let's all proclaim the mighty acts of God. Amen.