

A Sunday reflection for worship - 10th May 2020- Take a stone!

The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone;
See I am laying in Zion a stone, a corner stone chosen and precious;

Psalm 118:22

Preparing for the “go”

May Jesus be the way.

Taking every step.

May Jesus be the truth.

Committing to the journey.

May Jesus be the life.

Celebrating the joy.

May Jesus be the way, the truth and the life.

SING: When morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries,
R&S 292 *May Jesus Christ be praised*
A like at work and prayer to him I would prepare:
May Jesus Christ be praised

Hold your stone or pebble and read 1 Peter 2; 2-10

Pray: Lord our God, Sunday is your special day. So, we come to worship you. Although we cannot meet together, you have promised to be with us wherever we approach you in prayer. So we close our eyes, open our minds and we know you are with us. Speak to us your word of life - encourage us on our journey of faith. You love us and want only the best for our lives. Be with us each day so that we are not lonely or anxious. Teach us to be patient and to trust you more. We thank you for your beautiful world and for all the people who make us happy. Help us to be more like Jesus as we love and care for others, especially those who are ill or in need.

In Jesus' name Amen

Pray the Lord's Prayer

Reading: John 14; 1-14

When Jesus speaks of many rooms John 14;1 these are not in some house in the sky; not places stone! Yet Jesus must have been feeling like a cold harsh stone. Now reflecting on his pending death, he says to his disciple not to be troubled. Strange when he had been so troubled in spirit himself recently. When he saw Mary weeping for Lazarus, (11;33) at the realisation of his own death before the Greeks would see him (12;27) and telling the twelve of his betrayal (13;21). It was just as well not to place any reliance on anything so concrete as stone! “Let not your hearts be troubled believe in God believe also in me”. John 14;1

We too relinquished our stones in recent weeks. Forced to let our buildings go. Not able to meet safe inside the bricks and mortar. Yet, I do think our buildings are important. We have tried to ensure our church buildings have not become lifeless in their lack of use during the pandemic. Indeed, I have maintained a short weekly “sermon note” in our notice boards. You have allowed their use for good purposes. To store and distribute food in these difficulties. This is good. They can remain a symbol that God is alive. But we certainly do not want them to be the bricks and mortar of a prison on our return.

Is there a way that Jesus' troubled spirit gave life to a new confidence? Had this been part of the preparation his permanent dwelling place. A place to which Thomas questions the route, “how can we know the way” John 14;5. A place for whom Philip wanted more certainty, “show us the father” John 14;8. And of course, it is not in stone, bricks, buildings or things do we put our trust, but a person. Jesus Christ. “I am the way the truth and life, no one comes to the Father except by me” John 14;6. We believe this with our hearts.

But such an exclusive statement has become and is troubling in our inclusive world. If such an exclusive statement does not bring peace among neighbours can it be of God? Does an accident of birth, family or culture or circumstances exclude one from Gods love? For many this statement indicates an intolerant, unforgiving, unsympathetic, uncaring and unloving God.

Our recent troubling times have taught us about our commonality and dependence on one another, from all backgrounds, cultures and faiths. Are we asking questions of Thomas and Philip? Or somehow, in our own troubled spirit is God is calling us, not to concrete confidence but to something new again. To be new and living stones. What will this mean for as who seek to follow Jesus faithfully?

SING: I want to walk with Jesus Christ,
R&S 367 all the days I live of this life on earth
To give to him complete control
Of body and of soul:
Follow him! Follow him!

Pray; As living stones let us pray for the building up of Gods church and of the world God loves.

Activity: Now take you stone or pebble in you hand...

Hold the pebble on the open palm of your hand. Don't try to touch it with your fingers, simply hold it there. Look at it. Consider its colour and shape. Note the markings and scratches on the surface. Imagine you are that pebble, held gently on the palm of God's hand. Then clench your fist around the pebble.

Feel how cold it is. Feel it warm up as it takes on the heat of your hand. Imagine you are that pebble, held securely in the warmth of God's hand. Feel the pebble with your fingertips, noting the notches, the sharp bits, the smooth bits. There is no need to try to remove parts of the pebble; the sharpness and the roughness is part of what it is. Imagine you are that pebble, totally accepted by a God who loves you, sharp bits included. Cup your hands around the pebble holding it in the centre. Imagine you are that pebble, supported and cherished.

Replace your pebble on a bible – You could bring it with next time we meet together. We could create a little pile of pebbles.

Pray: God, the creator, loves and cherishes each one of us. There is a job for all of us in building a place where all feel loved and cherished. Just as we placed the pebbles, God calls us to reach out to others.
How can you do that?

If you like; Take a pen or felt tip or even some paint and paint a cross onto your stone or pebble. It can be as simple or as elaborate as you like. It will be a sign a living being stone!

Pray: Father, In the bleakness of daily news,
In the nations' loss of life,

We weep behind closed doors.

In the shelter of our homes,

In the confines of four walls,

We dwell on our future.

In the sunlight of another day,

In the clouds of another night,

We long for some comfort.

In the greening of the trees,

In the blossoming of Spring,

We look for a return to life.

In the isolation of our days,

In the darkness of our nights,

Remind us that you are our way. Amen

SING: Christ is made the sure foundation,
R&S 559 Christ is head and corner-stone,
Chosen of the Lord and precious,
Binding all the Church in one
Holy Zion's help forever and her confidence alone.

Closing Prayer

**We are precious stones, working together;
Let us build God's kingdom**

We come with joy in our hearts, to pray and to praise.
We come to share in the gifts of God's Spirit.
Living God, you are the cornerstone rejected by the world;
You call us to be a holy people;
We ask new possibilities to share your word
**We are precious stones, working together;
Let us build God's kingdom**