

5-7-23

Sermon: Have You Written in Stone?

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:2-10, CTW Psalm 31:1-8

Hymns: 668, 52, 671

Theme: Does your life reflect what God has done for you? Do you sacrifice for God in your life promoting purpose, holiness, worship, praise, and mercy? Are you honestly carving your life on the inside and the outside to look like Jesus Christ?

1

I. We Are To Be STONES OF MEMORY

The passage from 1 Peter 2 we will look at today is one that has stones at the center. It is a passage that calls us living stones and means to share with us important truths about our identities as believers.

A. The first way I believe the Apostle Peter means for us to identify ourselves is as stones of memory. To understand what "stones of memory" are, we have to look back at the Old Testament as this is an Old Testament reference. Stones were often set up as a way of keeping the memory of something alive or making a lasting agreement between people.

For example, **Genesis 31:44-46** contains an agreement struck between Laban and Jacob about flocks and herds and even the marriage of daughters:

⁴⁴ "Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us." ⁴⁵ So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. ⁴⁶ He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. (**Genesis 31:44-46**).

In **Deuteronomy 27** the people were to set up a monument in the Promised Land to remind them of all the laws God had set before them.

Also, remember in **Joshua 4** the people of God miraculously crossed the Jordan River on dry ground and it marked their crossing into the Promised Land.

It was the purpose in each of these passages that the pile of stones might be a monument to something significant that happened. I love the passage in Joshua because it shares with us the purposes of the stones.

Important! God specifically mentions that children will ask the meaning of the stones and the people of God are to share their memories about why the stones are there. The stones are to point to the significant event.

B. In our passage today, the Apostle Peter points to us and says that we are “stones of memory” and that each one of us who are believers in Jesus Christ are an important part of the message of Jesus Christ.

We who are believers in Him are the **evidence that He has done a miracle in our lives.** We who are believers in Him are the standing stones that point people to our Savior.

It is possible as we go through our lives that people will wonder how we as believers forgive others, how we deal with grief, how we move through guilt, how we choose to love, why we think about money the way we do, and a whole host of other observations.

As believers, we are to be the real life on-going representation of the forgiveness and work of Jesus Christ.

Our entire lives must point people to the saving work that Jesus did in us. Our entire lives must shine forth the same love that Jesus had for us.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES: Does your life reflect to others what God has done for us? What are some new ways that we could Shine as a beacon which points to God?

II. We are to be STONES OF SACRIFICE

The second way Peter talks about stones is that we are “stones of sacrifice.”

A. Stones in the Bible are often set up as altars for sacrifice. In fact, God tells the people in Exodus 20:25 that when they make an altar of stones, it should be made with stones that are not fashioned with tools but fit together naturally.

In fact, later in **Deuteronomy 27:5-7** Moses commands the people in worship after they come into the Promised Land, “Build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool upon them. ⁶ Build the altar of the LORD your God with fieldstones and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. ⁷ Sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God.”

Joshua 8 records the Israelites obeying and following Moses’ command.

Perhaps the most famous event with “stones of sacrifice” is with Elijah on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18. The prophet Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a divine duel.

The prophets of Baal prayed and called on their God and of course nothing happened.

1 Kings 18:31-39 states: “Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” ³² With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ He

arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood." ³⁴ "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. ³⁵ The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. ³⁶ At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. ³⁷ Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. ³⁹ When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD-- he is God! The LORD-- he is God!"

Stones of sacrifice are altars on which sacrifices to God are made, places of worship, and places of prayer. By using this metaphor of "stones of sacrifice," the Apostle Peter is pointing out characteristics we should have as believers.

B. Like "stones of sacrifice" we are chosen by God for a particular holy purpose; we are dedicated to worshipping God; we are people who belong to God; we are direct expressions of the praise towards God; and we are direct expressions of the mercy of God.

When we look at our lives, we should be able to cry out as the people of Israel did, "The Lord He is God!" When others look at our lives, they should be able to cry out as the people of Israel did, "The Lord He is God!"

As believers, **we are to be obviously dedicated to the purposes of holiness, worship, praising God, and exemplify mercy.** Again, as believers, we are the first and last

representation of the character of God and how life should be lived in obedience to Him.

QUESTION TO ASK OURSELVES: Do I sacrifice for God in my life promoting purpose, holiness, worship, praise, and mercy?

III. We are to be STONES CARVED LIKE CHRIST

The third way Peter talks about stones is that we are “stones carved like Christ.”

A. Peter tells us that our lives as believers are built on the foundation of our faith in Jesus Christ. We are spiritual houses built to look like Him.

When God looks out over His church, He should see the lives of His people reflecting Jesus Christ. He should hear the words of our mouths honoring Him.

He should see in our relationships that we pattern ourselves after His way of living. He should see when we sin that we do not sit and wallow in it, but we move toward forgiveness and restoration.

B. Each one of us should be a carved stone that is a testament to the power of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

-We are people who trust in God and are not put to shame.

-We are people who accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

-We are people who understand that the message Jesus taught is hard and difficult.

-We are people who share the message of Jesus and understand that **not everyone will accept it.**

-We are people who live in the light and try to get rid of darkness in our lives.

-We are people who have received mercy from God and share mercy to others.

C. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are commanded to follow Christ:

John 15:10 states: "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."

Romans 15:5-6 states: "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 John 3:24a states: "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. "

The overall picture we should own up to as we look at our passage today is that we are living stones that should be carved like Christ, and to achieve that, we who are believers should pattern our lives after what Jesus has taught.

We are not perfect. We are not without error. We are people who seek wholeheartedly after God through Jesus Christ with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

QUESTION TO ASK OURSELVES: Am I honestly carving my life on the inside and the outside to look like Jesus Christ?

IV. So, What Does Your Life Reflect To Others?

A. Does your life show others what God has done for you? Does it show others how you feel about the many blessings you have received from God, or does it show you lamenting about the things that He has not done?

B. Do you sacrifice for God in your life promoting purpose, holiness, worship, praise, and mercy? Or are your sacrifices more focused on yourself? Who is your pile of stones for?

C. Are you honestly carving your life on the inside and the outside to look like Jesus Christ? Remember also that the carving will never be done until the day that God calls you home...are you ready for that?

We all need to be seeking our own answers to these questions and then making appropriate adjustments in our lives which will mirror God's purpose for each of us! Listen to the words of this well-known summer camp song. Is it true about you?

Lord, Prepare Me to Be A Sanctuary
Pure And Holy, Tried And True
With Thanksgiving, I'll Be A Living
Sanctuary For You

It Is You, Lord
Who Came to Save
The Heart And Soul
Of Every Man
It Is You Lord
Who Knows My Weakness
Who Gives Me Strength,
With Thine Own Hand.

Lead Me On Lord
From Temptation
Purify Me
From Within
Fill My Heart With
Your Holy Spirit
Take Away All My Sin

Lord Prepare Me To Be Sanctuary
Pure And Holy, Tried And True
With Thanksgiving, I'll Be A Living
Sanctuary For You