

TCF at 40 Sunday Message (Feb. 23, 2020)

Living Stones

Matt. 16:20; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Eph.2:11-22

I. Jesus Christ brings a New Reality into our age: Matt.16:13-20.

A. The Lord is using the knowledge of this reality (Jesus is the Christ) to create an entirely new sort of humanity and a new living organism in this dark age:

1. The Lord is creating it. I will build my church (ekklesia)
 - a) Ekklesia. A gathering, a community.
2. It is eternal: will not die. Gates of Hades will not prevail
 - a) It is the beginning of an everlasting community and kingdom.
3. It offers God's covenant presence to humanity. Keys to the kingdom.
 - a) It is the meeting place of God's kingdom and this world.
4. It is the organism through which heaven interfaces with earth through Christ.

II. Paul (in the early 60s) explains the same dynamic to the Ephesians. 2:11-22

A. This is a "new reality" that includes all races (Jew and Gentile = all humanity)

B. It is a living temple of God, enlivened by the Spirit (trinitarian v.18)

III. Peter later (in the mid-60s) said the same thing. 1 Pet.1:22-2:10.

A. *The real action behind the scenes in our world is the growth of this supernatural, diving living organism—the Gathering of Jesus Christ, the Church.*

IV. He is shaping a living organism sourced in His life. 6 realities we share:

A. We Grasp His Saving Lordship. 1 Pet.2:3-4.

1. *Jesus is the Lord—God in the flesh.*
 - a) Ps 34:8 (taste and see that the Lord (YHWH) is good)
2. *He is the Living Cornerstone of the new universe.*
 - a) Resurrection = a new source for human life. A living stone.
3. *He is Ultimate Reality in Person. Ultimate Reality is a Person, not stuff.*
 - a) To relate to him is to relate to ultimate reality, not just to be aware of it or theorize about it, but to *know Him*.

B. We Embrace His transforming character: (grow in salvation) 2:2

1. **This happens together: Living stones being transformed and put together.**
 - a) *We are not river rocks left alone, but carved stones fit together in a building.*
2. His loving DNA through the message of the gospel. 1 Pet.1:22-25
 - a) Seed = sporos (spore).
3. His continued spiritual nourishment: the gospel understood at ever deeper levels. 2:1-3
 - a) Continuing to grow up into salvation: The Spirit uses the gospel to form and transform us.

C. We Experience his rejected identity. The stone the builders rejected.

1. *Expats: A sense of not belonging here. (1 Pet.1:1)*
 - a) We are always a bit homesick; sometimes terribly so.
 - b) Yet loving this world in redemptive ways.
2. *A sense of being criticized and misunderstood in this age,*
 - a) Yet understanding more than we did before. 1 Cor.2:14-16

D. We Promote His World Mission. Proclaiming his excellencies—the gospel. 9

1. Temple: *Where people experience God. 1 Cor.3*
 - a) A place where God meets humanity, where the invisible reality touches the visible reality
2. Priesthood: *Those who represent God to others and others to God.*
 - a) A counterculture in the broader culture
3. Spiritual Sacrifices: *Holy Spirit empowered life in this age.*
 - a) Demonstrating the life of the Kingdom. **Heb.13:15-16**
 - b) The OT image of priests making sacrifices to God = NT life where all details of life belong to the Lord
4. *We don't plant churches exactly. We plant the gospel and the Church grows from it. Jn.15:1-5*

E. We Accept His Eternal Judgments. Those who disbelieve, destined. 7-8 (Jn.5:21-29)

1. Both universalism and pluralism are demolished by these verses. Jesus Christ is the one and only way to God. This is radical. Jn.14:6.
2. *We must trust the Lord with all human souls, without insisting on our own understanding of exactly how God's decisions and our intersect.*
3. *Huge anxiety, skepticism and unbelief surround the attempt to take away God's responsibility to deal with all human souls.*
4. *Arguments about God's sovereignty and human responsibility can obscure the real point here—the necessity of responding to Christ.*

F. Rejoice in His Amazing Mercy. 10 (7a)

1. As God's family, we have received permanent, gracious, forgiving Mercy.
2. Mercy, by definition, cannot be "owed" or "earned."

V. Closing Thoughts.

A. The Lord's Church grows on the Cornerstone, not the other way around. (Eph.2:20-22)

1. The church is about the gospel—the gospel is not *primarily* about the church. It is Spirit-inspired, Father-revealed, saving faith in Jesus Christ that is the center and cornerstone of the church.
2. *The gospel is not our "project." We are the gospel's project!*
 - a) *It is more powerful than the church and it is the nourishment of the church.*
 - b) *It is the nourishment of the church before it is the mission of the church.*
3. *We are the Gospel's project.*

B. Because the gospel is first about what the Lord has done for us, not what we do for him. It is an announcement of His Work.

1. The Church does not support the Lord. The Lord supports the Church.
2. The Cross is God's permanent statement of his love for people who hate him, turning them into the people he created them to be.
3. He takes the judgment so that we can receive the mercy (1 P.2:10)

C. So, eternal life must be appropriated personally before it is experienced corporately.

1. You don't become a Christian by joining a church. You become a part of the Church by becoming a Christian.
2. This is why we are baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.