



November 10, 2019

Sermon Series: Seeking Stability in a World of Change

Building on the Cornerstone of Christ  
Pastor Jason Bryan -Wegner

**1 Peter 2:1-10 NRSV**

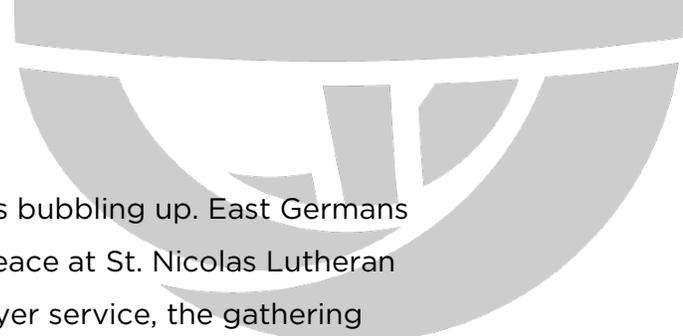
Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. <sup>2</sup>Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— <sup>3</sup>if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

<sup>4</sup> Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and <sup>5</sup>like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'

<sup>7</sup>To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner', <sup>8</sup>and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup> But 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 marvellous light.<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Yesterday marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Do you remember where you were? I remember watching Tom Brokaw reporting from the Brandenburg Gate the night the Wall fell. He seemed as surprised as all of us watching at home. East Germans who had been oppressed by their government streamed through the wall embracing one another and their relatives from the West. Others stood on top of the wall with pickaxes and sledgehammers. Germans, both from the East and the West suffered during those 40+ years of separation. They had lost relationship and a sense of identity. They had been told there was no other way and that reunification in a democratic Germany was impossible.

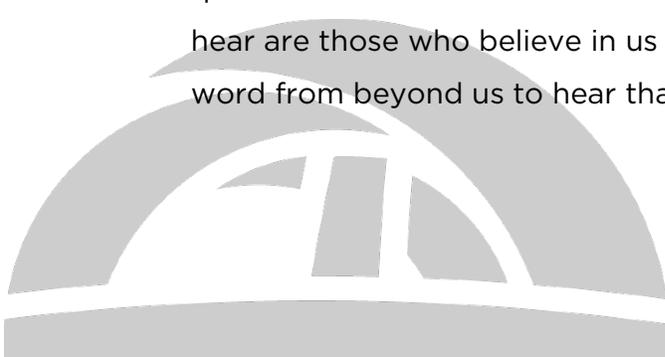


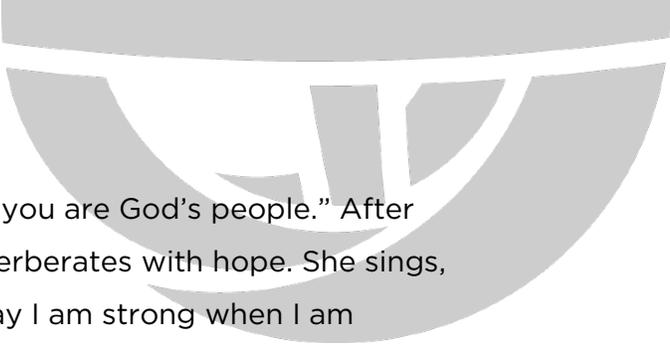
But in late September of that year, a new future was bubbling up. East Germans started to gather for Monday evening prayers for peace at St. Nicolas Lutheran Church in Leipzig, East Germany. Following the prayer service, the gathering continued outside the church. People demonstrated in the streets. They spoke of the freedoms they were seeking, they prayed and sang, and peacefully resisted police who sought to silence them. The first week there were several hundred. Two weeks later there were 70,000 people. Other demonstrations began in cities across the two Germanys. And two weeks after that 320,000 people gathered outside St. Nicolas Church to show their support. With each gathering, the people grew closer to a vision of being free with their relatives on the other side of that wall. They were being called out of darkness and into a marvelous light. From the prayers of the people rose a new vision for how a people may be more fully alive. It would've never happened had they only listened to the voices that sought to silence them.

We've been singing a song at worship on Wednesday nights called "You Say", by Lauren Daigle. You may have heard the song on the radio, it's become one of the most popular songs on Pop and Christian Radio.

The song begins with words that keep anyone from being fully alive, "I keep fighting voices in my mind saying I'm not enough, every single lie that tells me I will never measure up."

These little voices shape who we see ourselves as, don't they? You go to work and see a co-worker get the promotion you've been hoping for and wonder, "What more could I have done?". Or you feel the effects of getting older and grieve the things you can't do anymore, and wonder "What else lies ahead?". Or you're a student feeling the pressure of school and friends and parents to make sure you take the "right" steps to get into the college or career of your choice, and wonder, "Is it enough? Am I really enough?" No matter what stage of life you're in, these questions can stunt who God has made us to be. Often the voices that we need to hear are those who believe in us more than we believe in ourselves. We need a word from beyond us to hear that we are more than the sum of the voices of doubt





in our minds. “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people.” After questions of measuring up, Lauren Daigle’s song reverberates with hope. She sings, “You say I am loved, when I don’t feel a thing. You say I am strong when I am feeling weak...In you I find my worth, in You I find my identity.”

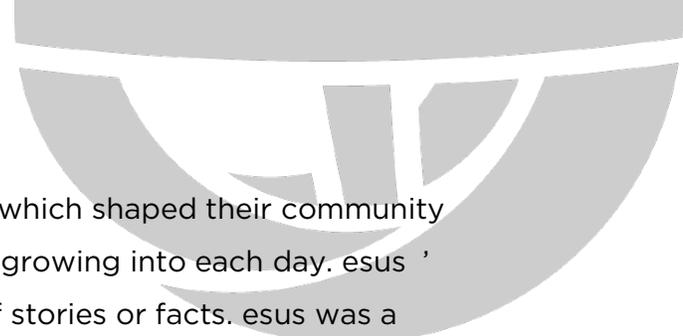
We want this confidence to be enough, don’t we? 1 Peter gives us this kind of hope and a clear sense of identity. In this letter we meet the God who claims each of us in baptism and is established as the cornerstone of our faith. esus shapes a new identity and a new hope whether it’s through the power of community yearning for freedom, or the individual who doubts him or herself.

When 1 Peter reached communities scattered across central and eastern Turkey, it was a foundational word they needed to keep steadfast in the faith. These verses reminded them of their identity in Christ. Their lives and society were largely shaped by Roman culture, by sacrifices to fickle gods who were cast in stone statuary in every public square in town. Descriptions of esus as a living stone would have caught some side-eyes, and the message of his mercy and goodness would have seemed like a great reversal of the gods with whom they were familiar.

Those who came to trust in esus, the living stone, lived differently. They built their lives on the cornerstone of Christ. They stopped traditional worship practices at temples or shrines dedicated to Roman gods or to the Emperor. They treated their families with more honor and respect and had a new openness to outsiders. They adopted spiritual practices that looked rather strange to their neighbors. They were gathering in homes with other Christians to sing songs, share a meal, and pray together.

It wasn’t always easy. Christians were misunderstood and openly harassed. There were times when these new Christians doubted whether what they were doing was worth it or if they had enough faith to endure the ridicule.





What held them together was the promises of God which shaped their community and gave them their identity. An identity they were growing into each day. esus ' life, death, and resurrection were more than a set of stories or facts. esus was a lived experience shared together by all the believers. esus shaped how they saw themselves in the world and gave them a vision for what kind of world God was still forming through them.

Today, we don't live surrounded by statues of idols on every street corner, but we live in a society increasingly skeptical that the life, death, and resurrection of esus could have much bearing on their lives. Times are changing, the church is changing. But God's faithfulness does not change. "You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, God declares. I have chosen people before. I have chosen you today. And I will choose people again.

Our sermon series this month is focusing on seeking stability in times of change. It seemed a timely topic as we enter into the first stages of a building project in the coming weeks.

What we didn't necessarily anticipate as this series was taking shape was that the Spirit would be working to call Pastor Lisa to a new ministry at the same time. God often has a funny sense of timing and a sharp sense of humor. Pastor Lisa has walked with a generation of young people, encouraging them to build their lives on Christ. She has led efforts to stretch Christ's mission beyond the walls of our building, showing us that loving our neighbor near and far is a powerful way to build our lives on Christ. She has also been a great colleague and incredible partner in sharing the gospel over the years. Will it be different without her? Sure, it will be. But Christ is still the cornerstone - building us up through the relationships we have, in the ministry we share, and in the mission that God is still preparing for us here at Zumbro.



We are encouraged by Scripture, and even more so by the community God has placed us in to make room for esus to build us into a spiritual house as individuals



and as a community. How are we doing that today? And how might we continue to proclaim the mighty acts of God among us?

We are invited to find our identity beyond the voices in our heads, or the immediate circumstances that we face, or the opinions others have of us. God loves us too much to have our voices, or the voices of anyone else determine who God has made us. We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people - not because of where we live, but to whom we belong, and to whom our lives are built upon. Jesus, the living stone, and the cornerstone of our faith leads us forward and makes us what we cannot be on our own, God's beloved and holy people in this world. Amen.

