

Live With Purpose

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- [0:00] What are we doing? Why are we doing this? Why do we gather together and worship? Why do you believe today?
- Or maybe you don't believe? Why do you think about what lies ahead? What the future holds? I don't mean your career, your job, I just mean what lies ahead, just generally.
- What will happen if you carry on rejecting Jesus Christ? Are you willing just to passively submit to a worldview that is fairly secular and worldly and be lulled into its unbelief?
- Or are you willing today again to consider Jesus Christ? And as Christians I want us to be considering a bit more about Jesus Christ again today from this passage.
- And I'm afraid I'm going to be repetitive because I'm going to use the same kind of free geology and illustrations that we've been using before. The foundations will simply not go away and we're going back to the foundations of this letter.
- [1:12] If you remember from chapter 1 Peter when he's speaking to all these Christians scattered around the place, he speaks to them about the gospel, about the grace and the peace of God that's theirs.
- And that's the foundation from which everything comes. Remember he's got the link word, therefore, therefore a couple of times. It's because of the foundation that we're able to move forward and we're able to move onward.
- So I'm afraid I'm being repetitive again because the foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ, His grace and His peace. And what that means, He's absolutely crucial and absolutely central to everything that we are and everything that we do today.
- And it's interesting that in verse 4 he doesn't say, as you come to church, he says, as you come to Him, as you come to Jesus Christ, and it's such a crucial, but maybe subtle difference, that we come to Jesus Christ, not to an institution, not even to a community, although there's a hugely significant community element, but we're coming to Jesus Christ as you come to Him, the living stone.
- So he's returning us, he's not using therefore this time, but he's drawing us back to Jesus Christ. Everything comes back to Him. There's nobody else in which we can found our faith in our Christian life and our understanding of the gospel and of life.
- [2:45] It all stands and falls on Jesus Christ alone. Everything revolves around what we think of and what we understand by and in whom we put our trust with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- And the great thing about Peter is he's got some great illustrations and great pictures. He uses a great picture here, a paradoxical picture, a paradoxical description of Jesus.
- He calls him a living stone. That's what we might call an oxymoron. An open secret is an oxymoron, isn't it?
- An original copy, that's an oxymoron when two things are opposites and they're mentioned together. Well, here's another one, a living stone, because stones are dead.

But here he's described as a living stone. And he uses that illustration and goes on to explain why he uses that illustration, because he's using it to describe this capstone or this cornerstone, that stone that's really important in a building, the one that is examined by the builders and looked at and seen if it's the right kind of stone to be used and if it's going to be a good enough stone to be used, because it's going to be the stone by which the whole rest of the building is aligned.

[4:07] And so it's examined and taken and chosen. It's a specially chosen stone that becomes the capstone or the cornerstone. And the paradox or the oxymoron in a sense gets deeper in this picture, because it's the stone that's chosen by God, but it's rejected by humanity.

So there's an interesting kind of paradox there as well, isn't there? That we have this capstone which is carefully examined for its suitability.

And we're told that God is the one who chooses it and it's precious to Him. So God has chosen Jesus Christ, God has chosen Jesus Christ as the perfect cornerstone, as the perfect, if we broaden the illustration, the perfect redeemer, the perfect saviour, the perfect one who alone is fit to be our redeemer, is fit to be the foundation of our life, is fit to be the one that is worth aligning ourselves to in life.

Jesus is chosen, God has chosen, therefore God's choice is a perfect choice. It's an absolutely good and proper choice. God who is perfect and infinite in His wisdom and knowledge and understanding says, yep, Jesus Christ is absolutely perfect for this.

He's the right one to be the foundation for the lives of people who put their trust in Him to give them hope and a future. But humanity has rejected Him.

[5:41] As you come to Him, the Living Stone rejected by men and chosen by God, isn't that interesting? Humanity is a whole. When they saw Jesus Christ, they liked things about Him.

They liked what they thought He was going to be. But then when they realised He wasn't going to be what they thought He was going to be, they wanted to crucify Him. Crucify Him. They wanted to get rid of Him.

In other words, humanity really rejected Jesus Christ. This isn't the kind of Saviour we want. He's not the kind of Saviour we need. I don't like this kind of Saviour.

I want a Saviour that's going to give me who I want. And so they rejected Him as a rubbish Saviour. And the reality still remains the same.

For so many people that He is rejected as being an unsuitable kind of Saviour for them to consider. But the paradox, or the...

[6:42] I don't know if you can talk about the oxymoron deepening, but it does in the sense that it is through the rejection of humanity that God's precious, chosen cornerstone becomes a redeemer.

So in the complexity of all of that for us, it's through the rejection of humanity, it's through the cry, crucify Him, so the fact that they didn't want this man to reign over them, that our salvation is wrought.

So that the death of Jesus becomes the way in which the salvation of God is revealed to us.

So as humanity closes the door on Jesus and says, no, we don't want Him, the way to God is opened up through His salvation and through His death in the cross.

And that is sealed by the resurrection. So we have a reject who is God's perfect choice for humanity. He's the living stone.

[7:57] That is, He's alive, He is life, He's the author of life, He's the author of your life, your life isn't random, He's the source of your life, and He's the one that offers life to the full, life beyond this life and life for eternity.

He's a living God and He's a living Savior. So this picture of Him being the living stone is tremendously important because He is the source of life and His God's choice and His God's perfect choice for us.

But as a stone He's also tremendously stable. He's that rock on which we can found our life. He's the reference point for us.

And in our lives, our lives are never fully aligned unless they are aligned through Christ, and in Christ, and because of Jesus Christ.

When He's not in the building of our lives, when He's not in the building of society, everything is out of alignment, everything is wrong, the foundation isn't there, and the building will collapse.

[9:06] And that is the picture of a world without Jesus Christ. It's a picture of your life or my life without Jesus Christ. It's a world where death reigns rather than life.

And that is something that Peter is wanting to remind the people of that he's writing to. Jesus Christ is God's perfect choice, chosen by God as the absolutely perfect Savior for you and for me.

Now there's many times we don't think that. There's many times we would rather a different kind of Savior. There's many times we feel awkward with the Savior Jesus Christ because we think He's distant or He's not the right Savior for us.

But this is God's choice, and He's a perfect choice for us in our lives. And so we have the question that we ask ourselves, really the two questions that we ask ourselves, I hope.

One, is He a reject to you? And then kind of asking it in a different way, is He the cornerstone of our lives? Is He the capstone or the cornerstone, whichever way you want to look at that.

[10:22] Is He a reject to us, or is He the cornerstone of us? A hugely significant and important question for us to ask. Is He a rejected Savior by you?

You've examined Christ possibly. Maybe you've come along to church for many, many years as you haven't come to Him.

You've come to church, but you maybe haven't come to Him. And you've examined Him and possibly you've said, well, I can't trust in Him. I want to come to church, but I'm not quite sure if I am able or willing to come to Christ.

I don't know if He's the right kind of Savior for me. I want to be free to do what I want. I don't want to be disciplined by Him.

I don't want to be lorded over, even if it's being lorded over by the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. I reject that He's a good God. I reject that.

[11:29] My goodness is better. My understanding of goodness is better. And I'm offended by the cross. I'm offended that that's God's perfect way.

I'm offended by its starkness. And I'm offended by the grace it speaks of. I'm offended that God's Son needed to die on the cross in order to give me life and forgiveness.

And maybe it's because our pride is hurt that I can't offer God anything. My years of churchgoing is worth nothing to Him.

That my goodness and my morality and my charitableness is not enough for Him. That if I were to stand before Him and a miserable wretched sinner was also to stand before Him, that we would be equal in God's sight, equally condemned without grace and without the Gospel.

I have a work ethic. I'm a Protestant for goodness' sake. I work hard and I earn my way to heaven. And I want to show God that I can give Him something in return for grace and for salvation.

[12:43] So you reject Him. But ultimately what you're doing is what He says here in verse 8, you stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for, disobeying the message.

That's the reality, we're disobeying what Christ has come to do. A collision course with what He says, rejecting the call of faith. You're stumbling over it.

He speaks about the stone which causes people to stumble on a rock to make them fall. You blame the church. You blame other Christians. You blame the unreasonableness of the Bible.

But ultimately it's the piercing gaze of Jesus Christ into your soul that you reject and His gracious offer of love.

It's a solemn reality that the Bible makes clear that people reject Jesus. We would love everybody to accept Jesus. And sometimes we can't understand why people reject such love, such free and full love, the grace of God, His open arms, and His invitation to say, look, I offer you life and forgiveness and hope and freedom, an eternity with me, freely and fully, simply trust and accept.

[14:03] But we recognize that people sometimes choose to grope around in the dark and stumble over Jesus Christ because they have a better way and their goodness is better and their life is better without Jesus.

It's a great challenge to us not to reject the one that is chosen by God and is the way of salvation given to us through God. So in our lives then, as Christians, as Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of our lives as He's described here, the capstone or the cornerstone, the foundation.

And we've gone back again and again to this grace and this peace that is spoken of as the foundation of our life through which everything else in our life is then aligned and that everything we do comes from that foundation.

Remember we mentioned that last week you don't build a foundation or a foundation isn't made, and then you don't go somewhere else to build the rest of the building. You build it on this foundation. It's core, it's crucial, it's central.

It's absolutely significant to the building. So as Jesus Christ is our foundation, is He the cornerstone of our lives? Is He, in the same way that He is precious to God, is He for us as Christians, is He precious to us?

[15:28] That's a tremendously helpful point of self-examination for us about our Christian lives, is He precious. It's a mark of faith for us.

In verse 4 it talks about, chosen by God and precious to Him. In verse 7 it says now to you who believe this stone is precious.

This stone is precious. Is Jesus Christ precious to you today? It's a precious stone. Is He valuable?

Is He first in your heart and in your soul? You have this relationship with Him that makes Him not someone that's rejected, a reject, not a reject, but someone who's precious, like He is to God.

He's God's chosen and He's precious. The mark of faith is that we begin to see Jesus the way God sees Jesus. It's precious, valuable.

[16:34] A chosen cornerstone, the right foundation that can defeat death and our alienation from God and all that happens because of that precious. And when we do it, we recognise what He offers to us in our lives, He gives us that sense of personal value.

You also, Peter reminds us people, like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood and so on. He offers us personal value.

He says that we become like Him. We become like living stones. We become oxymoronic. That's what we become. We become living stones.

We become like Jesus. We have a foundation in our life that's good and we have the life of Christ in us and we become like Jesus precious to God.

We have the life of God coursing through our beings that will take us beyond the grave and we have that security and foundation and strength and that courage that takes us through the storms of life that we will face.

[17:50] Personal value, we become living stones. Stones that are being built into a spiritual house. So we have a purpose in our lives. We're being built into a spiritual house. We're not alone.

We are part of something bigger. We belong to God's own pattern and we're being built into a house. Being fashioned, being chosen, being dovetailed, being smoothed so that as stones we are put one on top of the other and built into the spiritual house, which is a work in progress.

God's kingdom, God's people. However you want to illustrate that, whatever picture you want to use, we are becoming a heavenly community and the picture is that we're becoming a building that's being built up with Christ as the cornerstone and that gives us a sense of purpose, that God is a purpose for us.

He's uniting us into a work, into a kingdom, into a community and we're moving forward to be a community with Him for eternity. And the danger sometimes, the danger is that we like just to be precious in a different way.

We like to be that kind of stone that just stays in a field, you know? We don't want to be part of this building. You know, you just visualise the stone.

[19:04] You know, Mr. Lazy, you could imagine that, but you can visualise a stone, you know, just sitting there kind of all precious in itself in the middle of a field saying, I don't want to be part of that building.

I just want to be a moon here. I don't want to be chiselled and fine-tuned. I don't want to be shoved up beside other stones. I don't want stones in top of me and all the hassle of that.

I don't want to be claustrophobic. I just want to be my own stone here in the middle of this field. I'm doing my own thing in my own way. Building work isn't easy, but we are asked to be part of that.

We have the purpose of belonging to God and being part of His work and working together and being part of His body, whatever particular illustration from the Bible we choose to use. We're part of His kingdom. We're part of His army.

We're part of His family. And none of these things are easy, but He gives us that sense of desire and the ability to do and to be part of Him and to recognise the purpose of our lives and so doing.

[20:03] And also, He gives us that sense of belonging. Verses 9 and 10. He says, You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

It's a great verse, a very powerful verse, and you probably preach lots of sermons just on that verse alone. You've got just a waterfall of different illustrations and pictures of being a family, a people, a priesthood, a nation, a people belonging to God.

And He's getting across this important element to the foundation which becomes a building is that we have belonging. We definitely have purpose and we have this value in Christ, but we have this sense of belonging as well.

Remember to whom this was written. Can you remember to whom it was written? At the very beginning. It says, to God's elect strangers in the world and scattered throughout Pontus Galatia, Cap Eugetius, Eugetius, Bithynia.

So there's a people who are vulnerable, people who are scattered, who are dispossessed, they've become Christians and they may be lost friends and they've lost jobs and they're rejected because of their faith.

[21 : 18] There's a sense, possibly, of vulnerability, of being alone. It's not exactly what I expected it to be. Things aren't happening as I thought the promises would work themselves out.

So Peter see reminding them of who they are, where their foundations need to be and the sense of belonging that they have in Jesus Christ, that they are a chosen people, that they are royal, that they are a priesthood.

In other words, that we are all priests, with a priesthood of all believers, that we accept. That means that we represent God to other people in our lives and that we represent other people.

To God in our prayers, that's the priestly role that we have, that we pray for people and that we share the gospel with people and that we live lives of sacrificial service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we belong where those who are to reach out and where to share the gospel were separate from people because we are to be a holy nation, but we are not to be isolated from people.

[22 : 28] We are to be close to people without being contaminated by sin that enters our own hearts or that comes from our own hearts and by doing things that grieve our Savior who has redeemed us.

We are to be a forgiving and a forgiving people. This passage is an incredible passage, it's got incredible depth to it.

It's a passage which makes God really great, really great and awesome. He's a good God and He's a perfect God and He's chosen Jesus, but He's also an awesome God.

He's a God who chooses, but also who destines, a God who knows our hearts and a God who offers himself a God in many ways who is for us beyond understanding, but who still asks us to come to Him, to come to Him, to trust yourself to Him.

And when we do, then we need to trust in the one who is revealed and sing his song.

[23 : 49] We need to remember that we are a people who are called to declare in verse 9 the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. I wonder what sort of song our life is singing.

If we can look at it in these terms, if we can think about it in these terms. I was listening this week to New Album by Leonard Cohen, which is not the kind of brightest album in the album charts, shall we say.

Melancholic, possibly, depressive, suicidal, or maybe some of the words that come into mind when you think about that album.

Some fantastic words, a wonderful poetry. But I don't think our lives should reflect that kind of song.

It's Christians, depressing, melancholic, dull. I'm not saying anything about Leonard Cohen, I'm just using that as an illustration. That our lives should be declaring the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful, wonderful light.

[25 : 10] And I think one of the biggest differences is when we change our mentality and our thinking. And we're going to speak a lot more about this tonight, maybe.

That it's not about coming to church, it's about coming to him. It's about coming to him. And when we come to him and their foundation is in him, and we're able to go declaring his praises, because he's called us from darkness into his wonderful light.

I hope we can consider that and remember the belonging, the purpose, and the value that we have in him. And remember how precious he is to us. I mean, I like us to pray before singing together or parting Sam.

And it's good to welcome Isabella today. I think she's here somewhere. I presume she is, her mother and father are here anyway.

So we welcome her to church with us. And we give thanks and praise. I want also to pray for, I don't know this family at all, but you may have read about this tragic story in the papers this week of a mother who took the life of her son and then took her own life, because it didn't seem that she could cope with the death of her father.

[26 : 46] She had just got married and had moved the wedding forward because her father was dying of cancer. His name was Michelle Steven and the wee boy was Leon.

And I don't know that family at all, but I do know that Bob Ackroyd, who's our companion minister in the Clu, was heavily involved and is heavily involved with that family.

He did the funeral of her father. He did because he's a chaplain himself at the prison and her father was a prison officer. And he did the wedding of Michelle, hugely tragic and beyond words.

So I'd like us to pray about that. Let's put our heads in prayer. Father God, as we come before you today, we recognise that as with every time we come together on the large day, we find ourselves with mixed emotions, with mixed experiences in life and with our own burdens and concerns.

Sometimes we come with a light spirit and are reminded of the burdens and battles that others face. Sometimes we come bearing our own weight of trial and tragedy and maybe are unable to share that with anyone else.

[28 : 12] And we pray that you would bless us in times of sadness and times of joy, in times when we understand what's happening and at times when we throw up our hands and say, "Hey Lord, what on earth is happening? What's it all about?" But as we come to your word, we ask and pray that you would grant us a sense of the perfection of your foundation because it speaks of a resurrected Saviour who has promised victory over the grave for those who will put their trust in Him, the author of life, the one who has died on the cross for our sins.

With all that that means and we thank you that that remains absolutely as relevant today as it did 2,000 years ago when it was first announced.

Lord God, we ask and pray that you would bless our congregation, bless the dispensing of Scripture through the Gideons that we heard about today, and we thank you for that. Bless the work that goes on in different places like Africa where the girls will be going in the summer and where the need is great.

And remember the need in our own doorstep we pray and we ask that we would not be separate from that, we would not close ourselves off to the great need that we recognise as seeing our city and in the lives of people whose hope and whose future has been absolutely shattered.

We pray for the remaining members of the family that we've been speaking about. We ask that you would be near to them and that somehow the Gospel would be able to bring some kind of hope in the despair that they're in.

[30 : 17] We ask for those who are connected with them, we pray for Bob as he seeks in the hardest of all circumstances to bring friendship and comfort and solace.

We ask for special strength for him and others like him and we pray that we wouldn't be callous or indifferent or careless about these situations or our own lives when trouble and tragedy comes.

Lord we thank you for just fellowship and friendship also in the Gospel for being together. Thank you for bringing Isabella safely here to church today and we thank you for her new life among us and for the encouragement and blessing of that.

We pray and ask that you would continue to bless and help us even in times of difficulty and darkness. Undoubtedly we face these things.

Watch over as we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.