

1 Peter 2:2-10

Building With Stones



If it didn't require being a good detail person,
I would love to be a realtor.

I love looking at houses and seeing their potential;
I've even helped with a few real estate deals
here in town and one out of town.

But alas, for now I will concentrate on...
one particular house...

the house of God—what a bad preacher joke.

When we were looking at our first house,
I was skeptical.

I had seen it online
and didn't think it would work.

But our wonderful realtor, Xan Pilgrim,
convinced us to actually go take a look in person.

So we did.

The rest is history;
we loved our first little house
and turns out it was
Dale McDonald's mother's house
for years and years.

When we bought it, Donna Myers owned it
and had done a great deal to it to fix it up.

But it had a crack in the foundation.

It had been repaired
before we bought the house
so we didn't think much of it.

If you know where to look,
you can still see the crack
while standing in the driveway.

But like I said the crack had been fixed
and we didn't think anything about it.

Until...it came time to sell our house.

We had a cute house
I don't mind saying.
And we didn't think it would be on the market long.
We were right.
But what we didn't think about was,
would anyone else be worried about that crack.
The first offer was not worried about the crack at all.
But the first offer fell through.

Never fear, there was a second offer!
But she was worried about the crack.
We tried to assure her
that the crack was old and had been fixed.
We were not the experts she was looking for. *(Stars Wars hand motion)*

So we paid for a foundation expert
to come and give a report,
which he did;
which said that though the crack looked bad
it had been fixed and correctly.
There was no 100% guarantee
once a crack happened
but this fix was the right fix in his opinion.
Did this satisfy our potential buyer?
Um no, it did not.

Eventually we did sell the house,
to the third offer,
but what has stayed with me,
was how concerned
the second potential buyer had been
about that crack.



She missed the whole cute house,
with its refinished hardwood floors
and built-in cabinets;
she missed its small, 1940's charm
with original wooden doors and crystal knobs;
she missed the new stainless steel appliances
and silestone countertops in the kitchen.
All because of an old crack in the foundation.

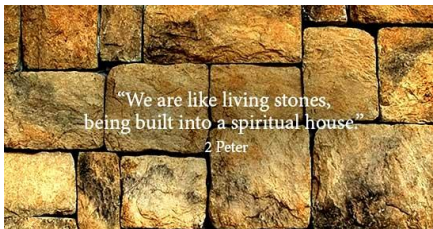
Maybe her realtor was overly cautious.
A sturdy foundation is important.
Anyone looking for a house knows
that without a good foundation
the house won't stand.
The same is true for the church.
A crack in our foundation
has to be dealt with and repaired
in order for us to stand.

Don't let this be a newsflash,
but the church throughout her years,
has had several cracks.
And our foundation goes back a long, loooong time.
I'm reading a book by Diana Butler Bass called,
Christianity After Religion.
Don't all rush to the library to get it after me, ha.
She is echoing what we've heard from others before
that right now we are going through
a religious awakening.

I'm like a broken record when I mention,
Phyllis Tickle who claims the church
goes through a rummage sale
every 500 years or so.
And it turns out a lot of religion scholars
have been thinking about this whole shift
in our religious culture;
Harvey Cox, a professor at Harvard
says we are currently breaking from

the Age of Belief
that happens every 1500 years.¹

Whatever the years,
or whatever we call it,
we are sensing a something happening
in the religious landscape.
A shift that for many people,
if we mention the word Christian or church
means they see the cracks
more than anything else about us.
*I definitely do not tell people next to me on the plane
what I do for a living.*



1 Peter as a whole is a book
—to give hope and instruction
to the church forming in Asia Minor.
It is full of instruction and affirmation
for the Christian community.
*Drink good spiritual milk like babies;
be built up into the house of God...*

For the church of that time
the temple, the place where God dwelled
was in ruins.
Nothing was left of its majesty,
beauty and grandeur;
nothing but the foundation.

Back then, the ancients saw
great structures and monuments
as having their own integrity and energy.
Their rootedness in the ground

¹ Diana Butler Bass, [Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening](#)
HarperOne, 2012 pg. 30

meant they were living.²
The pyramids, the great temples of the Greeks and Roman,
the Jewish Temple itself,
—these massive structures—
stones stacked on stones,
reaching high into the heavens
were alive.

But here in 1 Peter,
the hope is not in the buildings and the monuments;
it isn't in the great columns and pillars—
buildings or structures
hope is in the people, the community,
the living stones that are to be built up
into the spiritual house of God.



Think about that for a moment.

Imagine yourself in New York City or Chicago,
surrounded by buildings that reach for the sky,
their height and magnitude overwhelming.
And imagine that power and hope
doesn't reside in those buildings
but in all those people crossing Park Ave
or having their picture taken in front of the bean
—that's where the hope is,
that's where the power is.

² Daniel G Deffenbaugh http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=909



Imagine standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon
and realizing that you are a living stone,
with a mighty river of living water
that carves its own mark on you.

A living stone...in the midst of a great religious upheaval.
A foundation with cracks still standing.

Sometimes we are a little short-sighted,
believing that we are the only ones
who are experiencing this kind of shift.
In a way that is true.

We had to go through all the previous religious shifts
in order to get to this one.
BUT we are not unique as a people
who must navigate what it means
to be faithful to Christ in a changing world.

It can be easy to get bogged down in the church world,
falling attendance numbers,
scarce participation and not enough volunteers.
Though I doubt many of you think about it as often
as Whit and the other staff and I do,
it doesn't take a rocket scientist
to determine that religion,
particularly Christianity,
white Christianity at that,
is in a rapid decline.

Our living stones are scattered
—on Sunday mornings and throughout the week.
We are at Panther's games
and basketball tournaments.

Family luncheons and beach weekends.
Please don't hear me calling you out
—these are the things my dreams are made of;
I live vicariously through you.



So if we know that we
who are the living stones
are scattered all over the place
at any given time,
then how can we be built up
into a spiritual house?

Maybe the answer is to
let go.

Let me ask you, what makes a home?
Home is a where we land.
Where we feel rooted
to something bigger than ourselves.
Everyone likes to get away
but there is something settling
about returning to your house,
to your physical address;
where your towels
coordinate with your bathroom colors;
where your bed
is the most comfortable place to lay your head
and where it literally feels like home.

But if a tornado were to blow it all away,
what would you have?

You would grieve over your pictures,
your memories,
your favorite spot in the back yard, right?

But when it is all said and done,
we know all of this is stuff.

It is **the people** that make your home what it is.

You may move across town
into a different house at some point
—ask Katherine and Stuart
or to another state,
ask Jenny and Kevin Parker.
You may remodel your home,
ask Chad and Jennifer East
or Kari and Devon Fisher
—they both have beautiful, newly remodeled, kitchens.

The nature of our homes can change
without us being upset.
In fact, often when we move
we often do get rid of things.
When we remodel the bathrooms,
we get excited!

So why can't we get excited
about letting some things go
why can't we get excited about remodeling
when it is our spiritual home?
Our church?
The place where we have decided to land
in our lives of faith.

The banners, the rug, the good coffee?
It is all stuff.
If a tornado blew it all away,
what would we be left with?

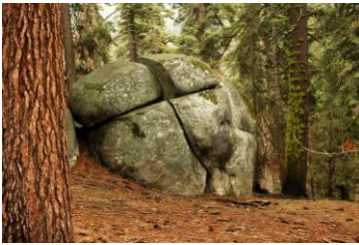
We'd be left, literally with a pile of stones.
We are used to lifting stones
to build houses on mission trips.
We flip over stones in creek beds
to find crawfish, no, crawdads.
Any stone we pick up or handle or lug—is living.

It has been here on this earth longer than we have.
It has withstood the pressure of life on this planet
in ways that would end us for sure.
Extreme pressure and stress,

fire, water, the messiness of being created,
this is what makes a stone a stone
and this is also what makes us who we are.

So maybe it is our thinking that needs to shift.
Maybe we need to spin the lament,
reframe the problem
and discover how these scattered stones
are still living, still able to be built up
into the house of God;

into a new structure
that resembles I don't know maybe a path,
that can lead to different houses of living stones
that have the energy and integrity
of being rooted in Christ.



What if we build our hope on the rock and stones
that rolled away—
what if our foundation
is in the very least likely of places—
the tomb?

The rocks and stones that held onto every bit
of suffering and the messiness of creation,
held onto sin and death itself,
until the time was right
and then those rocks and stones
rolled out a new story?

Living stones, being built into a new house.
Each and every one of us,
has endured the pressure,
the fire, the rain,

the messiness of this life
and we have a story to tell.
We are **the house**, the dwelling of God
—it is not the Temple,
it is not the church building,
it is you, and me and it is us,
gathered right here to share our lives
and all their messiness and joy;

the snapshots of our collective moments,
the memories we share
—we are the living stones,
firmly rooted in a foundation
that are being built up
for something new and enriching
for the world of today.

So now is the time for us
to throw open the doors of our hearts
to welcome the world home.
It is time for us,
to be living stones outside these walls
so that anyone we might encounter
would see us as place to land.

Together we are a new kind of spiritual house,
one that knows the religious landscape is changing
and we are willing to ride out the shift
because we trust that the Lord
is already the best place to lay our heads.

We are rooted in a foundation
that changed the very world,
right now, not in some time to come,
but is shifting things right now;
we are grounded in that foundation
so that we might be
built into something strong
and sturdy for the world to see.

No longer to do we look up in the big city—
or even the big steeples!
we look to the left and right
to see the power and potential
of the good news story we share.

No longer to we look at monuments
as our greatest accomplishment,
we look at the healing our listening can offer,
the love our hands can extend,
the power of speaking life right now
to each other and the world around us.

Living, breathing, stones
—strong, powerful, courageous
and when brought together
give the house a foundation that though cracked,
has been and will always be
repaired and stronger because of it.

So go tell all the potential buyers out there,
this is the house they want.