



Servants of Christ
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Encouragement

Peter 2: 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Peter, the upstart who denied knowing Jesus 3 times, who was told by Jesus to 'get behind me, Satan' when he thought he knew what was best for Jesus. Peter, the guy who cut a soldier's servant's ear off (when Judas was probably his intended target. It is hard to believe this guy became a rock of the Church, a strong leader but, by the Holy Spirit, he did. God is a God of second chances.

In this week's Servants of Christ devotion, Peter is writing to the church in what is now Turkey. They are new Christians and mainly Gentile. They have been persecuted because of their faith, and Peter is trying to encourage them.

You gotta see how this encouragement evolves: In the first part of the chapter, Peter calls the new Christians 'newborn babes.' Then he calls them 'living stones.' I think of the beauty of a coral reef. I have been down in the sea more than 100 feet and saw the beautiful sea life God created--- the colors, how the fish swim in perfect sync, the different turtles, even a fish that 'brushed its teeth' so that smaller fish would swim into its mouth! All surrounding the living stone of coral that only grows an inch a year. Jesus is the living stone and we are also living stones being built into a 'spiritual house' or, literally God's temple. And then Peter calls us his priesthood; We are descendants of Aaron in Leviticus!

In other words, God is doing more with us than ever imagined. Just as God worked in the lives of those in Peter's church, just as they were 'no people' but were now 'God's people,' we too are called out of darkness into marvelous light. For Peter, for his church, for us, God is a God of newness and transformation.

In the medical world nurses have a charting category that asks, "Is the patient oriented to time and place?" As you can imagine or have experienced, it is easy to lose track of days in the

hospital, so the nurses begin with, “Do you know where you are and what day it is?” It is a starting point.

These last eight weeks you may have felt a little ‘disoriented’ too. That is why God gave us touchstones through Scripture---- holidays, holy days, six days to work and one day to rest. These are important for living. For example, participating in Passover is so important that if someone is too sick to participate, they can have a ‘mini Passover’ 30 days later!

So, if you don’t know what day it is, if your hair looks like an animal blew up on your head, if you can only remember if it’s recycling day by the TV dinner you are eating, then be encouraged. Christ is the living cornerstone, solid, secure.

The rabbi who founded Hasidic Judaism once told a story about him traveling to the Tree of Life. As he began, he saw the tree in the distance and he was surrounded by people. The closer he got to the tree, the fewer the crowds. Then he found himself under the tree’s branches and he was alone. His takeaway was this: Clinging to the Tree of Life sometimes requires being alone.

May this time be a holy time encounter with the Tree of Life. May this time be when we re-discover that God is making us into living stones, a temple, and a priesthood of mercy and marvelous light. Today, God wants you to be encouraged.

Prayer:

Loving God, You are my rock, and I run to you today, believing that you will lift up my heavy arms, that you will fuel me for the tasks you've given me, and that your joy will completely consume the weakness of my life and make me strong again. I don't want to stay grounded, crippled by limitations and failed attempts. I'm tired of feeble efforts. Lord, I want to mount up with wings like an eagle and not just fly. I want to soar.

Renew my strength, Lord. Fill me with your supernatural power to overcome each obstacle in my path. With my eyes on you, Lord, with you walking beside me, working through me, I can make it. Thank you, Lord!