

**A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR HIS
OWN POSSESSION**
Sermon for the 5th Sunday of Easter 2026
1 Peter 2:2-10

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Second Reading from before, 1 Peter 2:2-10:

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Every one of you present here today is precious. You are holy, a kingly priesthood. You are a chosen family. God Himself says so: **“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession.”**

As the Israelites were once the chosen people of God, now you, being made God’s children in Holy Baptism, are the new Israel, chosen by God. *You are who He says you are*. Holy, kingly priests chosen and purchased with His holy blood and innocent suffering and death.

His Word defines and proclaims who you are. A couple of sentences before our text today, Peter quoted Isaiah 40.¹ He said, *“Grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever”* (1 Peter 1:24-25). God’s changeless will and Word are constant in this changing life. The Law condemns sinners; the Gospel works faith and hope through Christ.

It is the mighty, living, eternal Word of God that *alone can bring eternal life to the people of our dying planet*. The Word that Isaiah spoke about was the very same Word that had brought the Christians of Peter’s time to faith, the Word preached to them. That same eternal, life-giving Word is alive today wherever the Bible is read and proclaimed, as it is now. Luther once wrote, “We must recognise in our hearts and believe that we receive everything from Him and that He is our God. Then out with it, and freely and openly confess this before the world—preach, praise, glorify, and give thanks! This is the real and only worship of God, the true office of the priest, and the finest, most acceptable offering” (*Luther’s Works 14:32*).

These words are amazing and comforting. Why? Because we were not always His people. He was not always our God. Peter writes of darkness and light and says, **“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.”**

Here, Peter is quoting Isaiah’s contemporary, the prophet Hosea, whose whole message could be summed up by those few words: **“Not a people, but now you are God’s people.”** Disconnected from God, sinful from birth, hostile to God’s Word and will, all humanity bears this horrible stencil: *“Not the people of God.”* God was so angry with the unbelieving Israelites that He commanded Hosea to take a known prostitute as a wife as a visual aid for rebuking the unfaithfulness of the nation. Hosea was to call their son *Lo-Ammi* (Hebrew for “not My people”); *“for you are not My people, and I am not your God.”* “I am not your God” is the most catastrophic utterance any human being will ever hear.

By birth, no one lives under the mercy of God. We are born under the curse of sin, death, and hell. The horrible name that Hosea was instructed to give his daughter, *Lo-Ruhamah* (“not loved”), is the name we also were assigned at birth (Hosea 1:6).

“But now you have received mercy,” says Peter. “Now you *are* the people of God.” When Word and Sacrament work the incredible change in a human being that we call *conversion*, things change.

¹ Isaiah 40:6-8

When a human being is connected to Jesus Christ in faith, things change. Our status before God changes: God sees us clothed in the righteous robes of his Son and proclaims, “*Not guilty!*” Our attitude also changes; instead of hating God’s Word and ways, we come to love them. We see God as our Father instead of a judge and jailer.

God the Father shows His mercy through His only Son, Jesus Christ, and today Peter calls Christ “**a living Stone rejected by men.**” He was shown no mercy by God when He died in our place. The wrath of God fell upon Him as it should’ve fallen upon us. For us, He suffered and died.

But Christ is not a dead Stone. He is the “**living Stone.**” Having accepted the full payment for mankind’s sin, God the Father raised His Son from the dead on that Easter morning. “**The Stone that the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone,**” the first-laid stone of the Church’s foundation, the stone on which the whole building depends, the Cornerstone.

He is chosen and precious in the sight of God. But not only Jesus. *We* are chosen and precious in the sight of God in Him. Through Him, we, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house. A house not made of bricks or stone, but of *living stones.* A Church made of a holy priesthood offering up sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Yet, life doesn’t always fit into that beautiful picture of all of us being built together into the Church, does it? There is suffering and pain. Life does not always go as we would like. There is real pain and loss, whether it be physical or material. Perhaps like David, we find ourselves asking, “*How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?*” (Psalm 13:1-2). It’s as though everywhere we turn, there is something that makes our lives difficult.

And the other stones around us? They are of no help. In fact, doesn’t it feel like sometimes they try to tear you down more than they build you up? Again, with David, we sometimes cry out, “*I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts—men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords*” (Psalm 57:4). These stones should be supporting us, not hurting me. Why the friendly fire? Sticks and stones may break my bones, but their words still hurt. Each one is managing to land for maximum effect from the very people who shouldn’t be throwing stones at you.

Now, if we are to be brutally honest with ourselves, we hit people with stones, too, don’t we? They hurt me; I hurt them back. You are hit with stones, so you hit others with them. Do unto others, stone others, before they stone you.

Amidst our being built into spiritual houses, *bad things still happen.* Really bad, unfair stuff is going on all around us. A loved one gets sick. You don’t feel so hot. You want to know what’s going on with you, but you don’t want to find out it’s something bad. And it’s easy to think that believing in Jesus should count for something. It should get me something — something more than the other person who doesn’t believe. It should get me a pass, a get-out-of-suffering-free card. The people around me should be better. God should be better to me. *Things should be better than this!*

“**You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession.**” Chosen? Unlikely. Kingly? We aren’t even ruling the little corner of our lives, let alone anything in heaven. Holy? A people of God’s own possession? Are you joking? There seem to be more stones crushing us than building us up!

If anyone thinks or talks this way, that is *utter unbelief* because our Lord’s words are **not** a matter of what we see or experience. They aren’t made true by things working out for you or made untrue by things not working for you.

We are not kingly priests because we look like kingly priests. We are not a chosen family because we act like a chosen family, or events turn out our way to prove to us that God loves us. Neither do we do

something and make ourselves His own possession, nor do we make life work out the way we want it to work out.

No. ***We are who the Father says we are.*** We are worth what He has paid for us. And what was the price paid for us? “*Not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot*” (1 Peter 1:18-19). As we live our lives, remember what it cost God to make us His own—the precious blood of Christ. He paid the death of His Son. It’s not a matter of whether we measure up or things turn out the way we plan. Christ did what He did for us, and ***that*** makes and defines who we are and what we are worth.

You see—Christ mattered first. He really is “**the Stone that the builders rejected.**” He really is chosen and precious to God. Christ is the Stone rejected by men but chosen and precious to God. And after His death on the cross, He was raised as a living Stone.

We find our identity in Him. He’s the living Stone. We are living stones in Him. But not just us as individuals. All of us right now are “**living stones... being built up as a spiritual house... through Jesus Christ.**”

His building. His people. We heard from our Gospel before, Jesus telling us that He is “*the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6). This teaching is exclusive. There are no other paths to eternal life. No one comes to the Father *except* through Jesus. What a contrast to the popular teaching that says all religions reach God, but just follow different paths.

No, *apart from Him*, we are just dead rocks. Not God’s people. Unholy priests who deserve no mercy. Just people stumbling around, disobeying His Word.

But in Him—through the sacrifice of Christ—God considers us precious. *His* death for our sins. *His* resurrection for our resurrection. And we are made alive, living stones, built together into His Holy Church, not just stones, tossed around or hurled like missiles at others.

No, He is working among us. He is building us together. His holiness has become our holiness. His kingliness is now our kingliness. His priesthood, our priesthood. His mercy showered upon us in His gifts. “*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom*” (Luke 12:32).

All so that “**you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.**” In order that we might praise and sing to Him. To let all know, “**The Stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.**” A cornerstone holding the whole building together. You, I, all living stones connected to Him, building a great big giant building that praises and magnifies the Father.

In Him, we really do offer up praises and thanksgiving. In Him, we offer up our bodies as living sacrifices for those around us. No longer living in our sins, our despair, our evil, our deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander, or whatever other stones we toss at one another. But loving others, for others, for the sake of others, He takes the stones that fall around us. He builds us all together. He makes us a building, His spiritual building, *His Church.*

His Word is the final word on who we are and who we shall be. “**Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation—³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.**”

Come to the Lord. Enter His presence with thanksgiving. Believe again in who you are and live from it. “**You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.**”

This is who we are. This is who we shall be on the Last Day. This is who we are now. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.