

Building A Spiritual House
Texts: John 14:1-14, I Peter 2:2-10
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church – May 10, 2020
Rev. Michael F. Atzert

Like many of you this morning, I am remembering my mom on this Mother's Day. For those whose moms are still here on this earth, I encourage you to make sure that you call her, honor her, spend time with her as you are able. How I wish that I could spend the day with my mom and catch her up on my life, my family, and tell her again how much she means to me. My mom has been gone for 12 ½ years, and on Mother's Day, I find myself remembering back to my childhood – growing up with her as my mom.

One of the things that was expected by my mom of each of my siblings and I is that we would go to Sunday School and church. Although my mom's faith was not something she was outspoken or "out there" with, we always knew that it was important. And because of that, we had to get up on Sunday mornings to go to Sunday School and church. Even if – as we got older – we were out later than normal on Saturday night, the expectation was that we would get up and make the church service. It was indeed a part of our childhood, teenage years, while we were living under her roof.

I remember at her funeral that the pastor talked about how my mom's faith was apparent every Sunday she walked into the church building. She was always carrying something to give to someone, something related to her serving on the Deacons, something that had to do with her practicing her faith. However, her faith was something she did not draw attention to – it was lived out quietly and faithfully. And I know that it is because of her example, of her insistence (at times) to be a part of the church that the foundation for me was built through her. My oldest brother has been joining these Zoom services from his home in Delaware, and I am pretty sure he would concur with me.

This morning, we are going to talk about our foundations of faith – how we are (or should be) focusing on building our own spiritual homes. Where is your foundation? How do you build and improve the structure of your faith in your life and in the life of your family? Why is a solid foundation and good spiritual home important for us today?

In our Scripture for today from I Peter, we read this. “Like newborn babies, crave spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” When we are new in the faith, we only need the spiritual milk just like a baby needs milk before solid food. To me, this translates to regular time for prayer, having someone to mentor you and help you grow in your newfound faith, and an introduction to what the Bible teaches about life and faith and our Savior, Jesus Christ. The new believer would probably not benefit from complex theology and doctrine at the early stage of faith. It has to be simple. It has to help to foster the growth and strengthen the new foundation.

However, after a time, there needs to be a commitment to maturing in the faith. There has to be a desire to go from the spiritual milk to more sustenance in the faith – the solid food, if you will. Praying more. Reading and studying the Bible more intensely. A commitment to engage with other believers for fellowship and growth. Looking for ways to serve in the church and out in the community – sharing your faith with others and letting them know why God matters to you – why accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior is the most important decision you can make.

How are you using this downtime to grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good? How are you spending your time in these days which are long and sometimes boring? What are you doing to nurture growth in your relationship with God through Jesus Christ? We talked on Tuesday night at the Zoom prayer meeting about how so many

people are using this time of pandemic to examine their priorities in life – and making the decision to make things different on the other side of the quarantine? What decisions have you made – and how can you mature in your faith?

“For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.’” Now, most if not all of you know that I am not handy – I could definitely not build a house. Changing a light bulb – sure. Building something, absolutely not. However, what I do understand here is that in our faith lives, we must choose our cornerstone. And by doing so, everything that we believe – everything that we trust – the faith that we live out – will be done built on that foundation.

Of course, in this text, Peter is referring to Jesus as being the cornerstone – the One that the builders rejected. Even the disciples in the Gospel lesson, which Steve read, are not positive about the foundation. Thomas, who says, “Lord, we don’t know where you’re going, so how can we know the way?” Philip, who says, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” They had their doubts and questions. They were not sure who their cornerstone was, even after spending three years with Jesus. But Jesus responds, “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the words I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” Believe in Jesus. Make Him the cornerstone – the foundation of everything you believe, of how you serve, of whom you trust. Is Jesus your cornerstone? Is He the foundation of your faith, of how you live? What changes do you need to make – what adjustments to your thoughts, words, and actions do you need to put into place?

This precious cornerstone, Jesus Christ, has some assurance for you. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” As we build our spiritual houses, as we draw closer to Him and grow in our faith, we have this assurance. We are chosen by God. We are royalty in God’s eyes – holy and acceptable. We are God’s special possession. God’s special possession. Treasured by God – valued by God.

Knowing that we are treasured and valued by God – that we are His possession, I think that is where a spiritual house becomes a home. Think of times when families are together – when home is warm and filled with an abundance of love. That is how God feels about us. He loves us, we are His treasured and beloved children. Building a spiritual home recognizes the worth that we have in God’s eyes, regardless of the mistakes we have made, the people we have wronged, the times when we have made God an afterthought (or no thought at all).

How are you building your spiritual home? How are you teaching your children and grandchildren about this God who loves them and cares for them, enough to die for them? How are you building a spiritual home with your spouse, setting an example for your children? In what ways can you mature and grow? Are there places in your life where Jesus is not the cornerstone – that you can rebuild and add Him as a focal point – to guide you and point you in the right direction?

Let us each be committed to building the kind of spiritual home that pleases God, that allows us to be the best follower of Christ that we can be, that invites others to experience the unconditional love and acceptance of a Heavenly Parent. Let us pray...

Our loving Father, we thank You that we are precious to You – that we are Your special possession. We pray, Lord, that we might build for ourselves and our families the kind of spiritual home that allows us opportunities to grow and that it honors You. Help us, we pray, in Jesus’ name, Amen.