**Sermon Sunday 7th May 2023**

**Living Stones**

**Rt Rev Hamish Galloway**

**Text: 1 Peter 2: 4-5**

“As you come to him, the Living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2)

**Introduction**

There are two key images in this text:

1. Stones
2. Life

They come together in the phrases ‘living stone’ or ‘living stones.’

Let’s look at each separately before bringing them together.

1. **Stones** are referred here to as a building image and both Jesus and we Christians are stones in the building, which is the church or the body of Christ.

First, Jesus. There are a series of Old Testament passages that refer to a stone as an image for the coming Messiah, more particularly a cornerstone from which the whole building takes its shape; the first and foremost of many. (Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14)

In addition to this, the passages in the Psalms that talk about faith in God as the rock upon which we can stand – e.g. Psalm 40

In John 1 the first words of Jesus are what are you looking for? Spoken to Andrew and Philip, it seems to me they were looking for 2 things:

* The Messiah
* A cornerstone to base life on.

Jesus told them to come and see if he was what they were looking for.

They did and the found a messiah and a cornerstone to build their life on.

And yet so soon after Easter we know these very things about Jesus were tragically rejected by the Jewish religious leaders and Romans and others today do the same!

How we stand on this issue? Because this image applies to us too – we are called to be stones in God’s building connected to the cornerstone rather than random stones lying around separately on the ground (think of the Cathedral in Christchurch after the earthquake!)

We the church need to be connected to Christ and to each other as the body of Christ NB

1. **Life**

These are living stones.

A Spartan King of ancient Greece was boasting to another king about his city walls to which the other king replied ‘I don’t see any walls’ – the Spartan King pointed to his body guards, there are my city walls, every one a brick!’ Living stones! What we are called to be.

Lets look at the idea of a living stone:

1. First Christ! The ‘living stone’, the living and life giving Christ. There are so may biblical illustrations of his life giving power including
2. Speaking life into the dead chaos of the Genesis 1:1 void
3. Incarnation – God coming to life/live among us.
4. The life mission expressed in John 10:10, ‘I have come that you might have life in fullness’
5. Stone tomb, stone cold dead, crucified and in a rock tomb and on the third day coming to life!

The living saviour, the living Messiah, the living stone!

1. Us - called to be living stones built on the living stone that is Christ.

God desires this same life for us, not hearts of stone.

Ezekiel 36:26 puts it this way: ‘I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.’

We are to be living stones! Stones that know the life Christ has. When we are connected to him then we get life in all its fullness, resurrection powered life: Jesus is the vine, we are the branches – abide in him and he in us (John 15)

**Conclude**

And if we have that then we will be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable (pleasing) to God.

Priesthood idea big for Jesus in the Old Testament and in the New Testament book of Hebrews. Their Priests brought dead animals as sacrifices to the Temple. But we instead are called to bring our very selves as living sacrifices – 1 Peter puts this way: we are to “like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” Romans 12 puts it this way:

 “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, this is your true and proper worship.”