

Cracks began forming on the walls of an apartment on the 12th floor of a high-rise building in a big city. The residents called their super and the super came up with a jar of putty and slapped it in the cracks. No cracks, no problem, right?

Wrong. When the super started getting calls from other tenants with similar problems, the alarm bells went off. He called his boss and the boss sent a consulting team of architects and engineers to check out the problem. They searched the tower top to bottom and floor by floor, everything was where it should be and matched the blueprints.

Until they got to the basement. It appeared that one of the cleaning crew had been stealing bricks from the foundation: one brick here, one brick there. Enough bricks to build a barbecue pit. The repairs to the foundation prevented further cracks on the wall.

There are a lot of cracks that can form in the Church. At a local congregation there can be arguments among the members, there can be debates as to what color the carpet should be. In church bodies, major arguments can split entire denominations. Name any topic. Any of these are cracks on the wall. The true issue is one of foundation.

“For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”” Jesus Christ is the foundation. We build upon Him, and many of the arguments we have amongst our Christian brethren can be traced back to issues with this foundation.

Every week we have a prayer that collects the themes of the day. Creatively, it’s called the collect of the day. I’ll read it to you right now: “O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found;” In other words, **TRUE JOYS ARE FOUND WHEN THE CHURCH BUILDS ON THE CORNERSTONE.**

I. Jesus is the cornerstone where true joys are found. Peter’s letter serves as the basis for our text this day. He writes, **“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,”** Jesus is the foundation upon which we build. What this means is that everything we say, teach, and believe about Christianity can be tied back to what we believe about Jesus. Christ is the cornerstone.

And our prayer this week, and our prayer this morning is “that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found.” And certainly there are many changes of this world. How different things were this time last year! I could do the typical thing where I make a laundry list of everything that’s different, but I think that’s starting to get old. You know what’s

different. But let me just ask this question, “What has stayed the same since May 2019?”

I think the answer is: not much. Not much has stayed the same. Yet we know that some things never change. “Built on the Rock the church will stand, even when steeples are falling. Crumbled have spires in every land, bells still are chiming and calling.” “The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.” “Christ is our Cornerstone on Him alone we build.” Jesus Christ is the cornerstone who never changes, shifts, or crumbles.

In Christ alone we have true joy. He is the founder and perfecter of our faith. He is the one who was rejected by men so that we could find acceptance. He was the one who suffered for our sins so that we can be built into a holy house. He faced the darkness of Good Friday when the sun refused to shine so that we could be called into the glorious Easter light. He is the one who has made us a people for His own possession.

The joy of a Christian starts upon this foundation of Christ. The joy of a Christian is founded in the Gospel. Knowing that you too were a rejected stone. A stone with crumbled corners and odd angles. A stone not worth anything. All of us feel worthless from time to time. We make mistakes that make us slap ourselves. We feel stupid. We feel unloved.

Yet Christ has built you into His house to be the Church. This Church of living stones is built like a jigsaw puzzle with each stone being unique. I’m sure you’ve done a whole bunch of puzzles in this quarantine. How would you feel if you got to the end of the puzzle and one piece was missing? You’d tear apart the house to look for it! Christ loves you. You are made worthy in Him. He searched all over just so He could find you and make you a building block in His Church. This is a reality that nothing can change. This is a joy that nothing can shake. Christ is how we find joy in uncertain times.

And so, II. The Church builds on this cornerstone when it desires His promises. “O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise,” Faith means to hang on the promises of God. Faith means to set yourself down like a stone and not move an inch. If I make a brick shack on a concrete foundation, those bricks aren’t moving anywhere until that concrete begins to crack.

As Christians, we park ourselves in the promises of Christ. “**Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—**” Scientists could make all sorts of advancements in brick technologies. They could make the bricks twice as strong and half as heavy. They could make the bricks more durable and easier to make. But nobody would say a brick can advance so much that it outgrows the need for a foundation. Even the

best brick in the history of the world is only as good as the ground upon which it is laid.

We never outgrow the cross. The resurrection is not something to yawn about. We never grow tired of hearing those same Gospel stories year after year that Jesus has claimed us, redeemed us, and forgiven us. To say you've gone beyond those basics of Christ saving you by grace alone through faith alone is like saying your bricks have gone beyond your foundation. That's something no builder ever wants to hear.

What a perfect example of desiring promises that we see in an infant. The infant desires the pure physical milk that a mother provides him or her. The infant lives or dies by being fed this food. On this mother's day, we thank our mothers who have shown us this unconditional love. In this life, we can often feel like we don't fit in, like a misshapen stone, but we always fit in in the loving arms of our moms.

Circling back to our collect: "O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded" III. The Church builds on this cornerstone when it loves His commands. So you have the Church, a building built up of us saints, a ragtag team of rejected stones and misshapen bricks. It's held together by Christ alone.

Why has Christ brought us together? Peter tells us, "**To offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus.**" Peter tells us, "**that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**" This is what it means to love His commands. First of all, it means to love where Christ has placed you, namely, in His Holy Church.

That means He has freed you from your old ways of life. In Christ, you're free from feeling rejected. In Christ, you're free from your old pet sins. In Christ, you are loving and kind and righteous. In Christ, you're not afraid, but you are courageous, even in the midst of all other earthly things shifting as sand.

And as the Church, we rejoice in this joy in Christ. We are of one mind as we delight in those gifts Christ gives us, and as we delight in following Him. We also forgive one another as Christ forgave us when the cracks and rifts between us start to form. It is in this way that the Lord builds us into His Church with Christ as the cornerstone.

And so too, in this joy, we can look around and see that there are stones missing! There are gaps in the spiritual house of the church that only certain stones can fill. If you're listening to this and haven't been to church in a while or may not consider yourself a Christian yet, give us a call, we'd love to show you where you fit in! |And as the spiritual house of God, cracks may form from time to time, but let us always return to Christ as our cornerstone. On Him alone we build, and built on Him, we can never fall. Amen!