

## Marvelous Light

### 1 Peter 2:2-10

This is the fourth Sunday after Easter, and the last bloom from the lily has dropped. Alleluia has been tucked away for next year, and we are precious close to Pentecost and Ordinary Time. What better day to call for a refresher course about the impact of Easter Sunday? Though every Sunday is supposed to be a little Easter, we all know that the march through Ordinary Time can feel long and drawn out. All the Easter gladness we can collect must carry us across that long trek and sustain us, fully convicted by the power of the resurrection.

It is a pep talk of sorts that 1 Peter attempts in chapter 2. Pulling out all the Hebrew Scripture stops, the technical connections between past and present are presented. Peter tells this people that feel forgotten and abandoned by the larger world what they are to eat. What they are made of. What their house needs to be made of. Who they are; what is their vocation; and where they are to live. "O taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps. 34:8) becomes the condition for salvation: "if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good" (v. 3). The living stones of Isaiah 28 predict the cornerstone that the new Christians believe has become Christ. Finally, the pitiful rejection of Hosea's children becomes the reversal of fortune for those who follow Christ (v. 10)! While these connections are historically compelling, we are not great biblical scholars, and what happened in the past is past. What we want to know is how to be Christians today.

According to our passage the first thing we need is the spiritual milk of God's word. After all, it is the word of God that has convicted us and brought us to salvation. Many of us don't drink milk because of what it does to our stomachs and other parts of our digestive system. But we must remember that it was our mother's milk or formula that gave us the strength to grow into mature individuals. It is the same with our spiritual growth....we need the spiritual milk of God's word to meditate upon; to nurture us; to

help us develop spiritual muscles; give us strong spiritual bones and teeth. This is what saved us in the first place and it is what sustains us on our spiritual journey. Like a mother wants to provide uniquely and wonderful food for her own baby...God provides spiritual milk for us. As a new Christian "knows" at some deep level, "spiritual milk" is what will nurture their life of faith.

Alexander Schmemmann offers us an approach to a mystically rooted vision of Christian life with his emphasis on the role of the communing community in our encounter with God. For Schmemmann, we are constituted as church, as recipients of new life in Jesus, through our participation in the Lord's Supper. The Holy Communion is "the eternal actualization of the Church as the body of Christ." The Communion is the place where we "taste and see" that the Lord is good. Schmemmann speaks of human persons as fundamentally "hungry" beings, as we are hungry for God. In the Communion this hunger is satisfied, especially as it allows us to see that God has given us a world, not to satisfy our hunger, but so that we will turn from the world in thanks to God and there be satisfied. We are fed, then, through our connection to the communing community, and in this feeding we are at the same time the church—the community fed by God. We not only meet and come to know God chiefly as God has been revealed to us in Jesus, but we also are transformed through this encounter into Christ's body, manifesting Christ's ministry in the world. **Stephen Edmondson**

As we grow and mature, Peter reminds us that we are to stay close to Jesus, for He will build us up. Basic needs give way to building blocks, living stones that lay a foundation for the challenges sure to follow. We need a corner stone. A "cornerstone" is not only the stone set at the corner of two intersecting walls (as the name implies), but is one prepared and chosen for its exact 90° angle; as such, it is the basis for the construction of the whole building. Choosing the right corner is basic not only to the aesthetics of the building but also to its stability and longevity. We are to choose Jesus.

A solid foundation gives way to an identity that will not shrivel up at the first sign of trouble. Peter develops the identity for us as we imitate Christ:

*Jesus is* a living stone...we are Living stones

*Jesus was* rejected by humans...we are also rejected by humans at times

*Jesus is* in God's perspective, elect...we are in God's perspective, elect

*Jesus is* in God's perspective, honored...we are in God's perspective, honored

This is a message of hope, since it demonstrates that our suffering does not signal our rejection by God. After all, Jesus was rejected by humans but chosen by God. Therefore we live in the house where Jesus is the corner stone.

Peter also gives us our identity as *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people*:

- We are a spiritual house, where we become a part of a new community
- We become the new temple
- We are a holy priesthood; who offer "spiritual sacrifices," like holiness of life (1:15) and mutual love (1:22).
- We are an elect clan; God's chosen people.
- We are a royal priesthood and holy nation: like with Israel, God has delivered us from bondage, hears our cries of distress, acts to rescue us, and enters into covenant with us through Jesus Christ.

We are a people for God's possession and God has restored us to a right relationship with Him. Although we are identified with such beautiful descriptors like God's own people, we live in the real world. The real world is in real peril.

Included in our identity as Christians is our vocation: the call to proclaim something of what we know about God to the world. That is no small call. To counter the stereotype of small Christian living takes the weight of a person who has, according to 1 Peter, been warmly nurtured in the faith, who has the strength of one whose spiritual

house rests on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ, and whose identity is strong and secure in the arms of a God who serves up spiritual milk like no other.

Peter told us what to eat, what to build our house upon, and our vocation as priest, but he also tells us one more thing and that is where to live: in the marvelous light. Last week I was in Augusta, Georgia for work. That's where the Master's golf tournament is played each year. I arrived on Wednesday afternoon and had a lively walk along the river walk, in the light of the sun. It started raining after dinner and rained all the following day. On Friday the sun came out and the young lady I had met from Boston asked if I would accompany her to get a little sun. As we exited the building I observed a display that I had ignored. Oh, I had gotten close, but never had a reason to go outside. To my delight there was a historical display of an internationally known singer and record producer. That's the way it is in our lives when we don't walk in the marvelous light. We miss out on the wonderful things that He has for us. We must walk in the marvelous light of the SON!

Five Sundays into Easter, the power of the resurrection is palpable. The genius of God's actions on Easter Sunday is that there is death to counter every day, not just at Easter. There are oppressive structures to overturn every day, not just at Easter. There is life to be celebrated every day, not just at Easter. First Peter insists that the Christian life particularly equips us as believers with all we will need to proclaim the mighty acts of the one who calls us out of darkness into the light. For today, our role is clear and we are compelled to act. As God's own people we are empowered through Christ to sing, protest, dance, pray, and march. No stereotype can define us, because we have been claimed by God. No ridicule can undo us, because we have been named by God. No shallow expression of faith can represent us. Christ is risen! Risen indeed. It is enough to sustain us. It is enough to support us. It is enough to empower us for the days ahead. It is enough to help us walk in the marvelous light! Alleluia! Amen. **Joy Douglas**

**Strome Joel B. Green**

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