

Confirmation Sunday 11

May 22, 2011

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.
Amen.

My verses for today come from our reading from 1st Peter. *"Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, now you have received mercy."*

I love these verses because they reminds me, we are not just a group of humans living and existing in the same time and space, but we are God's people, chosen and precious in his sight maybe even more than that for we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.

What good is it to be chosen and claimed by God if we cannot sit back and celebrate the fact we have made it, that we have succeeded in assuring our entry into the Promised Land? Sitting back, enjoying the good life waiting for the coming of the end of our time on earth we can become like bumps on a log, couch potatoes, rocks laying about waiting for someone or something to pick us up and move us.

But that is not what God is calling us to do. We are God's children and we are to be about doing his business. But that is scary because we know being a child of God is not an easy task. That being chosen is not the end but beginning of a life long journey as a living stone, being built upon, being molded and transformed into the spiritual house wholly and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

It begins here today we celebrate with Annelise as she is baptized and welcomed into the family of God. Here her parents, sponsors will make promises on her

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behalf to help her grow over her life time as one of these living stones. We also celebrate with these young men and women as they are confirmed in their faith. Today they will stand before you the members of First English, family and friends and before God to claim the promise for themselves. They will promise to join with their parents and sponsors in taking on the responsibility towards the fulfillment of the promises made on their behalf at their baptism.

So what are these promises? What are they committing themselves to? The promises or responsibilities of baptism are in that second paragraph of the service of baptism in your bulletin. These promises are the central part of the conversation about baptism I have with parents as they prepare to bring their child to the font. They are also a large part of my conversation with the confirmation students the last couple weeks as they prepared for this day.

The responsibilities they are promising to uphold are these: To live among God's faithful people. To come to hear the Word of God and partake in the Lord's Supper. To learn the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments. To read the Holy Scriptures and be nurtured in faith and prayer. To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed. Finally to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Living among God's faithful people is hard and it is not just being out in the world with others who we think believe in God. It is about actively seeking partnership and community with fellow members of the body of Christ. Some people argue that they are spiritual but not religious so they worship God as they fish or hunt or walk in the woods or workout in the gym, or running 5 miles or work out in their gardens or sitting alone reading a book or even the Bible. For while those times in our lives can be refreshing and uplifting, they can and sometimes do become times of spiritual insight as you ponder what it

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means to be a member of God's family, a part of the holy nation you were welcomed into by the waters of baptism. Yet living in community among God's faithful people, becoming a living stone is so much deeper, so much more fulfilling than those moments might ever be.

We are called and encouraged to gather together with other living stones, so we might be an example for others as they are for us. We gather together to pray and lift each other, we gather together to serve and be served, we gather together to celebrate and support one another.

We gather to hear the Word of God spoken and heard, we gather to share a meal which both reminds us of the sacrifice Christ made for us as we are bound together as one family across the nation and across all time.

We gather so we might learn the basics of the faith, the creeds of the church, the Lord's prayer along with the prayers of the church as we pray for those in need just as we are prayed for. We come together to learn the ways of God given to us in scripture and to be nurtured in the faith. We gather together so we can be sent out as holy people, a royal priesthood, as living stones back into the world striving for peace and justice and proclaiming the Good News to a world in need.

This day we celebrate with those standing up affirming their faith, we celebrate with the Annelise, her parents, siblings and sponsors as she is baptized and welcomed as a member of this family we all share. For today is a day when we also reaffirm our baptismal vows, a day we too are reminded of the promises made on the day of our baptism and affirmed on the day of our confirmation. Reminder that this walk of faith is a journey that takes a lifetime to complete. To fulfill these promises is a weekly, daily, and hourly responsibility.

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But it is a shared responsibility among all who are gathered here along with all who gather in the name of Jesus where ever they come together in his name. It does not matter why you come it just matters that you come. Even if you do not get anything out of the service that day, even if you do not feel challenged or pushed in your faith, others are lifted up and bolstered in their faith by your presence. We gather not for the sake of ourselves, but for the sake of others in mission.

For you are God's people, chosen and precious in his sight you are a member of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people called, gathered and sent as living stones being built into a spiritual house offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

Pastor Michael

1 Peter 2:2-10 (NRSV)

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation--³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in scripture:

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

⁷ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,"

⁸ and

"A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

¹⁰ 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.