

A ROCK WITH A ROLE**1 Peter 2:4-12****(Read 1 Peter 2:4-12)**

INTRO: Each week I hear of a ministry done in our congregation and all I can say is – THE CHURCH JUST HAPPENED! (Marty Reider at Conoy telling Hope “We’ve all sinned in some way.” One person laid up with a bum leg and another ABCer coming and mowing his lawn. People helping with car repair. Others stopping by the hospital to visit ailing or recovering ABCers) We’re wrapping up our sixth month of looking at the shorter letters that we find at the end of the New Testament in a series we’ve called, Little Letters, BIG MESSAGE. And by what I just read, and with the illustrations I just gave of the Church at work, you can see how we minister to one another. Peter says are we living stones who take after our chief living Stone who is Jesus Christ. He is either a corner stone that holds the structure together for the faithful or a rock we trip over as we grope along blindly in the darkness of his absence if we rebel against him. One stone is life and the other is a grave stone that reads “Here lies a person who tried to go it alone.”

Our text also says we are a royal priesthood, which means that I’m not the only minister in this room. Yes, I’m the pastor, which means I’m the shepherd, but we are all ministers if we are Christ Followers. We all have a responsibility to live out our unique calling living stones and as called ministers. What this ultimately means is that we are each a rock with a role. We are a community of faith and we all contribute. In fact . . .

We are the solid wall of community

- A brick is just a brick when it is by itself – a brick placed together with others makes a wall. Barclay says that for Peter, "*Solitary religion is ruled out as an impossibility.*" And he quotes C. E. B. Cranfield who wrote, "*The free-lance Christian, who would be a Christian but is too superior to belong to the visible Church upon earth in one of its forms, is simply a contradiction in terms.*" And then goes on to say that *[i]ndividualistic Christianity is an absurdity.* We cannot stand alone, we need each other to carry out the mission of the Church. A Lone Ranger Christian who sits at home alone getting their preaching from the TV or by streaming online, and simply existing is not only cheating the community out of their gifts and talents, but they are slowly atrophying like an unused arm or leg. They lose their effectiveness because they lose all the effectiveness that is derives from coming together in the solid wall of community. There just isn’t any useful strength in just one brick.
- Together, as I said a bit ago . . .

EVERY one of us is a minister

- A piece I read this past helps here. The writer says, "*The vast majority of US citizens would understand the question, "Do you go to church?" However they may or may not answer, that same percentage will likely envision a congregation at a specific address on a certain day of the week. Headlining those congregations are professionals who lead us and manage programs designed to meet our needs. Christians come together on Sundays because that's what Christians do.*" While the writer was addressing how the label “Evangelicalism” has been tried and found wanting, he also is showing that the concept of the priesthood of all believers, which is all through the New Testament, and certainly in these verses here, is a major tenet of being the Church that is too quickly disregarded or blatantly forgotten.
- In the religions of Peter’s day, the priesthood was a privileged class. Indeed in the caste system of Hinduism it is still that way. To a certain extent, it is that way in the Catholic Church as well.
- In the Old Testament, the priest was the one who had access to God. He was the intercessor. In fact, there was only one priest who could, one day a year, even come into the presence of God. But beginning of the New Testament happened when the huge curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple was torn open when Jesus died on the Cross. From that point on, all who name the name of Christ can come into the Holy of Holies, which mean they can come into the very presence of God. That is where all Christ Followers became a holy priesthood. And in the same way that in the Old Testament, a priest is a bridge builder to God for those who do not have access to him, All Christ Followers are now commissioned to do the same thing.
- And the other function of a priest is to bring a sacrifice into the presence of God. We as priests are to offer ourselves. That is part of what Paul is teaching in Romans 12:1 when he says *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,* Now, think about it: What are

you to bring? What do you have to offer? How about yourself, your resources, your talents, your spiritual gifts. As a living stone and as part of the building that the Church is, you need to contribute what God has gifted you with – remember, you are a rock with a role.

- And here's another role. . .

We are the mouthpieces of God – telling of his work and telling of his plan.

- When I was kid we used to sing a song in Good News Club that went, *STOP, and let me tell you, what the Lord has done for me.* Verse 9 says we are to declare His praises – what has God done for you? Say it. What kind of transformation has he done in your life – declare it! Don't be shy. The world is watching. They want to see if Christ Followers really are different and if they really are transformed.
- It's no small thing to be called from darkness to light. We no longer are wandering around lost and aimless – we have a purpose – we are rocks with a roll – we need to tell people that.
- Verse 10 says, *Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* It's no small thing to made into something from nothing – we have been called out of insignificance into significance. Barclay writes: *It continually happens in this world that a man's greatness lies not in himself but in what has been given him to do. The Christian's greatness lies in the fact that God has chosen him to be his man [or woman] and to do his work in the world. (NOW DON'T MISS THIS PART) No Christian can be ordinary, for he is a man of God.* We are rocks with a role to play in the kingdom of God.
- That's why . . .

As God's chosen people – we need to act like it.

- The fact that we are a people of privilege just because we are living stones doesn't mean we should take it for granite. Don't waste your privilege – get to work.
- We are chosen and must be obedient. Living stones – a.k.a. Rocks with a role are under orders from a higher authority – we must obey.
- We are chosen for service – What is your gift? We have done Network Training in the past and we need to do it again. Network looks at your spiritual gift, combined with your personality, combined with your passion and helps you determine where your best ministry fits both inside and outside the walls of the church building. We'll offer it this coming winter. But for now, think about what your talents are and then use them for the kingdom.
- If we are a holy nation – we need to be holy. As we've pointed out numberless times before, that we need to be set apart for God's purposes. That means we are to be a picture of Christ to the people we come into contact with – or condensing v 12 a bit, *Live such good lives among them that, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*
- If we are a holy nation – those observing us from the outside better not see anything that they can use as ammunition. What relationships do we need to mend? What activities do we need to cease? What words and attitudes do we need to discontinue. The world is watching – are we ready for that?

Conclusion:

If we are going to be God's tools for transforming this society we live in – we need to be consistent. In Matthew 18:14 after telling the parable of the Good Shepherd where the shepherd leaves his entire flock to go find one lost sheep. Jesus says *In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.* All around you are people who do not know Christ. As a living stone – your job is to show them Jesus, by what you do and by what you say. That is what a Rock with a role does. Amen.