

In today's scripture reading we continue our reading of the Epistle of 1st Peter. In order to better understand the text that we heard today, there are a few terms and concepts that I will need to lay out for you in order to aid in our understanding of what he was writing at the time.

The first thing, is a reminder of whom it is that Peter is writing to. Peter is writing to "God's chosen strangers" in the world of the diaspora. In areas of Asia Minor, primarily in Turkey. Peter is writing to those in the world of the diaspora, which is a term that is usually used to describe the Jewish communities scattered throughout the Mediterranean world.

Now, Peter throughout this letter appears to be mostly addressing the Gentiles as we mentioned last week. It is something we can infer from context clues, as well as him addressing the recipients of the letter as God's chosen strangers. God's chosen were the Jews. The strangers, those who were not Jews, were the gentiles. Peter refers to them in terms that are usually reserved for Jewish believers, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and so perhaps that is one of the reasons he refers to them as those in the world of the diaspora despite not being Jews themselves.

Peter then writes about a spiritual temple. The idea of a spiritual temple would have resonated strongly with the listening audience. After all, despite being gentiles they would be strongly aware of what it means to be a Jew in the diaspora, one who is displaced from the temple. The actual house of God, where the Ark of God sits, where sacrifices can be purchased and offered, where sins can be forgiven, where one can be made right with God. The only place in the world where you can pray and fully know that God to be listening, as you are in his house.

Peter, knowing his audience understands the gravity of what the temple is and stands for, writes to them that there is a spiritual temple, a place where one might make a spiritual sacrifice and be made right with God. To say that there is a place where not only can you pray to God and be heard, not only can you be forgiven, but you are a part of its very structure and foundation. This idea would have been incredible and joyous news. To declare God was present with you outside of the physical temple.

To make matters even better in this spiritual temple, it is made up of believers who are the living stone, and Christ is both cornerstone and

capstone. Which from an architectural standpoint, is a difficult thing to imagine.

As many of us lack basic masonry knowledge and might have had to google what is a capstone for their sermon I will help explain. What makes these architecture terms interesting is that a cornerstone, while mostly symbolic in modern society, used to be the stone on which everything was based. Not just a piece of the foundation, but this stone was the one stone that was always laid correctly. Other stones might have been laid facing incorrectly but the cornerstone was always right and could be relied on to help orient the walls as they were being built.

A capstone in contrast, is the stone that goes in the top of an arch or even several arches. This stone is the one that holds all the others in the arch in place to prevent them from falling. What these architectural images would have meant for the listening audience, is that Christ is the one they can rely on to always be right and to orient themselves accordingly to him, and also trust him to hold them in place and support them along the way.

Peter's words had incredible impact on their lives. In fact it would have been incredible news for the believers. They need not make the arduous and expensive journey to Jerusalem to show their faith. They need not worry and fret that they have not made the effort to go into God's holy home. Because they are already spiritually connected and embraced in that holy space.

As I stated before this is incredible news to these early believers. But what is the good news for us today? Many of whom are already aware that God exists outside of one building, and can see God at work in the wild world around us? Honestly, it's pretty similar to what the message is for those whom Peter was writing to.

Let us revisit the concept of this spiritual temple briefly, it is made up of living stone, as we have interpreting meaning those who believe in Jesus. This is great news for us, because it means that we too are enwrapped in the presence of God. We too are sitting and standing in the halls of God's home, at right this very moment. Not because we are in the building that is Kinross Parish Church. But because you and I are playing parts in God's kingdom. Through our faith and our actions we are in fact helping to bring

the presence of Jesus Christ outwith these physical walls and this physical space.

As those who make up the living stone, we can rest assured in knowing that Christ is our foundation. He is our cornerstone, who is always ready to assure us of his truth should we stumble or shake in worry. He will always serve as our Guide should we worry that we are finding ourself in the wrong place. Just as a cornerstone guides the building of the rest of the structure.

Should we ever feel that we are without support unsure in our faith and struggling, we simply need to remember that Christ not only our cornerstone but he is also our Capstone. If you lean on him, he will help hold us together.

Please note I said, hold *us* together. For a capstone holds an archway up. We are held together as many beings, not simply held alone. What better way to symbolize this than with our celebration of baptism this morning? Just as Christ supports us and is our guide so too do we offer ourselves as guides to the children of our church, and support these young families in their journeys of faith.

Let us celebrate then today, that we have a saviour who serves as our cornerstone, helping us to right ourselves. We have a saviour who is our capstone, holding us firmly in place when we feel shaken. And we serve as a building block for each other and our growth in faith bringing God's presence into the world around us.

This is the word of our Lord,
Thanks be to God
Amen.

Austin Wicks