

Scripture Readings

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

Living Stones

There are a few things that stood out for me in these passages this week that I have not really noticed before. The most amazing thing for me was that in this passage which so often get's misinterpreted and abused, giving Christians a phrase to shut people out if they don't follow Jesus in exactly the right way, Jesus is actually welcoming and calling everyone (even his doubting disciples) to participate . These Passages commission us to participate in God's great love. Following Jesus may not be easy but the message is simple. Love God and Love neighbour and the rest will fall into place.

In 1 Peter 2:2-10 we discover *Jesus*, who was rejected by people, but honoured by God, is the cornerstone on which the holy builds a spiritual temple for his followers of which they are the living stones. This community built on Christ is called out of darkness into God's light to be God's holy nation. And then in John 14 Jesus encourages his disciples to trust in him and not be troubled, for he is the way to God and God is revealed and known in him. And because we know God through the revealed life of Jesus we will go on to do even greater things than Jesus did.

That baffled me when I first read it. In verse 12 Jesus says "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." We are called to be the I am in the world. We are not just to trust we are to be the very presence of God. We are to do works even greater than Jesus because we carry out his story of grace and love. We are to open the world up to more welcome, more love, more abundance as we live in faith.

Like Peter we are called to be the foundation of faith. As a church community we are a gathering of living stones empowered to live out God's mission to the world. This body of Christ is to be a company of comfort where hearts are not troubled. Where we know the way to live because we have seen the presence of God in Jesus. We have been welcomed into the the

household of God, an ultimate community of welcome where all are gathered. And as we are gathered we become a mighty nation, a royal priesthood of trust and love.

But we have some choices as we enter into this family of faith. Often as Christians we choose one of two responses to the challenges of life. On one hand we can grow fearful and alarmist, desperately pointing out the crises of the world. In that we take on the world as if it is all up to us. We live as if we consider the future survival of all humankind and creation is in our hands. Or, we can use faith as an escape, a way to focus on “heaven” and ignore the problems of earth. We become naive and passive in a faith that requires no engagement from us and no work on our part to change the brokenness of our world.

These Scriptures call us to a different response from either of these. While trusting in God’s care, and finding peace in the assurance of love, we are encouraged to work with God, living out God’s love boldly and graciously that our world might be transformed into something better as we seek to do the “greater works” that Jesus called us to, living as God’s people of light, welcoming all into God’s compassion and mercy.

John Van de Laar suggests “The assurance that faith brings gives us hope for the world and its future. The work that faith calls us to, makes us participants in God’s saving work in our world. These two go together, and call us, daily, to make local changes that have global impact. To consider what we buy and eat, what we wear and drive, how we vote and participate in community and social processes. Perhaps the place to start is to examine our hearts, find the places within us where we are most concerned or afraid, and ask how to lead us into faith and trust around that issue, while showing what practical steps we can take to be part of the solution to that specific global grief.”¹

Van de Laar continues “In local communities it is common for those who have the means to separate themselves from the problems of the rest of the world. We do this by creating gated communities for the wealthy, to protect them from the poor and from crime. We do this by hiding in a belief that our small efforts can make little difference. We do this by allowing our pessimism to lead us to self-interest and “us and them” thinking. But, in the Church we have no such luxury. *God* has shown us that it is in living and working for *the kingdom* that we find the assurance and peace that we seek, and this means not separating ourselves from the world, but engaging the world in Christ’s name. Rather than adopt a cynical “the world’s going to hell

¹ <http://sacredise.com/lectionary/2011/04/easter-5a/>

anyway” view of things, or buying into a “Left Behind” kind of pessimism about the world, we can embrace God’s saving and hopeful perspective on things and we can seek to be part of God’s healing. We can trust that God is at work in the world and in our communities, and we can look for the signs. And then we can actively participate in what we see God doing in our schools, in our neighbourhoods, in our local governments, in our churches and in our homes. We can seek to live as the community of light that, in whatever small way we can, shines light into the community around us.”² It is my prayer that this is the kind of active faith we as Squamish United Church are seeking to engage in as we transform our church and community.

The kind of faith that rests in the dwelling place of the holy.

The kind of faith that knows God is before us preparing the way.

The kind of faith that lives out a lives like Jesus who has shown us “the way, the truth, and the life.”

The kind of faith that brings us to do even ‘greater works’ than he did as we carry out God’s mission in the world.

The kind of faith where we recognize we are a holy priesthood

the kind of faith where we are the living stones of the path, building and foundations of faith for ourselves and others.

We are a gathering of living stones called to be Christ in the world. We are not a chosen priesthood that we may gloat and stand a part. One commentator stated. “Election is not for the elect. Election is for the purpose of mission.” I loved that vision. If we see ourselves a part of the body of Christ then we see ourselves as ones called to live a life like Jesus in our world.

May we be the foundational living stones that offer the way, the truth and the life so that all may live in abundance.

amen.

² <http://sacredise.com/lectionary/2011/04/easter-5a/>

