

Acts 7:55-60
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

Confirmation Sunday is a day that is ultimately about faith: the gift that God gave and nurtured for us, and for our confirmands, in particular. If someone asks what “faith” is, it’s often hard to put our finger on. Is it something we believe in our heads? Is it something we feel in our hearts? Is it a way that we live? Is it more than all of these? Our second reading from *1 Peter* speaks of the things of faith with several metaphors, which can help us wrap our heads around what faith truly is in our lives.

My 22-month-old son, Peter, is hilarious to get out the door at times. He has a litany of goodbyes he must say first. They always include people and any animals who are present (dogs, birds, etc.). But his greetings extend far beyond just the animate things. He says “hello” to statues, like the ones of Jesus and the four gospel writers at the Synod office. He often greets pictures of animals or people that he has enjoyed looking at. Some times he will say “goodbye” to his toys, like his baby doll or a treasured car of the day, or a nearby flower. I wish that I could peer into Peter’s brain to know how he thinks about these things, and why he says what he does.

With one of his metaphors, *1 Peter*, sounds similarly silly. Jesus was called “a living stone.” (*1 Peter 2:4*) And then the hearers were described in

the same way. “[L]ike living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.” (*1 Peter 2:5*) I have heard pastors make the connection that what we call “the church” is not actually the physical building at all. It is the gathering, the group of people, alive and flourishing. This is certainly something that Emanuel’s has talked about for a while, and it’s good for us all to remember. But that wasn’t actually what the author of *1 Peter* was aiming for. Churches at the time did not own buildings that were reserved for the worship. They gathered in people’s homes. We might have difficulty remembering that the church is people, but that would not have been their problem.



One commentator¹ explains: back at the time of *1 Peter*’s writing, objects that seemed to be unchanging, or rooted in the earth, were described as “living.” So buildings or structures that passed the test of time, that persisted age after age, seemed to be almost alive. With this in mind, of course Jesus would seem to be a “living stone.” This one would withstand the trials and storms of time. He would be like a great rock or a well-built temple. Since we are bound to Christ’s faith and life in baptism, Christian believers would seem to be living stones, too. With lives marked by the persistent, long-lasting, true faith of Jesus Christ.

¹ John H. Elliott as cited in Deffenbaugh, Daniel, Lectionary for May 22, 2011 on “Preaching this Week”, http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?lect_date=5/22/2011, 2011.

This analogy for faith may be a helpful one, reflecting the steadfastness of God in Jesus Christ. But faith in Jesus is not just an impersonal idea, or an inflexible monument. That might seem to be only a relic from the past, perhaps a museum exhibit that lingers for others to see. Thankfully, this same passage from *1 Peter* offers other imagery that helps to complete the picture of what our faith means in our lives.



Through Jesus, God speaks to us in both personal and communal ways, too. When we were all baptized, we were adopted, granted a favored relationship with God. We became true daughters and sons in Christ, full heirs of the household instead of mere bystanders. *1 Peter* tells us: “... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people...” (*1 Peter 2:9*) This quote, from the first part of verse nine, speaks of a chosen, special relationship in faith. We, along with a whole community of others, were selected by God for something important. We were set apart as priests or ministers, to the world in Christ’s name. We were gathered together to be God’s a holy nation, with a special vocation for our community to bless the world.

Verse nine continues by saying our vocation, a life of blessing, has a particular character. We exist in Christ “in order that [we] may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (*1 Peter 2:9*)

After hearing all about Harold Camping’s predictions about this weekend, it’s natural to wonder how his beliefs fit with those of Lutherans, and with what we hear. This text is NOT saying – and nowhere in the Bible does it say – anything about a moment of rapture, when believers would disappear from life. That didn’t happen last night, and scripture does not say anything like it, though many misread the Bible to think that it does.

The darkness that *1 Peter* speaks of is our darkness of unbelief, sin, and death. In baptism, God calls us out of our bondage to these powers that we may live in the light of Jesus Christ. God invites us to come to him through Jesus, who alone is “the way, the truth, and the life.” (*John 14:6*)

We come after knowing God’s generous love for us, and promises of abundant life through Christ. We come to witness the Holy Spirit unfolding God’s reign of justice and peace among us now. We come to experience and participate in Christ’s kingdom that is coming near. God’s love, Christ’s light, our identity, and our ministry all fit together seamlessly. When we are called to receive the fullness of God’s love in Jesus, we are also called to share that good news and love with others.



On this Confirmation Sunday, our four confirmands are affirming the faith that they were given in baptism. They are saying “yes” to Jesus, the living stone, steadfast and unchanging through the ages. They are saying

“yes” to the vocation that they receive through him and to their relationship with the community of Christ’s church.

Our class talked about the promises that they make today, promises that the Dugan and Cristina families made for little ones earlier this month. They will promise “to continue in the covenant God made with [them] in holy baptism:

- To live among God’s faithful people
- To hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper,
- To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
- To serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
- And to strive for justice and peace in all the earth”. *(ELW, 236)*

These promises are overwhelming, because our vocation in Christ is life-consuming. We are called to live, sharing our gifts with the grace and love of Jesus in our world today. None of us can do fulfill these promises without the grace of the Holy Spirit and the support of others. That’s why the congregation’s promise to “support these sisters and brothers and pray for them in their life in Christ” is essential. We can only do our part when we are in relationship to others – in a congregation close to home, and through Christian connections across the country and around the world. We can only receive all the blessings that God wants to give us by honoring these relationships.

Today we witness the promises of Joe and Laken, Pam and T.J.. We give thanks for the steadfast love that God has shared with them and for the faith that God has made alive in them, and. And we pray for them, that we may support the Holy Spirit's continuing work in their lives, that we may receive God's generous blessings through them. Thanks be to God. Amen.