

Last Sunday morning I joined the other parents of our congregation, sitting in on the Sunday School classes of my children. By in large there were not many surprises for me, for since we have come here I have realized what a fine Sunday School program we have. Our children are taught from scripture and about scripture. For that I am thankful. And for those who teach, dedicated, capable teachers I am also thankful. I sense that through the years the instruction of our children has been a strength of Christ Lutheran, Sunday I was reminded that it remains so.

But there was a bonus for me this ~~pkas~~ past Sunday. The lesson was about Christ the cornerstone. The third and fourth graders have been studying about this for a couple of weeks, having gone outside and looked at the cornerstones of the church buildings, and talking about the function of cornerstones, to knit two walls together. Last Sunday the question was asked, "How is it that Jesus is the cornerstone?" As I heard the question I was not sure how I would answer it, but my daughter Beth did not ~~xxx~~ hesitate, he holds together heaven and earth.

In these days since then I have found myself thinking about Jesus the cornerstone. For our second lesson ~~for~~ today is about his very thing.

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame. To you therefore who believe he is precious but for those who do not believe, The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

Stones, priests, sacrifices, images that ~~surrounded~~ ^{are related to} the temple are used to describe our life in Christ. In a sense the temple was the cornerstone for Israel. Here it was that heaven and earth were knit together. Here it was that God was known to be and to be known. But at the moment of Jesus death

all of that changed. In Mark we read: And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The presence of God, restricted to priests was now opened to all the people. Women, children, those wnot born of the tribe of Levi, even those not born ~~Jasxxxx~~ Jews now have free access to God. The veil was torn, through Jesus death the temple was brought down.

I like to think of it in this way: There was a curtain, it kept the people in their place, and though we never say it, I think the people felt it also kept God in his place. Like we think of him as being here, but not in motel rooms where adultery is committed, nor in our private conversations where we ^{pick over the faults of others} ~~pick over the faults of others~~ though we know God would have us only speak what is good. Yes, we like to have a place for God to be, a place to speak in hushed tones and not tell off-color stories, a place where we pretend that sex and money do not have the hold over our hearts that they do in all the rest of our life. This is God's house we say, so here our children are told not to run or shout as if to do so might be to wake up God. Yes, we want a place where we can confine God.

But when Jesus died the curtain was torn, and God escaped. He escaped into every home to hear the loveless words and shouting and cursing, he escaped into every business where morality is seen as a luxury that cannot be indulged in. He escaped into ghettos and prisons and homes for the aged and the places where the mentally ill are hidden away. When Jesus died he killed any religion that confines God to places and times, the curtain was torn and now God goes where he wills, he is present any where and everywhere.

Now we are God's house of living stones, Christ is the cornerstone holding together heaven and earth and we are built into him. Certainly when we gather around this table it is a holy table, blessed by the presence of our Lord. But when we pray, Come Lord Jesus, be our guest, then that table in your home or in a restaurant is also a holy table, surrounded by the priests of almighty God. Hear what Peter writes: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, ^{a holy nation} God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds

of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

This is not God's house, you are God's house, you are his temple. ^{As Peter has shown you are living in it} ^{You the ground into which}
are his priests, taking Christ and his grace and forgiveness wherever you
go, every life you touch is touched with the hand of God.

I must admit, I'm not different than any of you. I would like to confine God here so that when I am telling a questionable joke, I need give no thought to it. I'd like to keep God here, to divide up faith and life. But we who gave his son that he might escape into the world will not be confined by wood or stone, but will only dwell in human flesh and blood, in children and women, in blacks and ^{Christ} ~~Jews~~, in me and you.

This morning the Amen for the sermon will not be spoken by me but shall be sung by us all. For we shall sing the conclusion of this sermon, Hymn # 365. Open your ears and your hearts to what God declares to you as you ^{lift your voices} ~~sing~~ ~~open~~ ~~your~~ mouths in song.

This day then, ^{Christ} ~~he~~ will not remain here, at an altar but he will go with you.

Out that door and into your life he goes, where in your flesh & blood he intends to touch his world. With his love, with his forgiveness with his hope he ~~is~~ equips you, that you might be ^{his} blessing in this world. Amen.