



“Jesus is the Cornerstone”

Luke 20:17-18

March 15, 2020

This morning I want for us to open our Bibles to Luke Chapter 20. We are going to take some time to think about one of the most important and often quoted statements about Jesus Christ found in the pages of the Bible.

This morning we have a greatly needed reminder that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone; that He is the rock of our salvation; that He is the foundation of our faith; that He is the cornerstone of the people of God upon which all else is built. Jesus is the cornerstone.

This is familiar language for us for a couple of reasons. One reason is because it is used so consistently in Scripture. It appears over and over again. It was first noted in Psalm 118 and Verse 22. Then we see that Isaiah the prophet picked up the language from that Psalm and used it as well.

Then going to the New Testament, Jesus used the language of the cornerstone also from that Psalm in relation to Himself. Matthew and Mark and Luke all tell us about this occasion. Paul went on to talk about Christ as the cornerstone of the church.

Peter loved that language of Jesus being the cornerstone.—Peter, who was named Peter the rock by Jesus. Jesus is the true cornerstone. Peter went on to preach with that language in Acts Chapter 4. He used that language in the Epistle that he wrote. Jesus is the cornerstone.

That is familiar for those of us who have been reading Scripture because it is used so frequently. Also, we love to sing about the fact that He is the cornerstone. I wonder if these song lyrics are familiar to any of you. I think that they probably are.

**In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.**

That’s our Jesus. I wonder if anybody else has noticed that we seem to be in the midst of one of those storms. These are uncertain times. There are winds of uncertainty blowing all around us. It has yet to be seen what this health crisis is going to amount to.

We have yet to see just what the impact on our economy is going to be. There are some people that are rightly concerned. However, even in the midst of this uncertainty, I want to let you know that we have a sure foundation. We have a cornerstone, one that we build our lives on, by the grace of God, who is firm through any storm that we face in this life.

Here is something that I have noticed about rocks. They outlast things. Out by our two rose bushes, we have a burnt orange rock that I just about wrenched my back trying to pick from the ground. I needed Kristy's help to get it in the trunk of the car. We got it near Mt. Whitney, California.

I love that rock! I don't know how old it is, but I can tell you that it has been around a lot longer than I have. It will be here when I'm gone from this earth, because rocks last. Jesus is the rock. Jesus is the cornerstone. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

This is true too: The lives that are built upon the rock of Jesus Christ are going to endure in the end and will outlast all of the trials and the hardships and the pains and the difficulties that this fallen world throws at us, because Jesus is our Everlasting King! Jesus has brought us into His Eternal Kingdom in which we are going to dwell with eternal life forever.

Today, I want to encourage you that Jesus is the cornerstone; that He is the rock. It is my prayer that every life will be built upon Him and that you will feel the steadiness of His character and His love, even in the times that we are living in right now.

We are going to take a look at the time recorded in Scripture where Jesus used that imagery of the cornerstone in relation to Himself. For those of you who have been a part of this study of the Gospel of Luke, I will remind you that Jesus' use of this imagery came at an intense time.

It was the final week of the life of Christ. Jesus was teaching and preaching in the temple courts. The religious authorities of Israel had categorically rejected Jesus. They had declared Him a blasphemer, and they were plotting His death by crucifixion with the help of the Romans.

As we studied last week, we saw that Jesus had delivered the *Parable of the Wicked Tenants*. He continued to warn them what was at stake in their actions. Jesus warned them, but the people that heard Him could not believe that they would fall under God's judgment, even as they participated in the rejection of the Messiah.

Jesus told them to believe it and gave this *Parable of the Wicked Tenants* to make it clear. But they just could not wrap their minds around the fact that the vineyard of Israel might be taken away and God's vineyard given to others.

So Jesus told them to believe it, then He drew this quote from the Old Testament, where there is a prophetic picture of the rejection that was taking place. We see this here before us. These are words of warning, and we need to take that in. It is by His grace that Jesus gives such warnings.

We read what is here in Scripture. Luke Chapter 20 and Verses 16b through 19, after Jesus gave this parable:

¹⁶...When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!" ¹⁷But he looked directly at them and said, "What then is this that is written:

**“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone”?**

¹⁸Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

¹⁹The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people.

Once again, these are very strong words at a very intense moment, and Jesus was giving words of warning here that need to register in all of our hearts. We need to know that it is a dangerous thing to scorn the Messiah. We need to take that in.

What we see here in this portion of Scripture is that there are glorious pictures about our Lord that I pray we can take in and receive. I pray that the Spirit would be ministering these things to our hearts.

What we see here in this Cornerstone Prophecy is that it says something about Jesus and it says something about us. First:

1. What it says about Him (Luke 20:17)

Scripture says this very plainly. Once again Verse 17:

**¹⁷...‘The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone’**

Christ is the cornerstone. That is something for us to see and behold and hold on to.

Just to give us a picture of what the cornerstone is (pastor shows overhead illustration). We see the cornerstone is not the capstone or the keystone, different parts of the structure that are distinct from one another.

What is interesting is that in the Old Testament Hebrew language, they used the same word to refer to both the cornerstone, which is foundational, and the capstone, which was up at the top. Hence, in some of the different English Bible translations, you will find both words: Christ is the cornerstone. Christ is the capstone.

Guess what? He is both! He is the foundation upon which life and eternity is built. He is the cornerstone and He is the capstone. He is the elevated One that is positioned up on high. He is both.

However, here in this text, we are talking about Christ the cornerstone. If you will pardon a definition from Wikipedia, this is what a cornerstone is:

The cornerstone or foundation stone or setting stone is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. All other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus the determining the position of the entire structure.

So what we need to know is that in masonry nothing was more important than that cornerstone. One, because it was foundational, and also because it set the lines of the whole building. If the cornerstone's lines were not precise, then the rest of the walls would be askew.

The cornerstone had to be at the perfect angle. The lines had to be perfectly straight because the rest of the building would depend upon it. Christ is the cornerstone. The temple in Jerusalem was about to be destroyed. It happened in AD70.

But Christ is the cornerstone of the new temple of God, the church of the Living God. As the people of God, we are founded upon Him and all things are made straight by Christ. We need to set our lives upon who He is and the teaching and the doctrine that He gave to us through Himself and through His apostles.

Jesus is the cornerstone, but what we also see here in this text is there is a widespread tendency on this earth to reject Christ as the cornerstone. It was happening among the Jewish people with which Christ lived. They were rejecting Him. In the world today people set Him aside and they dismiss Him.

In the days that we are living in right now, we are getting drastic reminders of the frailty of the human condition. I need every person to know that Christ is the one and only cornerstone, the one and only foundation for life and eternity.

You need to be standing upon Jesus, positioned upon Him, if you want to have eternal life in God. He is the cornerstone—no other human philosophy, no other spirituality, no other religion, but it is Jesus. He is the rock upon which we stand. It is Christ and it is Christ alone.

Your efforts at good deeds are not the cornerstone. So many people operate by thinking that their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds and they are going to be okay in the sight of the Living God.

The fact of the matter is that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Sin permeates our lives more than we even know. Your good deeds, your morality and efforts, are no foundation for your eternity.

You will find that to be more like quicksand than the Rock. Jesus is the rock. Jesus is the foundation. In His love and in His grace, the Son of God came into this fallen world darkened by sin. Christ came into this world and He lived a life of pristine perfection, love, and holiness in the sight of God for us.

Jesus went to the cross and shed His blood, and the blood of the Messiah has supernatural power to wash sin away. When a person trusts in Jesus, declaring that you are created in His image and that you have fallen in sin in so many ways and confesses, *I see Jesus, Your Son, who lived for me and died for me. I put my trust in Him*, your life will be built upon Him and what you will find is that your life will last beyond everything that happens in this world.

You cannot make the attempt at having physical health and strength be the foundation of your life. Right now we are being reminded of how frail these bodies are. I don't want to get coronavirus, and I don't you to get it either. I pray you don't.

However, each and every one of us, our bodies are going to decline. We are going to die of something. But those who are found in Christ, those who are built on Jesus, who rose from the grave, what you will find is that after your body dies of something, your soul is going outlast your body.

You are going to proceed into Paradise. Some day at the Lord's perfect timing, He is going to return to this earth and He is going to raise up His people in resurrection bodies, and we are going live forever. That is our hope. Christ, He is the cornerstone! I pray that your heart would believe that and that it would steady you through whatever trials you are facing, particularly what we are facing as a people together right now.

Rejecting Christ is serious and we all need to hear that. We continue, and look at:

2. What it says about us (Luke 20:18)

Jesus continued in Verse 18:

¹⁸Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

Christ is the cornerstone

**¹⁷...The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone'?**

¹⁸Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

Jesus quoted Psalm 118, then He applied it in that way to help people understand the magnitude of the rejection that was taking place there in Israel in that day, and the magnitude of any such rejection that continues on into this day. It is serious.

Last week I was reading through a commentary on Luke by a brother in the Lord named Darrell Bock. He shed light on Verse 18 for me in a very helpful way by quoting a pithy little sentence found in an ancient commentary on Easter Chapter 3 and Verse 6. One of the rabbis commentating on something in the book of Easter said this. Listen carefully.

“If a stone falls on a pot, alas for the pot. If a pot falls on a stone, alas for the pot.”

You got it? So either way, if there is a run-in between a pot and a stone, it is going to be trouble for the pot and not the stone. (Pastor shows a stone and a pot). This is a beach rock that we found somewhere outside of a national or state park, not inside a national or state park. It was somewhere in San Diego County.

This rock is heavy for its size, close to fifteen-pounds. This is a cute little pot. Which one is going to win? If I put the rock on the floor and drop the pot on it, which is going to win? The rock!

If I put the pot on the floor and drop the rock on it, which is going to win? The rock! Do you get the picture? This is serious. At a time like this where there is suffering happening, there is something in me as a pastor that just wants to soothe and comfort.

But King Jesus gives us some eternal perspective here that everybody needs to hear, that you need to hear!

¹⁸Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.

If Christ is a stumbling block to you, if He is a rock of offense, if you come across Christ and you find His teaching fictitious, a fairy tale, or if you find Him offensive, or if you don't like the claims that He, the King, makes and encountering Him is like stubbing your toe on a rock, your life is going to be shattered in this world.

Your life is not going to be what God has intended it to be. And when the time comes at the end of the age, when the great judgment comes, you are going to be crushed in the judgment because of your sin, because of your transgression, because of the many ways that iniquity has filled your heart and life.

We are living in a society that does not take sin seriously, but God is holy and He does. I pray that grace will teach all of our hearts to fear in view of what is happening in our day, because we just have a short time on this earth. Your body is going to get sick and die of something.

I say these things to you out of deep concern. There is a heaven and there is a hell. There is good news in this teaching. There is bad news about your sin, but there is good news about God's solution for your sin. His name is Jesus.

For all this language about things being crushed, what we read about our Messiah, our Lord and Savior, in Isaiah 53 is that He was pierced for our iniquities. He was crushed for our transgressions. Jesus went to the cross, He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us. Jesus paid the price for our sin so that in Him, we could become the righteousness of God.

I wish I had some super glue with me, but I don't so I can't glue this little pot back together. There is not a single one of us here who is not a shattered pot. Each and every one of us has willfully sinned against the will of the Lord.

I'm not preaching to you as a self-righteous man. I'm preaching to you as a sinner in need of grace. I have stumbled over the commands of God so many times in my life. Time and time again I have deliberately sinned, knowingly sinned.

All of us, every one of us has done the same. But the Lord takes lives broken by sinful folly, He takes lives shattered by iniquity, and He takes those pieces and He puts them back together. We are all broken pots held together by the divine adhesive of God's grace.

God can take all your shattered pieces, no matter how messy life has become, He can take every last piece and put it together. The church is filled with broken pots, lives reassembled by the grace of the Living God. Our lives need to be standing on the rock.

And guess what? When the great resurrection comes, we are no longer going to be a little clay pot. We are going to be raised up and in our resurrection bodies, physical, tangible, glorious, strong bodies, we are going to be like the finest porcelain artistry for all eternity, if our lives are built upon the Rock.

Right now we have frail bodies that can get sick with things like Covid-19, along with a great many other things. But in Christ and in Christ alone, our existence is eternal. We live forever. It is when our hearts and minds are being transformed by this eternal perspective of the grace of God that, even in the midst of these times where our hearts can be tempted to shiver and quake, but when our lives are built and focused on Jesus, He is going to bring us His calm.

Jesus is going to be an ever present help in times of trouble. He is going to be our peace. Let's close in a word of prayer.