

Sunday, May 7, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
“Like Living Stones”
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 and 1 Peter 2:2-10

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants answer, “What are the characteristics of rocks and fortresses?”

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16. Context. Psalm 31 alternates between the psalmist’s description of his distress and his confidence in God. Luke records some of the words of this psalm (“into your hand I commit my spirit”) as Jesus’ last words from the cross, and, as was seen above, among Stephen’s last words.

1 Peter 2:2-10. Context. This week’s reading from 1 Peter has an almost poetic relationship to the reading from Acts: there, Stephen sees the object of his devotion, Jesus, the one who has fed his soul, in glory; here the author encourages his hearers to yearn for spiritual nourishment as a baby yearns for its mother’s milk. There, Stephen is stoned to death; here, Christ is a living, life-giving stone, a cornerstone, and all who come to him become living stones, built up into a house/priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices to God. The author here cites explicitly only three verses from Scripture, but every one of his sentences is an echo of either the Psalms or the prophets. The last sentence takes the story of the prophet Hosea’s children – named “No People” and “Not to be Pitied” as prophetic signs of the Lord’s rejection of Israel – and turns it (as does Hosea) into an affirmation of God’s mercy, in the present case towards those who had never been a part of God’s covenant community.

Read Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 and 1 Peter 2:2-10

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

Read Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 and 1 Peter 2:2-10 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Some reflection questions –

- "Into your hand I commit my spirit." (Psalm 31:5) *"I'm putting everything I have in this rocky refuge. My times are in your hand. My past and my future, not to mention my present."* What might it look like to trust God fully? What area of your life do you need to work on trusting God?

- Look at all the uses of the word "stone" in this passage: Jesus is *a living stone*, 1 Peter 2 v. 4; we are like *living stones*, v. 5; Jesus as *the cornerstone*, v. 6-8. What might it mean to be like living stones (v. 5)? Do you think Peter is offering this imagery from his personal experience?
- "... And like living stones, let yourself be built," (v. 5) "*Peter pleads with us. Let yourself—not decide for yourself. You're not in charge; you're a stone, for heaven's sake! You're not the architect; you're building material. Be built into something greater than yourself, something you may not even see right now.*"
- What does it mean to you that God is including you in building this spiritual temple? What aspects of our church shape us (as stones) to fit together well?
- 1 Peter 2:9-10 says, "...God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9b) and "now you have received mercy" (2:10b). How is this your story? What does it mean to be part of God's people? How have you experienced moving from darkness to light in your journey? What are you going to do this week in response to these two scriptures?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Our Rock and Redeemer, we give you thanks for choosing us and making us precious in your sight though we have failed you in many ways. You called us out of darkness into your marvelous light. Use us now as your living stones to build your community and to share the good news of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.