



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

May 12, 2019

Counter Cultural

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as 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 whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."
—1st Peter 2:4-8

If you travel up Third Street in Jacksonville, Oregon, you'll come to one of the most beautiful homes I know. My wife's brother built it, for his family to settle in and call home. Beautifully situated, its open view brings the surrounding forest into its décor, joining the comfortable indoors with the great outdoors. But its key feature is more than beauty. Every nook and space speaks of home.

In the Bible, God hesitated to build Himself a home on earth. He praised David's desire to build a permanent house to His glory, but He waited a generation to build the temple and move in. God preferred the tabernacle, where he could move around with His people, because *heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain* the maker of heaven and earth (1st Kings 8:27). God's temple, the house where He lives, is His people.

We are the home where God lives on earth. The LORD who lived with His people in a pillar of cloud and fire settled into a temple made of stone, until the time came for Him to become one of His people in His Son, Jesus Christ. Then, after Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin, He ascended from the earth, so His Spirit could descend to be—not just with us—but in us. We are God's temple, and the Holy Spirit within us is the awesome shekinah glory of God on earth.

This tremendous fact is true for everyone who comes to God by faith in Jesus Christ. We are the holy place where God lives. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, and He lives on earth in us. We are God's priests, who offer access to the Father in heaven through the Gospel.

Christ is the One who builds His house. In Christ, God became a part of His creation. In the Church, He joins His people together and builds us into a *spiritual house*. We are in the world just as Jesus was, and just as Jesus did, we identify with those around us, because we share a common humanity. But also like Christ, we are not of this world. The power of the Church is in our distinctness. Holiness befits God's house. Distinctness invites rejection, and the world finds holiness unpalatable.

The Church is countercultural. We influence the world around us by being different. This world is not our home, and our goal isn't to find cozy comfort here. Our *spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God* come from our willingness to reject earth as our home and allow the world to reject us. We find our home in God as He makes His home in us. Our call is to proclaim Christ and trust Him with whatever our call may cost. All our joy is in God, and our hope lies in the success of His plan to build His Church through us.

That's why prayer essential to our mission and key to our role as God's people on earth. It bonds us to the God who calls us, directs our efforts in His service, and empowers us to do even greater things than Jesus accomplished while he was on earth, as we build on the foundation He laid at Calvary.

And God will not withhold any good thing we ask for, because He loves His people—the home where he's chosen to live.

To the praise of God's glory!

Loosening Our Grip

So much of what God is doing in His Church involves helping us let go of the things of earth. Comfort is our natural human desire, but it has an anesthetic effect. It dulls us to the stark conflict between our earthly and heavenly homes. It allows us to get cozy in a world doomed to destruction. It normalizes the perversities of sin, until we can no longer discern the difference between the good God offers through Christ and the delights of earthly enticements.

It is good but painful to loosen our grip on all the earth offers us. We are so tempted to cling to this world's goods like a person drowning clutches to their bag of gold. God knows how to pry our fingers loose from earthly treasures, so He can fill our hands with eternal riches. He loves to enable us to let go of what the world has to offer, so we can embrace Him.

Pray for the success of the change God is working in His Church. Seek His help as you *sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart* (1st Peter 3:15). Jesus is the *treasure hidden in the field* and the *pearl of great value*, who is worth far more than everything we have.

Pray for our pastors and elders to lead the way. Pray for ...

1. **Our Pastors and Directors:** Scott Williams, Tony Chute, Taylor Mendoza, Terilyn Brown, Geoff Grant, and Marti Wiegman.
2. **Our Lay Elders:** Tim East, Steve Flood, Mark Kiker, Mike Russell, Vinoj Zechariah, and new elders who come onto the board.
3. **Our Church Staff:** Michelle Balga, Bob Brown, Andria Brucks, Chelsae Grant, Carolee Jefferson, Amber McEwen, Tamene Menna, Mark Norland, Corie Saunders, and Teri Vaughn.

Praise Record

Note when and how God answers your prayers. It will help you to see that He really is paying attention.

Date	Request	Date	Answer

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

–1st Peter 2:9