

March 10, 2024

Fourth Sunday in Lent: "Becoming Truly Alive: Recognizing the Valuable Stones"

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

300 E. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO 80524

Worship: 10:00 AM

Pastor: Steve Ramer

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SEASON OF LENT

Stones come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Some are given great monetary value and some are very useful to sculpt statues or build structures that can stand a thousand years. However, most just lie there, often getting in the way. Yet God calls us to become "living stones!" What does this mean? How can this transformation happen? Who are these living stones in our midst and which ones, yet unearthed, will also spring to life?

1. GATHERING

Musical Prelude

Call to Worship (Based on Psalm 19)

Leader: The heavens proclaim the glory of God and the sky expresses God's handiwork.

People: Without saying a word each day and every night pours forth exhalation and knowledge of our creator!

L: Among the heavens, God has made a tent for the sun and comes out every day with great joy like a bridegroom who anticipates his bride and like a fast runner who can't wait to run the race.

P: The rules God desires us to live by are perfect and they revive our souls.

L: God's decrees are always true, clear, sure, make our hearts sing, and make the most simple of us wise!

P: To follow the commandment of the LORD, opens our eyes.

L: God's will is more desirable than 24-carat gold and sweeter than honey dripping from the honeycomb.

P: In following God's will, there is both warning and great reward.

L: Save me Oh God from those faults that I cannot see. Do not allow me to become conceited and do not let my bad choice take control of me.

All: May the words I choose and desire of my heart always return to you, O LORD, because you are my rock and my redeemer.

Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 51:1-17)

God, you always show mercy because your love is steady like a boulder! Please forget all my failures and scrub me from head to toe with soap and hot water to wash off the stains. My faults are many and you would be justified in punishing me harshly. But instead, you desire what is true in me and what I hold deep within my heart. Create a heart that is true and fill me with your spirit. Restore my joy and sustain me when I'm weak. God, open my lips so I can sing your praises.

Congregational Singing

Welcome and Passing of the Peace

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also, with you.

All: Let us offer one another signs of peace, reconciliation, and love.

2. HEARING GOD'S WORD

Scriptures: Luke 21: 1-5

He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.

He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

"Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a difference. They bless the one who receives them, and they bless you, the giver." — Barbara De Angelis

Jesus didn't say, 'Blessed are those who care for the poor.' He said, 'Blessed are we where we are poor, where we are broken.' It is there that God loves us deeply and pulls us into deeper communion with himself. "
— Henri Nouwen

3. RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Congregational Singing

Joys and Concerns

Offering & Music

Sending (based on Romans 12)

I appeal to you, my brothers and sisters, only because God has been merciful to me, to live as living sacrifices - which is true spiritual worship.

Don't succumb to the acceptable patterns of the world around you, but be transformed, so that you can discern what is God's will, which is always good, acceptable and perfect. And it is only because of God's grace that I remind each one of you to be careful not to think of yourself too highly and to listen carefully to one another, because each of you does have something valuable say.

And just like your body has lots of parts that have very different functions, not all of you must think and function alike in order to become the body of Christ. But whatever part we play, love must always be genuine. While it's okay to hate what is evil, be sure to always hold on to that which is good.

Take care of each other and always be hospitable to strangers. Bless those who hurt you but be sure to rejoice with those who rejoice and cry with those who are in tears. Learn to get along, it does take work you know. Avoid acting "stuck up" by rubbing shoulders with the least "cool" people and don't act like a "no-it-all," because, let's be serious, none of us are!

Be true peacemakers, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink." Because if you are overcome by evil, the good can never win.