

“Growing Into Salvation”

1 Peter 2:2-10

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk,
so that by it you may grow into salvation.

If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good,
come to Christ, a living stone, though rejected by mortals
yet chosen and precious in God’s sight,
and like living stones,
let yourselves be 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: See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

To you then who believe, he is precious;
but for those who do not believe,
the stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner,
and a stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall.

They stumble because they disobey the word,
as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim
the mighty acts of him who called you
out of darkness into God’s marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

Growing Into Salvation

1 Peter 2:2-10

May 3, 2026

Rev. Michael P. Catanzaro

I.

Our sermon text today comes from 1st Peter. It is that rare day when someone preaches from 1st Peter. However, given the world events of late we are going to give it a shot, albeit with a great *subtlety*. Ready? 1st Peter, along with 2nd Peter, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John, James, Jude and, sometimes, Hebrews (depending on who is counting) belong to a group of New Testament writings known collectively as “the catholic epistles.” In the same way we use of the word “catholic” in the Apostle’s Creed we read each week, in this context catholic, small “c,” is meant to connote “universal.” Given that “epistle” is another name for letter, these books are letters about the Gospel and the life of faith which were intended for general use among any of the first century Christian Communities. In contrast to these “catholic epistles” are the Pauline epistles which were letters meant for specific, first century churches located in Asia Minor that were written to address issues unique to life in their respective congregations.

II.

Although 1st Peter is attributed to Peter, the best we can be sure of is that it was written by a church elder (or presbyter) writing from Rome to an audience of the Gentile persuasion. In looking at the book as a whole, which I will mercifully summarize for our purposes this morning, 1st Peter is written to those who are suffering because they have broken with the social fabric of their community. These are folks who are trying to live life in a different way. They are swimming up stream and bucking the trends of popular culture. They have become “aliens” in their own land. Expressed more simply, 1st Peter is written with the aim of helping people who *are* suffering so that they may *endure* that suffering.

Now, this is not a popular position to take these days. When we hear about folks who are suffering, or if we ourselves are oppressed or persecuted, we do not seek to merely endure the suffering. Instead, we want to *do* something about it. We want to start a revolution, sue for damages, oust the incumbent, or retaliate in kind.

III.

I think the reason few sermons are written on 1st Peter, is because no one wants to bear someone telling folks they should endure an abusive situation. Especially when that person is standing in the pulpit. However, every once in a while some fool (like me) will stand up and say... if you are currently in an abusive situation, or have been in an abusive situation, sometimes the only thing you *can* do is to endure the abuse. Moreover, sometimes the only thing you can do with abuse...is to survive it. Here is how...

IV.

Our passage from 1st Peter says the following: like newborn infants, we are to crave the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it we may grow into salvation. *Huh?!?* Ever sit around minding your own business when you notice this ache in your gut and you realize you have a sneaking suspicion that there has just *got* to be “something more to life?” *That*, my friends, is the craving for salvation. A longing so deep, a desire so powerful, it is like the newborn’s desire for her mother’s breast. A desire so visceral and complete that although your mind will *try* to ignore it, your body will simply not allow it. So, if you have had even a small taste and discovered for yourself that God is good, the author of 1st Peter would encourage you to come to the one who, like a nursing mother, will never deny her own children the opportunity to grow into salvation.

V.

Which is all well and good, but here is the thing: it is going to take *time* to grow into salvation. Like a child’s development takes time or the construction of a house takes time. Moreover, although those around you may reject you, or misunderstand you, or make you suffer, or even abuse you, you **MUST** maintain a belief that *you* are chosen and precious in God’s sight. While it is true that we are like living stones which, even now, are being built into a spiritual house, we are not responsible for the design of the house! Nor do we have to worry about how or when the house gets completed! We simply have to *be* that precious stone God has chosen us to be, and to be used.

VI.

The author of 1st Peter says that like you, Jesus was also chosen and precious; the very cornerstone of the spiritual house to which we have been joined. However, Jesus was *rejected* by those who would not believe, and now he has become the very stone which makes the unbeliever stumble. Hence, Jesus becomes like a stone placed in the midst of a path. Though clearly visible to all who have eyes to see and heart to believe, this same stone becomes a stumbling block to those who cannot see it or, if they do, try to avoid it or deny it. Yet, truth will not be denied, will it? And the truth is, you are holy! Though the world may persecute you, though institutions may abuse you, though people in your life may harm you, you have a birthright that can never be taken away: *you* are sacred.

VII.

Not *just* you, however, but I am as well and, moreover, all of us together. Those of us who are searching and trying to live life in a different way, by swimming up-stream and bucking the trends of popular culture. In so doing, *we* have now become a royal priesthood, *we* are God's own sacred people. Now, however, God calls us in this sacredness of ours to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

"Ah HA!" you say, "Rev. Mike, here is the rub!" Well, you are correct. Because if the Gospel Jesus Christ is about anything, it is about sacrifice. That said, let us be clear about what we are saying. Sacrifice is suffering with a *purpose*. Suffering without a purpose is *abuse*. In either case, the suffering is always the same; the pain, the shame and the damage are always the same. However, the *result* of that suffering can be *very* different.

VIII.

Although you are chosen and precious, you *will* suffer in your life, just as Jesus suffered in his. The only question is, will that suffering have a purpose? For Jesus, the answer was yes. His suffering was a sacrifice which claimed salvation for us all. That sacrifice, that mighty act, is now calling us out of the darkness into God's marvelous light. Will we dare to heed the call, though? Will we go stand in that light? Will we honor the ache we feel, that craving within us which compels us to grow into our salvation? Do we understand

that all of our suffering can move from senseless abuse to purposeful sacrifice if only we will move out from the shadows of our own pain?

IX.

To reiterate, there is no purpose in making people suffer. However, people's suffering *can* have a purpose. The issue becomes whether we can claim a *purpose* for our suffering so that we may transform the abuse we *have* endured and *are* enduring, into sacrifice? Now, you may say what good is suffering with a purpose? If the suffering feels the same is there any real difference between abuse and sacrifice? I would say yes, and the difference is this: *mercy*.

If we suffer without purpose, we will never learn mercy. Moreover, that lack of mercy may very well condemn us to a perpetuation of the abuse. However, if we want that abuse to end, if we want to see our suffering as sacrifice, then we must learn mercy. Because the *only* purpose in being made to suffer is mercy.

X.

Once, we had not received mercy. Now, though, we have received God's mercy; which is the mercy born of the cross. Mercy is that something aching in our gut. It is that craving for our own salvation, that "something more to life" for which we are longing. Most comforting, if we can show that mercy to ourselves we might even find the strength to take those final steps which move us out of the darkness of our own pain and into God's marvelous light.

Because, like a mother suckling her child, God will never deny us the opportunity to grow into salvation. It is, though, going to take some time. So let us give ourselves, and others, that time; like a gift which stretches out into eternity. Amen.