

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
May 18, 2014
Confirmation Day**

1 Peter 2: 4-5

Built for a Purpose

- 1. A Building Project**
- 2. Today, 8 Building Projects**
- 3. Built for a Purpose**

**Hymns: 515 – “In Christ Alone”
– 449 – 310 - Closing: 382**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:4-5)

For many who are here today, you know all about building projects. For a church, a building project is one of the biggest, most expensive, most involved activities that a church will ever embark upon. From every person in the congregation, it requires an investment of time, money, resources, energy, commitment, and work. And because of everything that goes into a building project, when the construction is finally done, there is sure to be a celebration that will occur, as well as a collective exhale and sigh of relief. The natural tendency - and the inherent danger of any building project - is to think that when the brick and mortar are put away, the work is done as well.

But the truth about a building project is that when the construction of the building is finished, the real work is just getting started. That structure is just a place in which the real work of the church will happen. And if there isn't the same investment of time, resources, and energy put into that church work, then the effort put into raising the walls and roof is all in vain. A church is always built for a purpose.

With that thought in mind, and using an illustration given to us by the Apostle Peter, today we are looking at eight individual building projects. They are projects that began long ago. They are projects that have required a tremendous investment of time, energy,

resources, and commitment. They are projects that have been built for a purpose.

When each of these young adults came into the world as babies, it was clear, in spite of what gushing family and friends might have said about you, that work was needed. Work was needed because each of you was marred by sin, just as each and every one of us was sinful at birth. And so, because of that sin that affected you, a building project was begun. The construction started at baptism, when each of you was washed with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Forgiveness for your sins was given. Faith was created. God marked you as his property. He would now be in charge of this building project.

Yet, even after all the change that was accomplished in your baptisms, the building project would continue; more building would be done. Jesus said that those who are baptized in the name of the Triune God also need to be taught everything that God speaks in his Word. Through the years, consider how many people have been involved in that building work. It began, as it always needs to do so for little children, in the home; with your parents reminding you of Jesus' love through bed time songs; giving you structure through meal time devotions; teaching you the basics of how to fold your hands and go in prayer to your heavenly Father. Others in your family also contributed, encouraging you in your faith; reminding you of your baptism and what that made you. I'm going to do now what I hope each of you will individually do later: “Thank you parents and family for the building you have done.”

But there were others who were part of the construction project. Through their patience as you learned, sometimes not so quietly, how to sit and listen and worship in God's house; through their instruction in Sunday and Vacation Bible schools; through their support of teachers and pastors who have given you God's Word and guided you through your Catechism instruction; your church was part of that building work too. So it is important that we pause again and say, “Thank you members of Holy Trinity for the building that you have done.”

Where has all of that building brought us? Through that work that began at the font, and which has continued in the Word, today we have in front of us eight Christian people, who believe that Jesus is their only Savior from sin, who know the truths of God's Word, who are ready to stand and confess to God and his church what they are convinced of. We have eight Christian people who are ready to show what they have, by God's mercy and guidance, been built into.

All of that makes this a great day, a day of celebration, a day of thanks. For these individuals, and for their families, of course, but also for all of us here, and even for God and his angels in heaven; who rejoice

whenever a child of God stands and confesses to the world what they believe. However, as special as this day is, there is one thing that it is not. This is not a day to exhale and let out a sigh of relief. It is not time to sit back and relax, as we are so often tempted to do when the construction of a building project is done.

That is because the work is just getting started. Listen to what Peter says about you, who are coming to stand before God and make promises of faithfulness and service: *“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:4-5)*

What Peter tells us in those words is that God has been building - and it's important to note, he will continue to build - you for a purpose. And that purpose wasn't just to get you to this day. As God has taken the time and used so many people to build you, he was doing so that you might be a part of a spiritual house.

The main function of a house is to provide protection, and make no mistake, that has been God's primary purpose in building you up spiritually, that you might be able to sustain the attacks that come against you. Though you might have thought that you were being tested, as you sat here on Wednesday in front of the church answering all those questions about what you believed, I'll be very clear; the real test is just beginning.

In the coming years, as you continue to be shaped and educated in the world as young adults, Satan will come at you as hard as he possibly can. He will launch blatant and aggressive attacks directly at you, using the world that you are about to be thrown into in every way that he can. His desire is to destroy what God has spent every day since your baptism building up. Your views of the Bible will be attacked; what you view as right and wrong will be challenged; your priorities in life will be questioned every single day. You will face intense and constant pressure to conform to the world around you.

That is why it is essential that you always remain part of the church. On your own, you would stand no chance of enduring through Satan's attacks. But you are not on your own, listen closely as I read Peter's words again, *“you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.”* Though each one of you could be looked at as individual building projects, you are also part of something bigger, something that groups you together with your fellow confirmands, something that groups you together with every member of Holy Trinity, something that groups you together with every Christian in the world: you are being built into one spiritual house, the Holy Christian Church as you have learned to call it.

And as part of that Church, you have this assurance, you are never standing alone in this world. You are part of a Church built by God, with each stone in that church hand-picked by God and precious to him, and he will never let anything hurt or destroy what he has invested so much to build. You are part of a spiritual house built to withstand and last.

He has built you for another purpose, *“you also, like living stones, are being built to be a holy priesthood, offering sacrifices acceptable to God.”* God has built you up, not just so that you might withstand attacks, but also that you might do his work. Peter here says that every person who is a part of the Church is also a part of the priesthood. This call to preach and defend and share the Word is not something that we can decline, it's not something that we can defer to others, it's not something that we can claim to be unqualified or untrained or unable to do. Today, God is telling you that you have been built to be his priest. And joining with each one of the priests who sit around you today, your life has one purpose - to build God's church.

Yet, with that call to purpose, it is important to remember this thought. You are stones, not bricks. **Bricks are all alike; stones are all different—in color, texture, size, and shape.** Each one of you has different skills and different interests; each one of you will go down different paths in different places; each one of you will work in different ways. **But there is a place for us all in God's building,** because you all share this beautiful quality: you are living stones, precious and useful to God. **And takes all the different believers, and joins them together in dazzling and beautiful form for his glory.**¹

What brings us altogether and makes this all possible is what Peter ends his words with. And it is the message that I'll end my words with, they are words that I pray you hold onto for all your lives.

By the hard work that Jesus put into saving you, by the price that he paid to purchase you from Satan's grasp, you are able to be presented to God your Father as a living stone, made acceptable through Jesus Christ. You are chosen. You are precious. You are built for a purpose. Amen.

¹ (Jeske, M. A. (2002). James, Peter, John, Jude. The People's Bible (86). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House.)