

Becoming ... One with Christ

May 14, 2017

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:2-10

² Be like newborn babies who are thirsty for the pure spiritual milk that will help you grow and be saved. ³ You have already found out how good the Lord really is. ⁴ Come to Jesus Christ. He is the living stone that people have rejected, but which God has chosen and highly honored. ⁵ And now you are living stones that are being used to build a spiritual house. You are also a group of holy priests, and with the help of Jesus Christ you will offer sacrifices that please God. ⁶ It is just as God says in the Scriptures, "Look! I am placing in Zion a choice and precious cornerstone. No one who has faith in that one will be disappointed."

⁷ You are followers of the Lord, and that stone is precious to you. But it isn't precious to those who refuse to follow him. They are the builders who tossed aside the stone that turned out to be the most important one of all. ⁸ They disobeyed the message and stumbled and fell over that stone, because they were doomed. ⁹ But you are God's chosen and special people. You are a group of royal priests and a holy nation. God has brought you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Now you must tell all the wonderful things that he has done. The Scriptures say, ¹⁰ "Once you were nobody. Now you are God's people. At one time no one had pity on you. Now God has treated you with kindness."

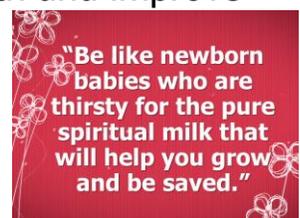


Today is Mother's Day!! Happy Mother's Day! Earlier in the service we recognized our teachers as well. Just as I am grateful for my own mother and for all my mother has done and given to me, I am also very grateful for the mother of my children and all

that she has done to raise them. In much the same ways, I am also very thankful for each of our teachers as well as they have spent the past year pouring into our children, into our youth, and even into other adults. Today we begin a new series, today looking at becoming one with Christ, next week looking at becoming one with each other, and finally, in the third week, looking at becoming one in ministry. As I thought about the roles our mothers and our teachers play in the development of our faith, I became aware of how significant these two groups of people are as we strive to become one with Christ. For both of these groups, we can all say thanks be to God. Let us pray.

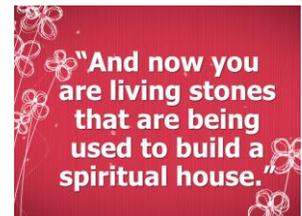
In today's passage from 1st Peter, we find an essential of our faith. When we reflect back on our early parenting days, it seemed newborn babies always wanted to eat. Yes, they did sleep for short periods of time and did require moments when they needed to get clean diapers, but when awake and clean all they wanted to do was to eat. For the baby, the milk was good and warm and sweet and was pleasing. Their little growing bodies needed the sustenance. In our faith journey, we should also be like the newborn babe. We should wake up each day craving and being hungry for the Word of God. It should be something we continually pursue so that our little growing faith can continue to develop.

A mother's milk is good and warm and sweet and pleasing to the baby. It is also just what the baby needs to grow well. It is pure and contains the nutrients and the antibodies as well as other things that help spur their growth and improve their health. After day two of life, the baby does not begin to look for something else to sustain and to nourish it. The baby instinctively returns to its loving mother and to her milk.



The Bible and the words contained therein are our pure spiritual milk. Verse two reads, *“Be like newborn babies who are thirsty for the pure spiritual milk that will help you grow and be saved.”* We are to come to the Word of God day after day to grow in our knowledge of God. Like a mother’s milk, the Word tastes good and warm and sweet and is pleasing. It provides what we need to nourish our faith. In this sense, it helps us to grow as believers. The Word also strengthens us and encourages us in times of trial and distress. The Word is our “pure spiritual milk” and is essential to our faith.

A good mother knows the baby must continue to drink pure milk to grow and mature. Our heavenly Father also knows the same is true for us concerning our time with the Word. As we transition from infancy into our school years, we see the vital role our mothers, fathers, and our teachers here at church play in helping us to delve into the Word of God and to begin to make faith something we own for ourselves. Verse five speaks of this role: *“And now you are living stones that are being used to build a spiritual house.”* All of these people that raise us up and teach us our faith are like living stones. They do indeed build us up in our faith and make each of us into a strong spiritual house. Our earthly mothers and fathers, our teachers, and our heavenly Father all give to and pour into us from a place of love. All of these nurture us along so that we can grow and develop our faith so that we can come to be all we were created to be. For our earthly mothers and fathers, for our church teachers, and for our heavenly Father, we are grateful for the role they each play in shaping us and forming us into who we were created to be.

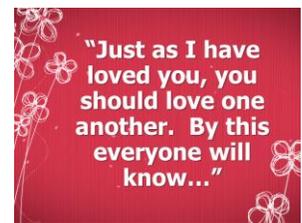




The purpose for helping us to grow in our faith is to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, to become one in Christ. The purpose is found at the end of verse two: all that these vital adults give us *"will help you grow and be saved."*

Salvation comes to us through knowing Christ and living as Christ lived. As we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, we enter into a saving relationship with and through Him. This is the first step in building our spiritual house. Jesus touches on what this looks like in John 14. It is part of what is known as the "Farewell Discourse". Jesus is spending some private and personal time with the disciples. They would have been gathered around a table much like this one. It would have been casual and comfortable. It would have been intimate.

To set the scene around the table, let us recall that night. They have gathered in the Upper Room. Jesus has again foretold of His impending death. Jesus has washed the disciples' feet to set an example of how future disciples are to serve and love one another. He has shared that one gathered with them at the table will betray Him that night. They have received the new commandment: *"Just as I have loved you, you should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples."* He showed what this means by washing their feet.



Jesus has predicted that Peter will deny Him three times. All in all it has been an emotional and powerful night together. The disciples have already absorbed much. Perhaps sensing this, Jesus offers words that are deeply personal and very heartfelt. Jesus speaks these words after sharing a meal, washing the disciples' feet, one by one. He speaks these words on the eve of His own crucifixion and death. Reading from John 14, verses one through three:

"Don't be worried! Have faith in God and have faith in me. ² There are many rooms in my Father's house. I wouldn't tell you this, unless it was true. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you. ³ After I have done this, I will come back and take you with me. Then we will be together."

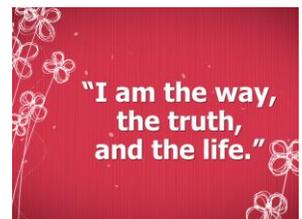
Jesus reassures His friends with these words. He lets them know that He will continue to be a part of their lives. And He reassures them that one day He will return to take them home. After all else that Jesus had shared and talked about that night, these words must have brought some comfort to the disciples. For us gathered here today, do we hear the comfort and reassurance in these words? Can you hear Jesus speaking them personally to you? Do you hear His promise? *"I am going there to prepare a place for each of you."* For each of you. For each of us.



As the conversation at the table that night unfolds, it becomes apparent that the disciples are needing further explanation.

Thomas asks, *"Lord, we do not know where you are going.*

How can we know the way?" The disciples are still unclear about the connection between God and the Son. In verse six, Jesus plainly tells them how. He says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life!"* Jesus answered. *"Without me, no one can go to the Father. If you had known me, you would have known the Father."*



Jesus makes this well-known statement while sitting in a private home with His disciples. It is at the table in a personal and private setting. John has recorded

these words so that we too can know them, so that they too can be our hope, so that we too can trust in the promise of Jesus to one day “*be together*”.



The good news for each of us is that the promise that Jesus makes for us to be one in Him is not just a future promise. It is also a promise that we live within each and every day when we walk with Jesus as our Lord and Savior. And the best news is that Jesus comes to us on His own accord. It is not through our work or our effort. It is solely the work of God. Our unity with Christ is the result of Jesus reaching out to touch us — to embrace our feet in his hands, to embrace our lives in his arms — each of us, one at a time. It is Jesus that reaches out and draws us to him. It is Christ who makes us one. He makes us one by uniting us, first to himself, and second, to one another. But that’s the topic for next week.

For our part, we only have to make a decision about whether we will trust him. Our role is to decide whether we will allow him to embrace us, to draw us to Him, to bring us into unity with God and the Holy Spirit, and to lead us into unity with one another. Our role is to simply say “yes” to His invitation.

But we do have to say yes. We do have to say yes to the invitation of Jesus. Jesus will not force us into relationship, into faith. We do have to say yes and allow ourselves to be embraced and allow others to be embraced alongside us. Again, this isn’t about what we do. It is about what God does for us that we cannot do for ourselves. We just have to receive the invitation. Can we open our hearts, our minds, and our spirit to the One who has issued the invitation?

Can we believe into him? Can we allow ourselves to be embraced into Christ's heart? Can we allow ourselves to be embraced into God's home?

Let us pray.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) Think back over your faith journey. Who do you need to thank for all they taught and poured into you? Thank them with a call or a note!
- 2) In what ways do you allow Jesus to be the way, the truth, and the life? How can you better allow Jesus to be these things for you?
- 3) Are you allowing yourself to be embraced "into Christ's heart" and "into God's home"? Pray for a willing spirit and a deeper walk this week.