

February 18, 2024

*First Sunday in Lent: "Living Stones"*

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

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

Worship: 10:00 AM

Pastor: Steve Ramer

Cell: 970-412-7510



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 Joel 2:1-2, 12-17)

**Leader:** Get up and blow your horn; sound the alarm from Horsetooth rock! Let everyone know that the day of the LORD's salvation is near!

**People:** For some it will be a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!

**L:** But the LORD holds out hope for us saying, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. Tear open your hearts, not merely your clothes, and return to the LORD, your God, who

is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and who is abundant in steadfast love rather than punishment.

**P:** Our God desires to bless us and not to punish us. So, blow the trumpet loud and return to true, holy worship.

**L:** Gather everyone together; the aged and the children, for the bridegroom awaits for us the bride.

**ALL:** Let us arise and follow the true God who can save us!

*"The great solution to all human problems is individual inner transformation." — Vernon Howard*

*"Personal transformation can and does have global effects. As we go, so goes the world, for the world is us. The revolution that will save the world is ultimately a personal one." — Marianne Williamson*

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

Have mercy on me, O God, because your love is steadfast and your mercy is abundant! Please forget all the times I failed to follow you and scrub me from head to toe with soap and hot water to wash off all my failures. Sometimes I have a hard time letting go of my failures and you would be more than justified in giving me a harsh sentence. I feel as if I was born guilty and conceived in sin. But you, O God, desire what is true in me, what I hold deep within my heart. Purge me with a strong laxative and remove all my stains with a powerful bleach. Help me create a heart that is true and fill me with a good spirit. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me when my spirit begins to falter. O Lord, open my lips and I will sing your praises. I know that you take no delight in dead ritual sacrifices, but that you are pleased when I open myself to the brokenness of the world around me.

### 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.

*"We need to realize that our path to transformation is through our mistakes. We're meant to make mistakes, recognize them, and move on to become unlimited." — Yehuda Berg*

## 2. HEARING GOD'S WORD

### Scriptures: 1 Peter 2:4-9

Come to Jesus, who is a living stone, chosen and precious in God's sight, even though he was rejected by mortals. You too can become living stones, that are used to build spiritual houses and become holy priests who can offer sacrifices acceptable to God.

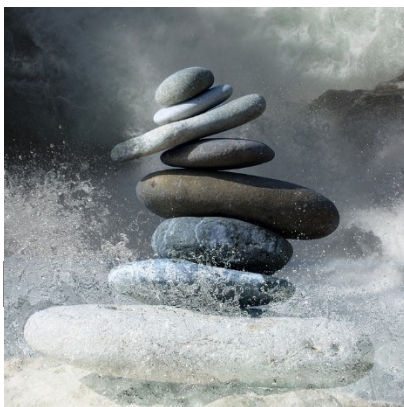
For it says in our scriptures, "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

That stone which mortal builders rejected has actually become the stone that holds the corners, the entire

building together... A stone that makes some stumble, trip and fall."

Those who refuse to believe in God's word will surely stumble because they can't help themselves.

However, you too are part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people, part of God's own family, so that you may proclaim the mighty acts of Jesus who called you out of dark places and into God's marvelous light.



### SERMON: "Living Stones?"

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## 3. RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

### Congregational Singing

#### Response

#### Joys and Concerns

*"As we enter the path of transformation, the most valuable thing we have working in our favor is our yearning." — Cynthia Bourgeault*

### Offering & Music

#### Sending (based on Matthew 6:11-6, 16-21)

If you practice your piety so that others will see it, God will ignore it. Don't make a big deal out of all the money you give to the poor, because God doesn't care about that. When you pray, don't be like those hypocrites who love to stand in church and pray loudly; God would rather sit and talk with you alone. When you fast, don't look sad, like hypocrites, who disfigure their faces and try to look obviously miserable. When you do deny yourself anything to spread God's kingdom do it joyfully. Above all, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures here on earth, but store up treasures in God's domain. After all, where you keep your treasures, that is where your heart really is.