

Stone rolled away 4/7/24

Good evening. Special thanks to Pastor Warren for inviting me to bring God's Truth to you today! I pray that your conference went well and that the Global Methodist church is prepared to move forward and declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!!

I have a few introductory comments that I would like to make before we delve into the Truth of God's Holy Word

I would be amiss if I didn't offer a well-deserved thanks to Fountain Park Church for welcoming our Ephesians 5 ministry into your presence to conduct our weekly classes for men and for hosting our monthly breakfasts. Our ministry reaches out to the epidemic in our churches, today, dealing with sexual sin, and really, sin in general, that so easily takes our Holy God off the throne, the place of importance in our lives. We unapologetically use God's Word as the foundation for true victory in our lives. We are blessed to have this beautiful place to meet the needs of men, and also more recently to address the needs of women as well. So my sincere thank you to Fountain Park and may all the Praise be to our God!!

I am deeply humbled and honored to be asked to present the Word of God to this congregation. It is with great pleasure that I accepted this invitation from Pastor Warren, and I am very emotional that God has given me this opportunity. So please grant me grace if I get emotional today. But when I think about God's overwhelming love for me and for all of you, I can't help sometimes, to just be broken and emotional before Him and so thankful for His love. It truly is the only thing that will make our lives worth living.

It is so nice to see so many friendly and smiling faces this evening. I will draw on those smiling faces as I speak tonight. Will you pray with me?

Father We thank you for who you are, for what you are. We thank you that you are our rock, a firm foundation. ..Father allow your Holy Spirit to lead my

thoughts and guide my words as I do my best to honor you. Father as we examine the stone that was rolled away, help us all to examine our lives in

light of what that means to us today. Father, help us to Love you, love Your Word, and love our neighbors as ourselves. Father, I pray, that you will use me, your humble servant to proclaim Your truth today. So now Lord, in the writings of that great songwriter David in Psalms 19:14, I PRAY, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, o lord, my rock and my redeemer.

As Pastor Warren recounted the events of the resurrection, he reminded us last Sunday that these events were not just meant for Easter, but that they live on, and that we should rejoice in them with a faith that drives us on into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. And to that I said Amen!! There were many facets of the resurrection that people have tried to discount, that Jesus wasn't really dead (even though these Romans were professional killers, if they didn't do their job, they would be killed), they were at the wrong tomb, that the disciples stole the body. Yet none of these discounted the fact that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. The tomb was empty

In fact, A man named Frank Morrison, was so incensed at this ridiculous proclamation that Jesus rose from the dead, that he decided to write a book entitled, "Who moved the Stone?" He was determined, Once and for all, to put an end to this absurd notion that Jesus, once dead, was now alive. Although a skeptic, Frank did his best to keep an open mind as he researched this event. Yet, when all was said and done, he couldn't write the book. In fact, the first chapter is entitled, The book that refused to be written. Given all the facts surrounding the resurrection, he couldn't in good conscience write a book directly contradicting all of the evidence that he had uncovered.

That bring us to the topic for today's sermon, the rock that was rolled away. This is one fact that was not disputed. Anyone could clearly see that the stone had been rolled away. In fact, the Greek word that we translate as rolled away is apokulio. Our English translation has such a nice warm meaning to it. Realying that an angel came down and nicely rolled back the stone. However, this verb has an underlying meaning of force behind it. Meaning, the angel wasn't playing around when it was time to remove the stone. Hallelujah!! Death had had its time with our Lord, and, as you may have noticed, there was no mention of the angels at the time of Christ death. As Jesus called out, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me,

the angels also were no where to be found. And it is not because they were around and able to stop this horrifying event, but they allowed what was necessary to happen. This separation was necessary for Christ to gain us the victory that we so desperately needed! And when that time came, the angels was bursting forth to remove that stone, so much so, that I believe, they removed the stone in such a way, that man could never put that stone back in place!! The angel wanted all to see that Jesus was no longer in the tomb, but alive.

So what is the meaning for us in the stone that was rolled away. Well, while researching this topic, I came across upon 3 reasons for the importance of the stone in our lives.

First there is the purpose of the stone,

Second is the provision of the stone, and

Finally there is the power of the stone.

What was the purpose of stone in the Bible? One of these purposes was to build altars for sacrificing to our God, to worship him for who he is, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Stones were also used to erect memorials in order for the people of Israel to remember, Moses did so when the Israelites affirmed their covenant with God in Exodus 24:4, where it says,

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD and Joshua did the same after they defeated Ai. in Joshua 8:30< where the Scriptures read, ³⁰ Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, ³¹ as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses—an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the LORD burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings.

You see, God did not want his people to forget what had been done for them! He wanted them to be sure to remind their children about what God has done, so the altars were built out of stone, as a visual reminder to them and to their children.

And so it is for us as well, a visual reminder of what our Lord has done for each one of us.

Stones were also used for building. And as any architect will tell you, the proper selection of the stone is of utmost importance. It is necessary for each one to fit perfectly with the next stone. And as our text tells us in Ps 118:22, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The MOST IMPORTANT STONE OF ALL, upon which everything is built in our lives. The purpose of the stone was to give us something solid and visual in our lives to remind us of God's goodness.

Second is the provision of the stone.

You see the enemy is so good at taking the things that God has provided and perverted them to try and promote his agenda. And the stone is no exception. The devil's purpose was to use the stone to show us this death had won the battle and that His death was now sealed and complete. However, The stone, as we just heard, was to be a visual reminder of the goodness of our God, and a reminder of his provision for us. It was also used to remind us that God has provided that firm foundation, the rock on which I stand. When everything around me is shaking, I've never been more glad. That I put my faith in Jesus, cause He's never let me down. He's faithful through generations, so why would He fail now? He won't! In fact, He can't!! HE can't be anything but Faithful and True!!

The stone provided a strength that we could never have for ourselves. A visual reminder that even though it looks hopeless and it appears that the tomb is sealed, our God has provided a way for us all to come to Him! The compassion of our God gives us all that we need, because on our own we are lost. That vision of the lost sheep, just wandering around looking for someone, anyone, who would help him/her find their way. And that one is

Jesus Christ who calls us to come to Him, and to help others do the same. You see, our God is immovable, immutable and ever faithful.

Yet the devil in his futile attempt used that stone as a way of showing that world that Jesus was dead, and yes it was sealed, so it could not be broken! Seemingly, the devil's victory was now complete. For him, a visual reminder of his small temporary victory. The God-man Jesus who you are looking to for your salvation, is now behind a stone that has sealed him in the grave.

Yes, it was a sad time...the women, the disciples and all who followed Jesus were broken-hearted that the One who they had followed and believed as the Son of God, was now dead. The disciples were hiding, figuring that they would be the next ones to die, the women were doing all that they knew how to do, and that was to bring spices to anoint the tomb of our Lord. It wasn't until they started out on this journey, that the question came to mind and the question we all have as we look for answers in our lives....Who will roll away the stone for us?"

Bringing us to the last entry, the power of the stone!

Humanly speaking there was no hope for these women. In the natural, their actions were doomed to failure. Historians have reasoned, that it would have taken up to 16 men to move the sizable stone away from the tomb. So where was the power going to come from? Remember, the stone that the builders rejected has now become the chief cornerstone! Praise the Lord! Like I said earlier the angels were just waiting for the command from the Father to rush to the tomb and remove the stone.

The prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon, so eloquently put it like this:

The heavenly officer (that is the angel) is deputed (or divinely appointed) to open the door to him, by rolling away the stone, and Jesus Christ, completely justified, rises to prove that all his people are, in him, completely justified, and the work of salvation is ever complete. The stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, as if to show that Jesus has effectually done the work that nothing can shut us up in the grave again.

It is interesting to note that the Stone was not removed in order that Jesus could come out, but it was removed so that we could look in. It was

necessary for our human minds to see that the tomb was empty. Another fact about the resurrection that was never disputed. The tomb was empty!!

So the power behind the moving of the stone was for us to see that Jesus fulfilled all that He had said about himself and his purpose for coming in to the world. 1 Corinthians 15:14-17 says, 14 And if Christ has not been raised,^z our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.^a But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.^b a truly sobering and somber thought But praise God< he has been raised from the dead and we are now free from sin and death. Once this was complete, Jesus said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Brothers and sisters, the message is just that simple.

We were lost in our sins, Romans 3:23 says, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

Romans 6:23 reminds us, the wages of sin is death. This is what we truly deserve.

As we look forward, we know what is to come.

Hebrews 9:27 says that it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes the judgment

So it is with this background that we realize our hopeless situation before a Holy God. So God started the redemption process so we would have a chance and a choice for our future

John 3:16-17 says, For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son, that whosoever believes in him, will not perish, but have everlasting life. For

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved!!

Romans 5:8 reminds us, God demonstrated his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Romans 10:9, boldly states, Because if your confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, You will be saved. I repeat those words, you will be saved.

So what do we do now? What is our reasonable response at this point?

2 Cor. 6:2 I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

Today is the day! No one is guaranteed tomorrow, and the Good Shepherd is waiting with open arms to welcome all who confess and believe!!

So let us go forth and tell the world that there is life for those who are dead in their sins. That there is light in the midst of the darkness in this world. It is a matter of life and death for your soul. And as we tell others the Good News of Jesus, Spurgeon proposes, "and who can tell, many disciples will be added to the church, a risen Savior will be glorified and you will be comforted by what you have seen." 1 Peter 2:4-5 says,

⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house^[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

You see, I don't know why you are here today, but I do know it was not a mistake. God knew you would be here, and He has a special message for us all.

So maybe you have been a Christian for a while, and things have become a little dry. Jesus is waiting for you to come and focus on Him to find a deeper purpose in life. Really the only purpose that matters.

Or perhaps, you are a Christian, and for whatever reason, life has taken you far from Him. Today is the day you can rededicate your life to Christ, and the angels will rejoice.

Or finally, maybe you have never heard the Good News about Jesus, and you are never put your trust in Him. But now after hearing the Truth of who God is, you would like to find out more about Him. Brothers and sisters, now is the acceptable day of salvation.

I will be available after the service to anyone who would like to talk about this. God is waiting for you.

He who testifies to these things says, Surely I am coming soon. Amen
Come Lord Jesus!!

Shall we pray?

Father God, Please accept the humble words of Your servant and bless all those who have heard the Truth of who You are.