

## You Have Been Mercied!

⑥ **By the Living Stone** (vv.4-8)

⑥ **Like living stones** (vv.5, 9-10)

In the Name of Jesus Christ – crucified and risen, God’s Cornerstone, dear living stones:

Maybe you’ve also known some people who would think this is funny. They’d bury a trick stone in a popular path through a park. With motion cameras ready, they’d raise the stone just as someone was stepping over, and trip them. Hilarious, right? Like, “You’ve been punked.” Or for grandparents remember what your parents watched, it was, “Smile! You’re on *Candid Camera!*”

About as funny as your aunt laughing while she bandaged your leg from when you were chasing a Frisby full tilt across the yard where somebody parked their Stingray bike! Or pranks they played – or you played – which we can’t talk about here and then said, “We only tease you ‘cause we love you!”

Some folks think of God as a practical joker or worse, and arbitrary bully. But in the bright sunshine of Easter morning, still glowing in God’s Word today, truth is – **You Have Been Mercied!**

⑥ **By the Living Stone** (vv.4-8)

*“As you come to him, the Living Stone...”* Grace has taught us to expect all good from God. *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever!”* (Psalm 118:1 EHV) The dear Holy Spirit of God has turned our hearts to come confessing our sins and rejoicing in forgiveness.

And yet, this **Living Stone** who is Jesus Christ is also *rejected by men*. Humans consider Christ unworthy and unfit for their serious consideration, much less adoration. So, they reject the Lord’s Christ before they even check out His life, His claim, His preaching and promises. Like builders looking for stones suitable for building their life as they want, they reject Jesus as the wrong shape and size.

We shake our heads in sadness and disbelief at their stubborn refusal to listen to God’s Word, not realizing that there are other forms of unbelief that hide like lions in the grasslands to devour you. It seems so harmless, but lukewarm faith is deadly, like Christians in *lukewarm Laodicea* whom Jesus warmed, *“I am about to vomit you out of my mouth.”* (Revelation 3:14-16) Or the way some congregation members trip up on giving to a budget like it’s an idol, instead of giving firstfruit to God. Whether the budget is flush or lean, Christian giving is an act of faith we need like a lake needs an outlet in order not to go stagnant. Or the arrogance of Christians thinking, “My pastor taught me plenty in Catechism. No I can coast.” We promise to be faithful to our good and gracious God, but we fail miserably day by day.

That’s why God keeps saying: **You Have Been Mercied!** We rarely see the word used that way except in sports when the winning coach puts in the second or third string to keep from running up the score. **You Have Been Mercied!** Or that couple saved from embarrassment when they ran out of wine at their own wedding. Fortunately, they invited Jesus who was shining forth as God in His first miracle, making water into wine and giving a nest egg of the finest wine to begin their life together. **You Have Been Mercied!** Or the woman caught in the act of adultery where self-righteous religious leaders tried to trip Jesus under Moses’ law. *“Whoever of you is without sin can throw the first stone.”* (John 8:7ff TPA) Accusers disappeared, Jesus forgave her and said, *“Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.”* (NIV) **You Have Been Mercied!** by *the Way, the Truth, and the Life* – Christ alone!

All who refuse God’s mercy in **the Living Stone** want to blame Christ for tripping them up. But God wants everyone to be saved. So, He warns that crushing damnation is the consequence of unbelief.

Today's Prayer of the Day *"is a prayer for the transformation of our lives, for a change so complete that we will love what we are required to do, that we obey God's Law and commands not out of constraint nor a sense of duty but out of spontaneous desire. To live from love and not from obligation is to exist in the precise place where true joys are to be found."*<sup>1</sup> "Make us love what you command and desire what you promise...to ever yearn for the lasting joys of heaven." **You Have Been Mercied!**

### © Like living stones (vv.5, 9-10)

The Lord's Apostle Peter was only weeks away from when he'd denied his Lord. But Christ's death and resurrection came clear when the dear Holy Spirit opened his mind to the Scriptures on Pentecost. Peter stood before powerful church and government *rulers* and *elders of Israel*, warning them that after waiting for centuries for the Christ, they crucified Him in the Person of Jesus the Nazarene. **"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."** (Acts 4:11f) **Like living stones** ever since, God's people are willing to die rather than deny Christ.

**"You also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."** Your precious soul is like another stone in the temple of God's grace. Old Testament people needed a priest to sprinkle them with blood from sacrifices to come safely into the presence of holy, righteous, all-powerful God. But you who believe **"have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you."** (1 Peter 1:2 EHV) Now you are *a holy priesthood* offering yourselves as living sacrifices and your works of love and mercy for your neighbors far and wide. **You Have Been Mercied!**

Trusting in Jesus, we will never be ashamed. God's mercy will not fail us in life or in death. For **"But you are a chosen people"** – before time began, God knew you by name and chose you purely out of mercy to come to repentant faith in Jesus. You are *a royal priesthood* with direct access to God's throne of grace to pray prayers made powerful by God's mercy on you and your family and friends and city, state and country. Pray, *royal priesthood*, pray! You are *a holy nation*. Never forget that our true and lasting citizenship is in heaven where perfect peace and friendship reign with Christ upon His throne. You are **God's own possession** for one powerful reason, **so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** All guilt and shame that seared your soul because of sin has been washed away in the blood of the Lamb. God cannot hold you accountable for greed, covetousness, murder or abortion, adultery or homosexuality when you come in repentant faith to Jesus, the *Cornerstone* of God's Church. By grace you live in Him who became sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God – His hands, His feet, His heart for kindness on people from every nation, tribe and culture. You be the kind ones in your neighborhood. You speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. **You Have Been Mercied!** In Christ alone, live **Like living stones**.

Someone filled out a "Let's Connect..." prayer request card for college and university students taking exams in coming weeks. Years ago a young woman from New Life was in a class whose professor offered to help their test with his incantations as a Shaman, claiming access to the world of good and evil spirits. She politely declined, saying God's help would be enough for her – making him angry because it's never just an offer for good like God gives. Christ sacrificed Himself in order to mercy us; Satan brings death on babies, children, our culture. Our Christian collegiate gladly took her test in another room. A few days later the professor had his assistant call because he was too embarrassed. The TA said she got the highest grade of anyone ever on his test. **You Have Been Mercied!**

This text humbles me because a hundred sermons could not cover it. Perhaps the Lord will grant me a few more years of preaching at New Life. Eternity is too short to praise God enough. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Pfatteicher, 253, quoted in *Commentary on the Propers – Year C*, p. 240f © 2021 NPH. (1-800-662-6022; [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net))  
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