

The Chief Cornerstone

Psalm 118:21-29

[21] I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

[22] The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

[23] This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

[24] This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

[25] Save us, we pray, O LORD!

O LORD, we pray, give us success!

[26] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

[27] The LORD is God,

and he has made his light to shine upon us.

Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,

up to the horns of the altar!

[28] You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

you are my God; I will extol you.

[29] Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

for his steadfast love endures forever! (ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, AMEN

As we continue our look at selected Psalms during our Mid-week Lenten services, we are reminded by tonight's Psalm, that Jesus, "who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures"

In Psalm 118, we rejoice, as what He has done for us is "marvelous in our eyes!" says the Psalmist. In our Gospel reading tonight Mark 12, Jesus directly quotes Psalm 118 and as He often does in the Gospels, shows us how this Psalm is about Himself, as is the case for all of Holy Scripture, for He is the Word become flesh and with us. Here in Mark 12, Jesus is speaking to the Sadducees two days after Palm Sunday, only a few days from His fulfillment of this text with His death and resurrection, where He is victorious over sin, death and the devil. He has just ridden on a donkey and had people wave Palm trees and cry Hosanna, or Save us Son of David, but the Sadducees and leaders that He is addressing want Him killed, and soon He will willingly give up His life, for He is not the kind of Messiah that the Old Man desires. Really, we are no different than this audience that opposed Jesus in Mark's Gospel. We too want a Savior that we can work with, and cooperate with on all things spiritual. It makes sense to the Old Adam, our sinful flesh that God plays a part and we play a part in our salvation, as everything good in life is earned, at least in part right? Even though I may be just 5% of the work, still, thinks the Old Man, I must be cooperating with God in my salvation.

The problem is that as God knows our true and dire condition much better than we do. We can only contribute, as Luther reminds us, two things to our salvation sin and resistance. We are of no "help" to God, for not only can we not help, but we are dead in our trespasses and sin, we are by nature children of wrath, at war with God. Due to Original Sin, a problem that is ours from birth, we don't need to get better, or improve, but **we must** be crucified with Christ. The Old Adam of our sin nature must die. Jesus then, to save us from our sins, must go to the cross, for only there can our sin be paid in full and our Old Adam die with Him on that cross. This is the life of Baptism, "having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead." (Col. 2:12 ESV)

It is the life of faith, which itself is a gift of God, that trusts, not in what we do, but what has been done completely for us by Christ Alone. Therefore, the Psalmist says "you have become my salvation", "this is

the Lord's doing" "this is the day the Lord has made" Hosanna!! Or Lord save us..and His steadfast love is what endures forever." We rejoice and give thanks, because of what God has done **for us** in Christ. "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. 8:3

As Jesus in Mark 12 is talking about the failure of the people of Israel, with their history of sin, rebellion and violence, He is also talking once again on the Tuesday of Holy Week about His death and resurrection. Jesus is the cornerstone of the entire church, not just the foundation, although He is that, but the head stone on which the entire structure, which are all of the people of God from every tribe, tongue and nation that He will purchase with His own blood, you are held together, and exist, and are forgiven only on account of Him. The disciples do not assist Him, and you do not either. Your salvation and the forgiveness spoken by our Lord to you, is completely and totally His work, beginning to the end.

As Paul tell us in Colossians 1:15-23

The Preeminence of Christ

[15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. [16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[21] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [22] he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, [23] if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, AMEN