

#### 10.4.20 L27P18 From Rejection to Cornerstone

- You've probably heard the phrase, "diamond in the rough?"
  - I've never seen anything but pictures of rough, uncut diamonds, but basically they are nice but not beautiful, a little shiny but not brilliant, and irregularly shaped dull little globs rather than symmetrical diamonds that you might wear in an engagement ring, earring, or body piercing
  - Without being cut and polished, a rough diamond in the dirt looks like something that if you didn't know what it was, you might just keep on walking by
- In the gospel reading for today, Jesus talks about a very different kind of stone that was at first ignored – instead of a diamond in the rough, he talks about a building stone
  - Building stones need to be about the right shape, or be able to be chiseled into the right shape
  - Whether its small stones for a small wall, or huge stones for something like the temple in Jerusalem, building stones need to fit into place
  - And some stones just don't seem to fit, so they are cast aside as scrap
  - BUT, Jesus said, "The stone that builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes! [Mt. 21:42]"
  - This is clearly about more than a stone that was first rejected, and then found and used and in fact used as the cornerstone to become part of the foundation that would tie two walls together – this rejected stone was a person
  - And that person was none other than Jesus himself!
  - Jesus spoke this little parable of the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone when his life was in danger because some of the religious leaders were plotting his death
  - Jesus was about to be rejected.
  - And indeed, he WAS rejected by enough Jewish and Roman leaders that they successfully put him to death to extinguish the preaching the Kingdom of God that Jesus had been proclaiming, and which threatened them by favoring not their power, but instead favoring God's power which kept being poured out lavishly and generously on everyone – like thousands of ordinary instead of powerful

people who were simply hungry for God's love, and also hungry in their bellies... and they were fed with both God's love and with bread that after giving thanks, became more than enough to go around for the whole multitude

- The few powerful leaders were successful in rejecting and silencing Jesus on the cross, but they were unsuccessful in silencing the risen Christ who brought the Kingdom to life in the world, as Christ crucified and raised became the cornerstone of the church – Christ's church the forgiven and beloved people of God who have been called to be Christ's servants and witnesses among a broader humanity that so desperately needs a rock, a cornerstone as the foundation for life
- Jesus Christ was rejected and crucified, but now Christ has been raised and he is the cornerstone
- And that cornerstone brings life to people even when they don't expect it
  - This world is very good at rejecting people who are...
    - not smart enough to set the world on fire...
    - not rich enough to buy the Hope Diamond...
    - not attractive enough to win a beauty pageant...
    - and not good enough to earn their way into heaven...
  - People on the rise in this world are good at rejecting and casting people aside on their way to the top
- However... it's been almost 20 years now since the movie "Shrek" was made, and this remarkable movie tells us something
  - Shrek is a cartoon about an ugly green ogre who lives alone because everyone knows he's ugly and ornery and people are afraid of him
  - It's a long and silly story, but to cut to the chase, Shrek the ogre falls in love with the beautiful princess Fiona
  - How can an ugly green ogre and a beautiful princess fall in love with each other?
  - Unknown to Shrek, Fiona has a secret – because of a spell that had been cast on her, every night at sundown, she also turns into an ogre, so every night she goes away and hides so no one will see her change from beautiful to ugly

- But in the end, Shrek declares his love to her, kisses her, and breaks the spell at sundown just as she is being transformed into an ogre
  - Shock waves radiate from her, windows – church windows in fact shatter – AND SHE IS... still an ogre
  - But Shrek tells Fiona that she is beautiful, because in his eyes, she is
- “Shrek” the movie, is a story about two imaginary people who are diamonds in the rough, that are cut and polished into brilliant radiant beauty
- It’s the gospel story about the rejected stones, becoming a cornerstone in each other’s lives
- It’s the story of a rejected ogre, and a princess who becomes an ogre, and in love THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL and in the closing words of the movie, they live ugly and happily ever after
- And most importantly it’s Christ’s story which in turn becomes our story – Christ was rejected and became the cornerstone. Christ’s dying and resurrected love embraces us even when we are not smart enough, even though we are not rich enough, even when we are rough rather than beautiful, and *especially when we are not good enough, and no one is ugly in the eyes of the one who made us*
- And so Christ picks up all of us who deep in our heart of hearts know that we are not good enough, and maybe in the world we have even been cast aside, but this Risen Christ, our cornerstone tells us that we are beautiful just the way we are, and that we are forgiven, and we are welcomed, and we are loved, because THAT is what it means to be child of Christ our cornerstone.