

## Let Yourselves be Built...

Easter 5 A 2020

St. Andrew's Anglican Church Kelowna+ Rev'd Anne Privett

Acts 7:55-60; Ps 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

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BC rolled out its multi-phase re-entry plan this week. Today on Mother's Day we are still to keep 6 feet away from anyone not in our immediate household circle. Our parks will *hopefully* open again for the long weekend but we still have to keep our distance and keep washing our hands. We received a letter from our Bishop saying we are to hold the course and not yet gather for worship or community events. There is mixture of relief, worry, hope, frustration and resignation as we realize that we are really are just at the end of the beginning of the pandemic in BC.

Each of our readings this morning meets us with a mixture of emotions. At first glance they are a curious combination for Easter season readings and I'd like to focus on two of them.

The first letter of Peter is written to Christians who he calls 'exiles' because they are, on many levels, homeless. They are rejected and ostracized by their neighbours, they are no longer housed under the safety of Judaism, and the Second Temple has been destroyed<sup>1</sup>. They are people without a home but not without a God. When they have no physical house they are to become a spiritual one; when they have no family they are to become God's family. "Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ", exhorts Peter (spiritual sacrifices include both worship and social ethic). They are to be holy, like God is holy, in the midst of their inhospitable communities (1:16).

'Let yourself be built into' is quite different than 'build yourself into'. In a time when they had no worshipping home and not much agency in their situation, it was time for God to build not them. It has been both wonderful and appalling to watch how people around the world choose to engage with the feelings of a lack of power, or a lack of freedom, over these COVID days. It is interesting to listen to the language of all the re-building we are going to be doing (especially our economy). If there is ever a time to not just blindly rebuild our economies and societies but rather assess, listen, hone, craft and build again this is it! We hear it starting with calls to better love our elders and change our care home system. We are hearing calls to make health care a much bigger priority. We are hearing calls from around the world to reassess our economic dependence on fossil fuels. I have been assessing my own life as a consumer and subscribed to my first CSA Farm Box this week, feeling the call to participate even further in the just, local and environmentally ethical cultivation of food and goods.

While we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century might disagree with some of the conclusions First Peter comes to, the big picture is crucial: let yourself be built into God's holy people. Listen to that living stone upon

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars debate 1 Peter's date. It is either 62-63 or 70-100.

which you are built, let go of what has become necessity simply because it is familiar, let yourself be built from the inside out: become a holy people who live a different and particular way.

That's why the early Christians were not called Christians but, in fact, 'people of The Way'. And that Way was not a set of rules but the pattern of Jesus' life lived out in relationship with the risen Jesus and other people through worship and community. Our Gospel reading this morning brings Jesus' famous words "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" in answer to Thomas asking where he was going. Thomas asks this question the night before Jesus' crucifixion. The word 'where' in John's Gospel is a very important word. 'Where' doesn't simply mean a geographical location but rather a relationship ('Master where are you staying?'...'Come and see'). Jesus is about to go through crucifixion and death, carry all of the distortions we have made of our call to love into the heart of the Divine to be healed and make room for us deep in that action and relationship. Eternal life is not a place in the heavens but the relationship, love, healing and transformation that comes from being nestled at the heart of God. It is the life-long pattern of dying and rising that begins now and continues after our deaths. We become part of this relationship in the same way we come part of any relationship: we live it! We live Jesus' Way of un-selfish love, allow the Truth of God's humble choice to be with us to become our life's ethic, allow the peace and abundance of God's Life to become our own. So let yourself be built from the inside out, let yourself be loved into this Way, this Truth and this Life.

A few questions for prayer and reflection this week:

What is God showing you, and refining in you, every time you've become frustrated, sad or lost your patience? What is God showing you, refining in you, in the times of simple joy? What is God building in you during these days?

What are our St. Andrew's gatherings online, or on phone, teaching us about the heart of the church? What have you missed about 'normal' church life and what haven't you missed?

What do you hear and see God building in the world? How can you help with world allow it to happen?

Let yourself be built from the inside out, let yourself be loved into this Way, this Truth and this Life.  
**Amen.**