

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023; Trinity 18; Benefice HC Gilling

The words from our Gospel today, “Jesus said to them have you not read the Scriptures? And he goes on to quote Psalm 118, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing and it is amazing in our eyes.”

What a question to ask the religious leaders, ‘Have you not read the Scriptures?’. I bet none of us would dare to say that to Bishop Paul or Archbishop Stephen! Yet here Jesus again challenges those who had awarded themselves power and control over the people. This manner of speaking to the chief priests, and leading theologians of Israel must have angered them. Jesus quoted from Psalm 118 to remind them that their rejection of Him said more about their guilt and coming judgment than it said about Jesus Himself. Though they reject Him, He is still the chief cornerstone, fulfilling the great Messianic prophecy of the Psalm.

What an amazing metaphor Jesus uses, the word ‘cornerstone’. A ‘quoin’ or cornerstone was of great importance in binding together the sides of a building. It is something we are reminded of when we see our great cathedrals, churches, and monuments. Since ancient times, builders have used cornerstones in their construction projects. It was the principal stone, usually placed at the corner of an edifice, to guide the workers in their course. The cornerstone was usually one of the largest, the most solid, and the most carefully constructed of any in the building. Cornerstone is an expression borrowed from masons, who, finding a stone, which being tried in a particular place, and appearing improper for it, is thrown aside, and another taken. However, later, it may happen that the *very stone* which had been before *rejected*, may be found the most suitable as the head stone of the corner and is reinstated in its true role and purpose.

Once the cornerstone was set, it became the basis for determining every measurement in the remaining construction; everything was aligned to it, something of great importance that everything else depended on.

The phrase "corner-stone" is sometimes used to denote any principal person, as the basic part of it on which its existence, success, or truth depends. The Bible describes Jesus as the cornerstone that His church would be built upon. As the cornerstone of the building of the church, Jesus is foundational, our standard of measure and alignment. If this is the case then, how can people reject God's chosen, precious cornerstone? Simply put, they want to build something different from what God is building. Just as the people building the tower of Babel rebelled against God and pursued their own project, those who reject Christ disregard God's plan in favour of their own. Judgment is promised to all those who reject Christ: "Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed". This is the question we too must ask ourselves in our lives of following Christ, do we truly accept Him as our cornerstone in life or so we prefer to follow our own aims and desires, even if we think we are in His name? Do our words, opinions and actions support or weaken the 'Cornerstone'?

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. He is the foundation of our salvation, what we believe, and our future hope, holding all things together and keeping our salvation secure.

So, this passage, as applied by our Lord to himself, is a summary of the truth and good news of the Gospel which says that He, being rejected and crucified, became an atonement for the sin of the world. Secondly, He was raised again from the dead, a proof of his conquest over death and sin, and thereby providing a pledge of immortality to his followers. Thirdly, He has

constituted the foundation on which the salvation of mankind rests, and the corner stone which unites humanity, beautifies, strengthens it, and completes the new building, as the head stone, of the Heavenly city of God. Christ as the Cornerstone states therefore that law and grace; God and man; time and eternity; the letter and the spirit; and judgment and mercy, all begin and end, with Him as cornerstone.

Thanks be to God. Amen.