

Foundational  
By Rev. Michael Blackwood  
United Church of Broomfield  
May 10, 2020

1 Peter 1:24-2:10 Common English Bible (CEB)

24 Thus, all human life on the earth is like grass, and all human glory is like a flower in a field. The grass dries up and its flower falls off, 25 but the Lord's word endures forever. This is the word that was proclaimed to you as good news.

1 Therefore, get rid of all ill will and all deceit, pretense, envy, and slander. 2 Instead, like a newborn baby, desire the pure milk of the word. Nourished by it, you will grow into salvation, 3 since you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 Now you are coming to him as to a living stone. Even though this stone was rejected by humans, from God's perspective it is chosen, valuable. 5 You yourselves are being built like living stones into a spiritual temple. You are being made into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 Thus, it is written in scripture, Look! I am laying a cornerstone in Zion, chosen, valuable. 7 The person who believes in him will never be shamed. So God honors you who believe.

For those who refuse to believe, though, the stone the builders tossed aside has become the capstone. 8 This is a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Because they refuse to believe in the word, they stumble. Indeed, this is the end to which they were appointed.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. Once you weren't a people, but now you are God's people. 10 Once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

\*\*\*\*

For Mother's Day, I'm going to begin this morning's message by telling you a fairy tale. It's one that I'm sure you've heard before. Historically, there have been variations. I'm going to read what I found to be an "original" version from a 19<sup>th</sup> century publication.

Once upon a time there was an old mother pig who had three little pigs and not enough food to feed them. So, when they were old enough, she sent them out into the world to seek their fortunes.

The first little pig was very lazy. He didn't want to work at all and he built his house out of straw. The second little pig worked a little bit harder but he was somewhat lazy too and he built his house out of sticks. Then, they sang and danced and played together the rest of the day.

The third little pig worked hard all day and built her house with bricks. It was a sturdy house complete with a fine fireplace and chimney. It looked like it could withstand the strongest winds.

The next day, a wolf happened to pass by the lane where the three little pigs lived; and he saw the straw house, and he smelled the pig inside. He thought the pig would make a mighty fine meal and his mouth began to water.

So, he knocked on the door and said:

Little pig! Little pig!

Let me in! Let me in!

But the little pig saw the wolf's big paws through the keyhole, so he answered back:

No! No! No!

Not by the hairs on my chinny chin chin!

The wolf showed his teeth and said:

Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down.

So, he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down! The wolf opened his jaws very wide and bit down as hard as he could, but the first little pig escaped and ran away to hide with the second little pig.

The wolf continued down the lane and he passed by the second house made of sticks; and he saw the house, and he smelled the pigs inside, and his mouth began to water as he thought about the fine dinner they would make.

So, he knocked on the door and said:

Little pigs! Little pigs!

Let me in! Let me in!

But the little pigs saw the wolf's pointy ears through the keyhole, so they answered back:

No! No! No!

Not by the hairs on our chinny chin chins!

So, the wolf showed his teeth and said:

Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!

So, he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down! The wolf was greedy and he tried to catch both pigs at once, but he was too greedy and got neither! His big jaws clamped down on nothing but air and the two little pigs scrambled away as fast as their little hooves would carry them.

The wolf chased them down the lane and he almost caught them. But they made it to the brick house and slammed the door closed before the wolf could catch them. The three little pigs they were very frightened, they knew the wolf wanted to eat them. And that was very, very true. The wolf hadn't eaten all day and he had worked up a large appetite chasing the pigs around and now he could smell all three of them inside and he knew that the three little pigs would make a lovely feast.

So, the wolf knocked on the door and said:

Little pigs! Little pigs!

Let me in! Let me in!

But the little pigs saw the wolf's narrow eyes through the keyhole, so they answered back:

No! No! No!

Not by the hairs on our chinny chin chins!

So, the wolf showed his teeth and said:

Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down.

Well! he huffed and he puffed. He puffed and he huffed. And he huffed, huffed, and he puffed, puffed; but he could not blow the house down. At last, he was so out of breath that he couldn't huff and he couldn't puff anymore. So, he stopped to rest and thought a bit.

But this was too much. The wolf danced about with rage and swore he would come down the chimney and eat up the little pig for his supper. But while he was climbing on to the roof the little pig made up a blazing fire and put on a big pot full of water to boil. Then, just as the wolf was coming down the chimney, the little piggy pulled off the lid, and plop! in fell the wolf into the scalding water.

So, the little piggy put on the cover again, boiled the wolf up, and the three little pigs ate him for supper.

Do you remember hearing this fairy tale from your mom or dad? Maybe a grandparent or babysitter? It's a bit dark, but one of the primary lessons was based in architecture. Be like the pig who built her house out of bricks; live in and build a house with a strong foundation that protects you AND others from danger.

\*\*\*\*

In Peter's first letter to these scattered believers in Jesus, he provided words of reassurance and hope. Words that still guide us today. He preached about building the church, with Christ as the cornerstone. This church was a community of individuals, building their own lives on this solid foundation.

Peter stressed that we are to build the church and our lives on our faith in God, with Christ as our cornerstone. We should choose the very best building materials available to us – just like that third little pig. A church and a life built from the gold, silver and precious stones of life, rather than wood, hay and straw.

From a very young age, in our fairy tales and our Sunday School Bible stories, we're taught the importance of a strong foundation. With the cornerstone, that first stone in the construction, all other stones will be set in reference to that stone, thus determining the success (or failure) of the entire structure. How important that cornerstone is!

With a firm cornerstone in place, strong, level bricks will be placed perfectly to anchor the structure deep into the ground, allowing it to handle an enormous amount of weight and amazing natural forces.

\*\*\*\*

COVID-19 is dominating our lives right now. It's on the television, in newspapers and print, on the screens of every device we have ... and it's in our minds and on our lips. We're talking about it – a lot. Practically everything that we think, say and/or do is affected by this sub-microscopic, infectious agent that has the ability to render us incapacitated and even kill us.

It's a startling reminder to us ... just as the beginning of our scripture reading today from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter says ... that all human life on the earth is like grass, and all human glory is like a flower in a field. It dies and withers.

Our earthly lives can be so very precarious and delicate. We're able to endure and withstand so much, yet we can succumb to something so infinitesimal as a virus. It provides perspective. A perspective for which we need reminding constantly, because face-it, we're stubborn and forgetful.

This is who and what we are – humanity endures yet succumbs. Humanity knows yet forgets. Humanity is adaptable, yet stubborn and digs in its heels. We are so fortunate to have a creator that knows us so well; who knows all our beauty and capabilities, our shortcomings and weaknesses...and still loves us so much and bestows so much grace and mercy.

Despite the mortality that is a fact of our earthly existence, our Creator provided an eternal existence through the Word, the Living Water, the Way, the Rock that is Jesus Christ.

Peter reminds us to forget envy, malice and deceit. Those emotions destroy us and tear us down. What builds us up is the nutritious milk of the Word. The Way of Jesus' teachings – compassion, kindness and love – build us up. Then we can build the church of God.

\*\*\*\*

“The Christian church is a spiritual structure founded on Jesus Christ as its chief cornerstone. But until the cornerstone is used to hold other smaller stones in place, giving stability and direction to the entire building, its purpose has not been realized. To keep a cornerstone in isolation is to reject it. When rejected so large an object does not just go away. Instead people trip over it and it brings about their downfall.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the church, however, is not to make people stumble, but to seek out and lay in place other living stones on the foundation of Christ, thus protecting against the possibility of stumbling. ... [W]e see [this] happening in the story from John 4 [when Jesus provided *living* water to the Samaritan woman]....The living Water is shared with one person and overflows to many. The living Stone (1 Pet 2:4) is set in place so that many smaller stones (1 Pet 2:5) can be set in place on it.<sup>2</sup>

*Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. (Matt 7:24-27 NIV)*

The Rock in this parable is Christ. Anyone who builds on Him receives sustenance and shelter; if not, their house collapses and they are crushed.

\*\*\*\*

Trials and tribulations, challenges and adversities, fires and stones, big bad wolves – will continually be around to test the mettle of our churches and our lives. When these events come, if we have built lives on faith, God and Jesus, we will be able to withstand these trials ... and even if, in part, we are decimated, we will not be destroyed.

---

<sup>1</sup> The mistake of rejecting the Cornerstone is found in Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; and 1 Pet 2:4, 7. The idea of stumbling over it is found in Rom 9:33 and 1 Pet 2:8.

<sup>2</sup> Hardy, Frank W. (Hardy 1985)

So, which little pig are we? And what, exactly, are we building our lives upon? What are the foundational principles of your lives?

With Jesus as the *living* cornerstone, we are called to be the *living* stones set in line with Jesus.

- Calling one another to connect.
- Donating time, money and items to the church, FISH, A Precious Child
- Praying for other's healing and peace
- Dropping off a basket of cookies at one's doorstep
- Mailing a card
- Supporting local businesses that are struggling
- Wearing a mask and gloves
- Maintaining physical distance

These are the bricks of compassion and love. These are the very best materials that help you to construct your life as carefully and soundly as possible, trusting Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of the foundations of our lives and church.

Who's afraid of the big, bad wolf?<sup>3</sup>

Not us. It's not us.

Amen.

---

<sup>3</sup> (Hagmaier 2017)