

Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Sermon Week 4 1 Peter 2:4-10

It is Great to Belong

It is great to belong to something. There are Country Clubs, Dinner Clubs, Bridge Clubs, Book Clubs, Men's Clubs, Women's Clubs, Athletic Clubs, and on and on we could go. We all like to be a part of something, some group, where we feel like we are known and make a difference.

Belonging at Church

Today, let's think about the fact that we are members of our church. At our church there are lots of places to belong be it Afternoon Guild, LWML, Men's Club, choir, Weekday Bible Study Groups. We love to come together for special occasions like Christmas, Easter, Advent, Lent. We love to see and talk to others. These people are our friends. We love them. We belong here.

Isolation Makes It Hard

That is what makes this time so hard. We cannot go to church or see each other. We miss each other. We feel isolated and alone at times. We know we belong, but sometimes we wonder if we will ever have the kind of fellowship with each other like we are used to. We may well belong but the joys and pleasures we had with each other seem like a thing of the past. Sometimes we just get angry about it. Sometimes we get so frustrated we don't think much about God, our faith, or our hope in Him.

Church is Not Just Another Organization

Now let's be careful here because our church is not just another human organization like some club. Oh, it has a constitution and elected leaders, but in many ways it is so different. For we did not build the church so to speak. God did. Just listen to what God tells us,

"As you come to Him, the Living Stone, rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood..." (vv. 4-5)

We Belong to a Spiritual House

Who is this Living Stone? Jesus Christ is the Living Stone. Yes, living! We celebrate that in this Easter Season. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is alive. He died for us on the cross of Calvary to pay for our sin. He did not stay dead. He rose from death on the third day and lives and reigns forever. He is alive. All who believe in Him are alive, living stones that are built up together. The church is a spiritual house built by God's own Son who died and rose again for us. We belong to a spiritual house built by God Himself. We are members of that house forever.



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God Makes Sure We Belong

But there is more! God makes sure we know we belong. He says,

“Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people, once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (v. 10)

We were caught up in sin. We were cut off from each other and from God because of our sin. We did not even want to belong to God, to be His people. Still, God loved us. Still, God reached out for us not with anger and punishment, but with His own Son. God made us what we are in Jesus Christ. God poured out His mercy on us when Jesus Christ died and rose again for us. He made us His people by His work for us.

You Belong to God’s Kingdom

Still God has more to tell us. He wants to make sure we know we belong to this spiritual house.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession....” (v. 9).

Wow! God says so. We belong to a spiritual house built by God through Jesus Christ. This house is built with living stones, us, all people that believe in this Jesus who died and rose again for us. You my friends belong to God. He made you His own, a member of His Kingdom, His house, the day you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God called you by name that day and He will forever. You belong.

What are We to Do?

As living stones, priests, and kings what are we to do? God has poured out His grace on us in His Son. This is our hope. What do living stones, members of God’s house do? How do we live in this world? God tells us,

“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (v. 5)

Alive! Not Dead!

What is a spiritual sacrifice? Sometimes it is also called a “living sacrifice” in Scripture. When we think of sacrifices we usually think of dead animals used in the OT. What are living, spiritual sacrifices? A spiritual sacrifice is what living stones do. When they do what God commands, and they do it with faith in their hearts in Jesus Christ, then this is a living, spiritual sacrifice. We are alive in Jesus Christ and when we live for Him we are offering God spiritual sacrifices. Alive not dead!



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Paul says it like this,

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20

God Empowers Our Spiritual Sacrifices

We are living stones. We belong to God. We will be with Him and all our fellow believers forever. That is our hope. Now we live like it. God empowers us as His children by our baptism to offer Him spiritual sacrifices-doing His will in this world with faith in our Savior. Why? Not to earn anything from God but to give thanks to God for what He has done for us.

Simple Things Offered to God

Don't try to think up some great offering to God. Just live where He has placed you as His child. Your spiritual sacrifices are things like helping your children with on-line homework; calling your elderly neighbor or grandma just to check on them and talk to them so they are not so lonely; if you are able, helping someone with no job put food on his or her table; making a special offering to God at your church to help others, to pay the bills every church has or salary and benefits for your church workers; taking the trash cans to the street for your sick neighbor; comforting your children when all that is going on scares them. Need I go on? Even these simple things are spiritual sacrifices offered to God acceptable to God in Jesus.

Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

We are living stones. We belong by God's grace in Jesus Christ. We live in hope. We live offering spiritual, living sacrifices to God for all He has done for us. Amen.



Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Bible Study Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Introduction

"You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:4

This study explores the power of hope at work in us and through us. Peter has already taught us much about hope. We have the living, resurrected, tested and true hope of Christ running through our veins. In this study, Peter puts "hope" to work. In construction language, he makes us "subcontractors" of hope as both Jesus' crew and materials. In priestly language, he deploys us to speak a holy sermon of hope. And in the language of offerings, he calls us to be stewards who worship, offering our spiritual sacrifices of hope.

Checking In

1. What specific needs, possessions, activities or events—past or future—are you missing because of the Coronavirus?
2. What accommodations have you and/or others made to address one loss you are feeling or anticipating?
3. How have you seen the grace of God at work in anticipated losses?

Preparing for the Word

We just opened with a brief opportunity to share some of the feelings, losses, and surprises of grace that are personal to each of us in this pandemic. There's a difference, however, between something lost involuntarily and sacrificing something valuable intentionally. Today Peter draws our attention to the later: offering sacrifices of hope. As you read from Peter and discuss the questions that follow, consider how the Bible and the power of the resurrection of Jesus emboldens sacrifices of hope. And one more thing: every mention of "you" in these Bible verses is plural! This stretches our thinking even more about "offering" language. Ultimately, this is an activity we do together as God's people!



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Bible Study Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

First Word: 1 Peter 2:1-12

4. How have you “tasted that the Lord is good” and how has it impacted your growth as a child of God? (see verses 1-3)
5. Peter uses “Temple Talk” to describe our relationship with Christ and with each other (see verses 3-9).
 - a) Identify the various visuals of worship and temple life that Peter describes.
 - b) How does Peter in numerous ways describe Jesus as the fulfillment of temple structures, priests and sacrifices?
 - c) How has the death and resurrection of Jesus included us as a living fulfillment of temple structures, priests and sacrifices?

Video

St. Paul’s Lutheran (Des Peres) H.I.S. Puppeteers have produced a video puppet show to compliment this study. Youth and adults will enjoy watching it.

Simply visit: <https://mo.lcms.org/our-hope-for-years-to-come-week-4>

And select the “Puppet Show” button

6. Why was the boy having a difficult time? How did the girl help him?
7. What does it mean for Jesus to be our “capstone”?
8. What does it mean for us to be “living stones” with Jesus?



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Bible Study Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Household Activity

9. **Review:** Last week's activity explored blessing our institutions.
- a) What group or person did you choose to bless?
 - b) How did the experience help you see God's servants with the mindset of Christ Jesus?
 - c) How is submission to God's authorities impacting your witness to the hope you have in the Gospel?
10. **Offering Spiritual Sacrifices:** Peter uses the language of giving offerings to show how we put our living hope into action. Our offerings express many truths of Biblical stewardship and sacrificial giving. Discuss with others in your household (or friends you reach out to in your Christian community) at least two of the seven joys listed below of offering spiritual sacrifices. How have they impacted your faith and life personally?
- Worshipping together in praise and thanksgiving to our Triune God
 - Serving as "a holy priesthood" together as the Body of Christ
 - Expressing sacrifice voluntarily, rather than compulsory
 - Celebrating belonging to each other in the Church
 - Expressing the creative activity of working together as Christ's Church
 - Blessing our community as witnesses to the Gospel
 - Multiplying the Kingdom of God as servants in the mission of Christ
11. **Offerings as Sacrifice:** Identify one activity of discretionary expense that you will sacrifice as an offering to God. Discuss with your household or group the following?
- How can this be an activity that we can encourage one another to do together?
 - What cause (a general offering or a specific mission gift) will we participate in together as a group?
 - How can we collect the "offering" in a way that will remind us of our working together as living stones and in the Church?
 - When will we offer the gift?



Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Bible Study Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Prayer Journal

This week's prayer journal emboldens us to be a holy priesthood. The priesthood of the Old Testament did not merely offer sacrifices and forgive sins. The priesthood offered prayers of intercession for the people of God and for the world.

12. Before you pray, complete the following exercise to flex your muscles as intercessory priests. The prayer questions below are shaped in a way that ask us to intercede for people beginning from a distance and gradually moving to those closer to home. With the pandemic in front of us 24/7, try to look at each area of concern with more specific needs than simply requesting prayers for "the virus" or "the crisis." If you need to, search for news stories to get specific. Write down your sacrificial prayer commitment and offer these prayers daily for one week.

- a) What issue for the Christian Church on earth will you be a priest for every day this week?
- b) What global issue will you be a priest for every day this week?
- c) What national issue will you be a priest for every day this week?
- d) What issue for the Lutheran Church in our District or Synod will you be a priest for every day this week?
- e) What community issue will you be a priest for every day this week?
- f) What issue in your congregation will you be a priest for every day this week?



Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Bible Study Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Second Word: 1 Peter 3:1-12

This final word from Peter in our study is sacrificial as well. Peter challenges us to think about our roles as men and women, in marriage and in families, in the church and in society, with a view that challenges the entitlements and vanities of our culture. As you read this section, read with your call to sacrifice in mind (rather than someone else). Whether you are married or single, male or female, these words challenge us to put our hope in Jesus rather than our entitlement.

13. How does my offering of hope in Christ impact...

a) my modesty and appearance?

b) my consideration and respect for others?

c) my witness to the world?

14. How can I bless my marriage (or someone else's) with hope by offering a spiritual sacrifice?

Blessing

If you haven't done so already, make use of the Daily Reading and Reflections provided with this to help you listen to the Bible more. It will help you grow deeper in your hope, a hope freed to serve.

Close by taking turns using 1 Peter 2:9 to bless one another. An example of how you can modify it to be a blessing might go like this:

{Name} Jesus is your hope!

You are united to me and His Church as

a chosen race, a royal priesthood,

a holy nation, a people for His own possession,

that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him

who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light!



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Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Daily Readings & Reflections

Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Introduction

In order to support our churches using the lectionary, this week's readings jump around the readings from last week. The scriptures from last week set the stage for this week.

Chapter 2:1-12

God's call to be stewards who "do good," even in circumstances of unjust suffering (2:19-25) compliments the opening words of chapter two which call us to maturity and living hope that is founded and completed in Jesus.

Chapter 3:1-12

God's call to be stewards who "do good" by submitting to our authorities (2:13-18) is translated into godly order for marriage and family relationships in chapter three.

Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Peter shapes the imagery of these chapters in "Temple Talk." He is fully aware that his audience is socially distanced from their Jerusalem Temple. He turns them to the reality of the Temple fulfilled in Christ. He is the chief cornerstone. He is the beginning and ending of everything temple worship was teaching. In Baptism, we have been joined to Christ and this marvelous Temple community. Together we are "living stones," "chosen people," "a holy priesthood," "a holy nation," "people who belong to God!" Ever since the resurrection of Jesus, the temple sacrifices have been deployed, sending hope to the world.

The pandemic has temporarily impacted our familiar worship routines, but it has no power to interrupt the flow of God's grace distributing hope to our world. We may be exiles in this new world. We are also people belonging to God that we may declare the praises of Him!

Our present circumstance and the Epistle of Peter challenge us to reexamine our stewardship of the gifts of God. These meditations uncover the vast resources and opportunities we have to make "spiritual sacrifices" that bring hope everyday people—inside and outside of the Church.

Set aside at least five minutes for these daily exercises and you will end up using them to offer spiritual sacrifices for days to come! You can do this alone or in a family group. Take the grace you find and give it away!



Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Daily Readings & Reflections

Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Monday

Read: *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*
1 Peter 2:1-3

Reflect: Peter opens with ugly “grown up” traits. Everyone is vulnerable to these infections. Where is your greatest vulnerability? Peter finishes with a twist: childlike faith. Recall a simple Bible verse or teaching you can use this week with grace to help you keep “putting away” and “growing up.”

Tuesday

Read: *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*
1 Peter 2:4-8

Reflect: Keeping in mind “you” is plural, how is God calling and positioning you as He builds up His spiritual house during this crisis? What spiritual sacrifices is He calling you to offer in these days that will build up His Church?

Wednesday

Read: *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* 1 Peter 2:9-10

Reflect: Of the many metaphors here, which one is strongest in connecting you to your church family? How does the image inspire you to speak confidently of your personal story of God’s mercy? Who will you tell today?



Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Daily Readings & Reflections

Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Thursday

Read: *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.* 1 Peter 2:11-12

Reflect: Recall a time when you witnessed someone speak critically of your faith or other believers. How did you respond? What insights from this passage help prepare your soul and your response in future settings?

Friday

Read: *Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.* 1 Peter 3:1-7

Reflect: Whether you are male or female, married or single, how does your conduct, speech, and respect across gender demonstrate your submission and hope in Christ? How will you offer a spiritual sacrifice that blesses a marriage today (yours or another) not with vanity but with “imperishable beauty” and hope?

Saturday

Read: *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*
1 Peter 3:8-12

Reflect: What examples of “spiritual sacrifices” do you find in these verses? How do they specifically offer hope? What is one specific act of hope you will offer as a spiritual sacrifice today?



Hope Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Household Activity

Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Note: This activity is also included in the Week Four Bible Study.

Review:

Last week's activity that explored blessing our institutions.

- a) What group or person did you choose to bless?
- b) How did the experience help you see God's servants with the mindset of Christ Jesus?
- c) How is submission to God's authorities impacting your witness to the hope you have in the Gospel?

Offering Spiritual Sacrifices:

Peter uses the language of giving offerings to show how we put our living hope into action. Our offerings express many truths of Biblical stewardship and sacrificial giving. Discuss with others in your household (or friends you reach out to in your Christian community) at least two of the seven joys listed below of offering spiritual sacrifices. How have they impacted your faith and life personally?

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Week 4 1 Peter 2:1-12 & 3:1-12

Offerings as Sacrifice:

Identify one activity of discretionary expense that you will sacrifice as an offering to God. Discuss with your household or group the following?

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- When will we offer the gift?

Prayer Journal Activity:

In the weekly Bible study, there is a prayer activity for each week. This prayer journal is included in the home activity page because emboldens us to act as a holy priesthood in prayer. The priesthood of the Old Testament did not merely offer sacrifices and forgive sins. The priesthood offered prayers of intercession for the people of God and for the world.

Before you pray, complete the following exercise to flex your muscles as intercessory priests. The prayer questions below are shaped in a way that ask us to intercede for people beginning from a distance and gradually moving to those closer to home. With the pandemic in front of us 24/7, try to look at each area of concern with more specific needs than simply requesting prayers for “the virus” or “the crisis.” If you need to, search for news stories to get specific. Write down your sacrificial prayer commitment and offer these prayers daily for one week.

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