



Come to him!

We were sitting at a football game, strangers in every way except that we were rooting for the same team. It didn't matter whether we were Democrats or Republicans, African American or Caucasian, Jew or Gentile, Americans or Greeks. We were all hooting and hollering, laughing and crying, complaining and celebrating as one. Our identity and common cause for that hour was centered in our

relationship to our hometown team. We were deeply connected from the heart to that team and so, we were deeply connected from the heart to each other.

This message about a common identity that supersedes everything else is what the Apostle Peter is proclaiming in this upcoming Sunday's Scripture passage from 1 Peter 2:1-10. "You have been born anew," he wrote in the previous chapter, thanks to the living word, the good news, that was announced to you. "Rid yourselves, therefore," he continues in chapter 2, of everything that hinders that new life together, things like "malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander." The new life God has given you is a life of "genuine mutual love," love that comes "deeply from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22) To live this new life fully, Peter writes, you must be like newborn babies longing for their mother's milk and come to Jesus who will give you everything you need to grow up in this new life, into this salvation.

"Come to him," Peter goes on, switching metaphors, "a living stone" and let him build you up as living stones yourselves into all that God intends. Let him build you together into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood that offers "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." It is crucial to note how clearly Peter states that this new life is something they will live out together, which fits with the emphasis on loving one another in the previous chapter. As we come to Jesus, we will "be built into a spiritual house" *together*; we will not simply be bricks laying around on our own. As we come to him, we will become "a holy priesthood" *together*, not just priests off doing things on our own.

In our society, the Christian faith has often become too individualistic, something we imagine we can live out on our own. But when we come to Jesus, we come together with all who look to him as Lord and Savior. Far more than the fans of a football team, our identity in Christ supersedes every other identity the world gives us. We need to remember and remain steadfast in this, especially when the world tempts us to conform to its way of thinking. Race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, language, political affiliations, and all such things are ways the world categorizes and divides us. And while each of these can rightly be very important to us, our God-given identity in Christ surpasses them all and must shape how we understand and live them out.

When we come to Jesus, we discover our true and core identity. In Christ, we are one, rooting for each other, encouraging and loving one another, serving alongside each other. As we come to Jesus, day by day and week by week, we invite and allow the Spirit of Christ to build us up together into a community in which the presence of God is clear to see, as a priesthood that helps one another and those in our world connect meaningfully with God. As we come to Jesus, we are enabled to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, to both will and work for God's good pleasure, as the Apostle Paul puts it, and to make known in word and deed the mighty acts of God who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Prayer:

Almighty God, I come to you. Enable me to grow as the person you have created me to be in Christ, to know that who I am as your beloved child is the most important thing about me, and to believe that I have an important part to play in your body of believers on earth. By your power, help us together to live to the praise of your glory, loving one another deeply from the heart, witnessing to your goodness in word and deed, and helping our neighbors connect and come alive in your love, through Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord. Amen.

Suggested Verses for Meditation and Memorization:

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-5

Some Thing(s) to Try:

- Practice sitting still with God away from distractions for five minutes or more each day. Slowly breath in and out, praying, "I come to you."
- As you reflect on this week's passage, name those things that get in the way of you living and serving as a healthy part of the community God is building on earth. Is it one of the things listed in verse one? Is it that you don't come to him to receive his Word and Spirit and direction on a regular basis? Is it that you are trying to live your Christian life on your own without a full commitment to other Christians and Christ's Church? Repent of whatever is getting in the way and decide how you will more fully live into your new life in Christ. Write it down and tell someone about your decision.
- When you come to Jesus this week to pray, worship, and listen to God's Word through the Scriptures, picture yourself as a baby before God longing for life-giving milk, or as a baby bird chirping (praying) to God for the food you need, food God is so gladly and generously ready to give you.
- Thinking of 1 Peter 2:9 and God's goodness to you, pray for and look for an opportunity to share a story about God's goodness with someone as a way to encourage them.

Further Suggested Readings:

- Jeremiah 1:4-10
- Psalm 71:1-6
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
- Luke 4:21-30