

Nothing prepares you for the experience. You don't know how you're going to react when it happens. All you can do is hope you don't say something foolish. It was the first time someone said to me at the grocery store, "Would you like a sack for that?" A what? "Can I get you a buggy?" What's a buggy doing in a grocery store? I never heard those terms used in a grocery store before we moved to the south. Sack, buggy, I didn't know how to react. Bag and cart, those I understood. Those I grew up with.

Sack and buggy aren't wrong. They make sense to someone who has lived in the south all their lives. The contrast between buggy and cart isn't that big. They both work, they both refer to the same thing. It's when the term describing something seems to contradict like, jumbo shrimp, driveway, or parkway. Buggy I get, but driveway, jumbo shrimp? Shrimp is used to describe something small. You park in the driveway and drive on the parkway. Somewhere along the way someone chose terms that didn't make any sense.

Peter used something similar in the section of his first letter we're covering this Confirmation Sunday. It's a two word phrase that seems to contradict. The two words don't seem to work together. But Peter uses them in a beautiful picture of the Christian under the living Christ.

You are a living stone

Stones by their nature are lifeless. They don't walk around. They don't move when told to move. They don't breathe, or smile, or anything else that living beings do. You've seen stones, played with them, skipped them across a lake before. Stones are used for building material, crushed into pebbles to be walked on, and some even we sit on like right outside the church front door. Stones have different sizes, shapes, and colors. There's a lot of variety to stones. But never are they considered living.

Because stones aren't living we use stone to describe the heart of someone who doesn't care. If there's no love, no caring, no compassion then that person has a heart of stone. It's also the way our sinful nature should be described. We're stone. Where have been the times you didn't show love, care, or compassion? Does love show when we hold a grudge against someone, continuing to be mad at them long after what they did is over? Do people see care in you when you're making demands and expecting things to be done your way? Is compassion what people think when they see your car buzzing past them in such a hurry on the road? Our hearts of sinful stone show themselves again and again. It's all about us, it's all about me. We may have variety in how we look but essentially we're all the same dead sinful stones.

Peter not only used the phrase, living stone, but he made it apply to someone specific. **"As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house."** The Living Stone is he who was rejected by men to the point where they wanted to see him suffer. They rejected him in the worst way possible on the cross. Seeing him die painfully was better than believing he came for them. Yet he was chosen by God long before the world was created to come and face what would be thrown at him. Hanging on the cross proved he was chosen by God. The precious Son of God was giving his precious blood for you and me. Jesus is the Living Stone, precious enough to have life in himself, precious enough to give life to others. He makes us living stones too. His death seemed to contradict this, seemed like he was a dead stone. But he came alive again. He rose proving himself to be the Living Stone and proving he could grant life to others.

This Living Stone, Jesus makes you and me living stones. **"Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."** We believe in the Living Stone. This precious Living Stone forgives our lack of love, care, and compassion. He forgives all our sins. We trust in him through the power of his own promises. Such amazing and powerful blessings are ours. When we have no reason to show love because we figure it has to be all about us, Christ Jesus says we'll never be put to shame for believing in him. When showing care is too hard because others have hurt us, Jesus says trusting in him we will never be made fools. When we need compassion of our own, Jesus comes with compassion to spare and leads us to trust in him. Through Christ we're members of God's family. Because of Christ we have received mercy. We're part of the building process of God's spiritual house. We're living stones coming together into a spiritual house to **"offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."**

This morning another living stone is being lifted into place. She makes her own public confession of faith. She will testify that she believes in Christ Jesus the Living Stone. Through God's Word she has learned to trust in him by faith. In the face of life's challenges, whatever they may be, Christ promises that if she believes in him she'll never be made a fool. Today is the beginning of a lifelong study of God's love. Her chosen verse from Scripture says something special to her. **"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."** God through Jeremiah lets her know the Lord will not only be with her but will have the active role in guiding her life into the future. And like all believers, this living stone has hope. It's living hope from the Living Stone, Jesus Christ.

Christians are special people, but also a study in contrasts. As humans we are sinful. Living can't describe sinners. Yet we believe in Jesus as our Savior. We're precious in God's sight and perfect before him. We're reminded in God's eyes we are living stones. Christ made us that way when he came to be the Living Stone for us. By believing and confessing our faith in him we show ourselves to be living stones under him. You and I are living stones and we have living hope through Christ our Living Savior.