

Message Book – 2645 - 10/11/20

Jesus the Stone Mason

By Bobby Schuller

Friend, today I want you to know that you don't have to be ashamed of wherever you are. And maybe you're not where you want to be in life, join the club, especially with COVID, many people have had major setbacks and they're embarrassed about where they are in their career, or in their family, or in their hobbies that they're wanting to pursue and so they double down on the fakery. You don't have to do that. You'll have a joyful life when you're willing to bring your emptiness, your brokenness, your poverty, your addiction, your fears. All of these things, and just bring them innocently before the Lord and say it's not because I haven't tried. It's not because I haven't given an effort, but Lord, would you help me with this? Watch, He'll help you, and He'll begin to chisel away.

The series we're in is about how the symbolism of stone and working in the quarry is central in many parts of the Bible, and how your life of discipleship is like the stone being pulled out of the quarry of Abraham and Sarah. That there's something really special and substitutive about you, but that it requires work, effort and even pain at times,

enduring suffering in order that you can become the person that God has called you to be.

Today I want to talk specifically about the importance of focusing on the inner life before the outer life. Your outer life matters. Your job matters. Your choices matter. Your family matters and your image actually matters, too. These are important things to you, and they're important to God, but they're secondary to what's truly going on in your inner life; that is your heart, your thoughts, what you focus on, and the things that you want to hide from others. Those are the things we need to bring before God and let Him chisel away.

I remember when Hannah and I, we were so lucky that we were able to go on a private tour of Israel with a guy named Ronnie Winter. He was the son of two Jewish German husband and wife who fled Germany during the Nazi reign and they fled to Israel, and he grew up in Israel, so he grew up speaking both German and Hebrew, and he was kind of this Indiana.. he's still a great guy, he's this Indiana Jones type guy. He works for the university, he's an archaeologist, he even has the Indiana Jones hat and everything, and it's just like a Jewish Indiana Jones. He's great.

And he took us to this amazing ruin called Beit Shean, I think we have an image of it here. Beautiful, it was so fun. Hannah and I got to walk with him, and you can see the greatness of this former Roman city. Here these pillars and colonnades and mosaics and roads and market

places, and you could see where the theater was and the palace and it's all in ruins. And he asked us this question that historians love to talk about and they always give a million reasons for it: why did the Roman Empire fall? Why did the Roman Empire fall? And he looked at us and he said Bobby and Hannah, you want to know why the Roman Empire fell? I'll show you.

And he took us to the ruins of one of the temples in what used to be a major city, and he said look at these ruins. Look at the outside. And he began to paint a picture. Huge pillars and this was gold leaf, and here was marble, and these great images, and there would be torches and flames and these huge stairways, and you could see it as he was painting this beautiful temple. He's like gorgeous, beautiful, and he's like walk with us, and began walking sort of up the ruins of the stairs into this room, into this tiny little cubby. It was like maybe like four or six feet around, this tiny circumference with a little pedestal and he said the idol for this god would have been this tall.

So the temple on the outside was ornate and gorgeous and beautiful, but when you went inside the temple, it was small, shallow, boring, and he said this epitomized the Romans during this era. Everything on the outside is important. Everything on the outside is ornate and beautiful and rich and gorgeous, but when you get to the inside, it's hollow, boring, empty. That's not you. And he said this is the reason the empire fell.

And I worry, when I look at the modern world, that time and again you see that as affluence and wealth comes, it's so easy to focus on the outside stuff, which again is important, but forget the inside stuff. Forget your relationship with your spouse or your kids or to forget the importance of your walk with God, or to forget that these things on the inside are what really matter. They don't just matter to God they're the things that really matter to you. And when you discover their importance, if you haven't, I'm sure you have, but when you focus on those things in life, get better.

It's interesting because when we reflect on Jesus' life, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and in fear for His life, He ran to Egypt. A lot of us don't know this one. He spent His time in Egypt as a child, but then when He moved back because of fear of the new Herod, they moved to the northern part of Israel called Galilee, and they lived in a very small village called Nazareth.

Now Nazareth was only about 300 people in Jesus' day, and they actually believed that the Messiah would come from their town. I think this is one reason why Mary went there. But another reason might be that they were only four miles away from the capital of Galilee. We don't have any real historic evidence, but tradition says that this city Sepphoris was the birthplace of Jesus' mother, Mary. And this city, Sepphoris was an unbelievable place. Unbelievable. Right at Jesus' day it was being built by now Herod Antipas, and it was the capital and it had

palaces and streets and gymnasiums and theaters, and again it was only a four mile walk from Nazareth.

Now Jesus, we all know if you've been going to Shepherd's Grove for awhile, Jesus wasn't necessarily a carpenter. The Bible says that Jesus was a Tekton. Tekton. That literally means a builder. Jesus was a builder, and you can interpret that any way you do. If you're living in medieval Germany or medieval England, a builder is a carpenter. That's somebody who cuts down trees and builds houses out of wood. But if you live in Israel where there are very few trees, and buildings are made of stone, a builder is typically going to be a stone mason. So it's likely that Jesus actually wasn't a carpenter. He probably could work with wood, had to know the basics, but probably historians believe was actually a mason, a stone mason. Not the lodge kind. The stone mason. You work with stones, you chisel them, you cut them, you sand them, and you make buildings out of them, and when you see the ruins in Israel, they're all made of stone and they're beautiful.

And it was so interesting when we got to go to Sepphoris to walk around and think okay this is four miles from Jesus' home, which only has 300 people in it. That's not a lot of work for Joseph and Jesus when he's a teenager in their little village. Most of the work that they would have gotten was probably going to be in Sepphoris. We have no evidence to support this at all. This is totally conjecture, but I believe, and many historians believe, that a lot of these buildings in Sepphoris were built by

teenager or guy in His 20's - Jesus! Isn't that amazing? That you walk around and it's very, very likely that Joseph and Jesus and His brothers worked on building this theater, or worked on building these streets, or these mosaics. And that most of Jesus life through His teens and His 20's, He was building things, carving things and shaping things and it wasn't until He was 30 that He became a great rabbi.

Now that is interesting to me because when you look at the nature of God, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He got to effectively choose His job, and that He chose being a builder, a mason or a carpenter. That He chose this profession. And I think it is so important that we understand that there's something about God's nature that He loves to shape out of the gnarly-ness and dirtiness of the stone that comes out of the ground, to shape something ornate, unique and beautiful. And that's what He's doing in your life: ornate, unique and beautiful. That it's about the details. It's about the little things, and that's what God's doing in your life.

They found another discovery in Jerusalem when they were looking at the stones at the great temple, they found that so many of the stones had ornate carvings on the outside, beautiful images of things flowing and all of this stuff, but the big surprise was when they dug up the foundation stones, that is the stones that were under the earth, the stones that after they placed them there nobody would see them, that they still had the same ornate carving on them. That the Jewish people

who built the temple, the message is this: they believed so much in the hidden things, that when they carved the stuff on these little stones, that even though no one would see them, they still wanted to give their all to God. This is the temple.

And this is what the Lord wants from us. That the secret things, the hidden things in our life are the important things. In other words, that we take responsibility for our lives. That we take responsibility for our lives. That we focus on us in terms of what needs to be fixed, not everything else. That we remember that the foundation is what matters. That what's hidden is what matters.

Every single Sunday for more than 60 years, a minister has gotten onto this pulpit and opened every worship service with the same words. You might know them: "this is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it." Those are the same words as Hava Nagila, by the way. If you're Jewish or you've grown up in a Jewish family or you have Jewish friends. You ever go to a bar mitzvah or a bat mitzvah or a wedding, you're going to hear (SINGS: hava nagila, hava nagila, hava nagila v'nismecha.) That is word for word. That is let us rejoice and be glad in it. And both of those are pulling from Psalm 118. And a lot of us have no idea that that when we say 'this is the day the Lord has made,' that is only the second half of a verse. Let's bring it up.

The full verse goes like this: "the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Did you catch that? So it's like builders

were looking at a pile of stones, and they picked the ones they thought were the best, and then there was this other stone over here and they threw it away. And somehow in the mix of it all, someone took that stone and said yeah, it's a funky looking stone, but this funky looking stone will be the most important one. Its going to be the cornerstone, which is the foundational stone at the top of the ark that holds the whole building together. That it may not look like the other stones, it's utterly unique. It's got this bizarre shape, but this is the stone we need to hold up everything. That the one they threw away became the most important thing.

So it's become the cornerstone. "This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes," and then "this is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." What day? The day that the things that were rejected, the things that were outside became the most important things. The things that they thought were worthless became the best thing. The thing that's even, you might say the cornerstone is often hidden, you don't see it, is the most important thing; that although it was thrown away, this is what matters.

So why would you rejoice? Why is that something to celebrate? Why is that something to jump up and down and say hava nagila about? The answer is because it's a picture of the kingdom. See the world looks at everything on the outside, all the vain stuff, but God looks at the heart. God looks at the heart.

The hidden thing that is happening today in your life is the fruit of your life tomorrow. You may have grief, you may have anger, you may have broken heartedness, but if you give that empty brokenness to God, and He repairs and heals and works on you on the inside, if that is fixed but your outside isn't, don't worry. Tomorrow's going to be amazing. If the inside is worked on today, the outside will be fixed tomorrow. Jesus told us seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and everything else, everything else will be taken care of. Everything else, it says, will be given unto you.

So in our world, let me just.. who's not worried about America? Who's not worried about this election? Who's not worried about the way in which there seems to be two groups that at least used to have some respect for that hate each other? Ongoing violence, broken systems and all this stuff that everybody's talking about and yet it's not getting better. The more we talk about it, the worse it gets. What's up with that? May I suggest that Jesus' message of fixing the inside, the heart, before fixing the outside is the answer here.

I remember when Hannah and I had the privilege to.. I had the honor of being the youngest chaplain at the Chautauqua Institute, which is a mega honor and I'm definitely bragging about it. And I remember when we were there, there were a lot of things I liked and a lot of things I didn't like. One of the things that I thought was kind of cheesy was there were these people that would get together and they would pray for peace,

and they say this song (SINGS: let there be peace on earth and let it..) and I always thought it was.. there's nothing wrong with it, I just thought it sounded like Kumbaya.

And now, looking back, I miss those days when people used to sing songs like that. (SINGS: let there be peace on earth) and the key line (SINGS: and let it begin with me.) Who sang let it begin with me? It's always let it begin with him or her or this system or this law or this thing or that. Those things are important, and they matter, but if peace isn't in me, I'm never going to experience peace out there. If peace isn't happening in my heart, I'm not going to experience peace on the It's a Small World ride. It doesn't matter where I am. I am going to be worried and anxious and something is always going to seem wrong with the world I live in. If I am not at peace, if I am not a loving person, it will be very hard for me to experience love, and to only experience hate from others. If I am not taking responsibility for my life, it will be so easy to blame all of my lack and failure on other people or other systems or other groups. And Jesus looks at these things and He cares about them more than we do. But He understands that at the heart of it, we have to change. I have to change. If I want a peaceful world, I have to become a peaceful person.

Let me give you an example. We can look at something, maybe the most disgusting evil thing in our world and we can all point at it, I don't think there's anybody who wouldn't point at this and say it's not evil and

disgusting – sex trafficking. Very often, most cases its children who are sold into the sex industry by gangs and such. Everyone will look at that and say that is broken, that needs to be fixed, I care about that, I want that to end in our world. That is representative of hell breaking into our world, something so evil. Jesus cares more about that than we do? Because Jesus not only says put an end to that, right, Jesus says anybody who harms a child should have a millstone tied around their neck and be thrown into the sea, which I love that.

But He also says, and this is what's most important, that you have heard that it was said such and such and such, but I say lust, right? So Jesus says lust is the problem. Now don't get confused with lust and desire. Sexual desire is different than the word lust. The word lust means I want to objectify and use another person for my own pleasure and gratification. That is at the heart of sex trafficking. All of us, all of us can look and say genocide, the genocides that happened in the 20th century, or racism that pervaded so much of our history, especially in the 20th century.

Everybody says that's horrible, but you know Jesus cares more about genocide and racism than we do? Because Jesus says anyone.. you have heard that it was said anyone who murders.. let me read it to you. "And you've heard that it's said you shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment, but I say to you anyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again,

anyone who says to a brother or sister ‘raca’ that’s like filth “is answerable to the court, and anyone who says ‘you fool’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” We look at the outside, the racism, the genocide, the violence, but Jesus looks at the heart. Contempt! If you dehumanize people, if you hold bitterness in your heart towards a person, and yes you’ve never acted on it, you’ve never done anything but you hold that in your heart, that’s the issue. See Jesus cares more about it than we do.

We say it’s all about not murdering, and of course you shouldn’t murder, but Jesus says stop chanting the stuff that you’re chanting all the time. Stop going on social media and saying to real children of God the things that you say to them. When you go on Twitter or Facebook or Instagram, if I have to read F-you racist or F-you libtard one more time. See Jesus says you want to get rid of racism, but you can’t do that if you’re saying F-you racist. You want to get rid of things like autocracy, but you can’t get rid of that if you’re saying F-you libtard. When you say words of contempt, and when you cuss out people online or in real life or in an email, when you have contempt for another person, even if they’re an evil person, you are making it worse, not better, and that’s not who you are. You are a joyful, encouraging, loving person. It is so much more important to win people over than it is to win.

And that is the thing that we learn from so many believers that came before us. From Mother Teresa, to Dr. King. Dr. King? Look at Dr. King versus Malcolm X. Those guys didn’t like each other, and didn’t

agree with each other and it was for one reason and one reason alone. One, Malcolm X, I believe, was okay with contempt and violence, and Dr. King was not. It was not okay to have contempt in your heart. It was not okay. Yes, you speak with what you believe, but it is not okay to cuss out and be violent and do all of this stuff.

That is not what we believers do. We love our enemies. We love our competitors. We love people who disagree with us. And the more people ratchet it up, the more we have to have focus on our hearts and say I will not allow bitterness and resentment and all of this stuff to be a part of me. I'm going to say what I believe, but I'm going to say it with respect. I'm going to do what I'm called to do, but I'm going to do it with dignity. I'm going to keep my chin up and be honest about what I believe, but I'm not going to say F-you this, or F-you that, or any of those things. That is not helping. That makes things worse.

Moreover, you cannot fix the world if you cannot make your own bed. You cannot fix the world if you cannot make your own bed. It is so important that we understand that if we can become the people who focus on the little things in our own lives, and can do that well, we're going to have more sympathy, grace, and wisdom when we become leaders. And that is who you are. If you have bitterness or un-forgiveness in your heart, you probably have a good reason. You probably are treated unfairly. You probably had some trauma or something horrible that was done to you and God sees that.

And I just want to say to you, be free of that. Give that to the Lord. Hand over your contempt and your bitterness. Allow Him to teach you what it means to love people who hate you or don't like you. Maybe you carry a lot of fear in your heart. Fear for this country or fear for your job or fear for your family, it just cripples you. Of course you feel that way. I'm sure something happened in your life where you learned that I have to be afraid, I have to be protective, I have to be defensive, or these things will happen. Give it to the Lord. Trust it to Him. None of these things you just do overnight, it's a process, but over time begin as much as you can to give your fear over to the Lord, and He's going to give you peace. And the more peace you have in your heart, the more peace we're going to have in our nation, actually.

And I guess that's what I'm saying. You want a peaceful nation? Become a peaceful person. You have a broken heart? Of course you have a broken heart. God sees what you went through. God's heart breaks with yours, as well. But allow God to come and mend those pieces together. Don't walk away from Him. Don't give up on life or on your job. Tomorrow will be better than it was today and the day after that will be better than that day. Your future is really bright and you'll look back and say I'm so glad that through this time, I stuck it out with the people that love me and with the Lord. Give your broken heart to God, and He'll mend you together.

And most of all, if you're riding the fence and you have not made a commitment to the Lord, commit your life to the Lord. Become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus says that anyone who loves the Lord with all their heart and all their soul and their strength, and those who love their neighbor as themselves, that they will have eternal life and I believe that. If you entrust your life to Jesus Christ, to His work on the cross, you'll be saved. And make a decision today. Nobody wants to make a decision about anything.

I should end my sermon, but just this last thought. So often, at least I am very tempted when I'm invited to something, to say maybe. I don't know if I want to go. I'll see how I feel when I get there. And very often in life this is how we are with the really important things like should I make a decision to follow the Lord? Make a decision today to follow Christ. We don't know how long we're going to live. And I just believe that the best life that you can live is the one following the Lord, so make a commitment today.

I want you to know I'm so proud of you. I believe that God is going to bring peace in a broken world through you. I believe that God's going to relieve you of whatever anger and frustration and all of these things that may be tearing you up inside, He's going to bring peace into your life, and I proclaim that over you. And I just believe that as we seek the inner things and allow the Son of God to work on our hearts, that we're going to become the kind of people, you're going to become the kind of

person the world needs today. Not another person saying F-you, but someone whose saying I'm blessing you. Let me talk to you. Let me work with you. Let me be a friend to you. And I just believe that makes all the difference in the world.

Father, we love you and we thank you so much that you've given us life, and you've given us this country, and many who are watching in all sorts of other countries, facing other political issues and other dynamics, Lord, help us in our nations and in our cultures that we love, our songs and our food and our families, and all of these things that make up who we are as a people, to never forget that you are the most important thing. And help us always to be gracious people, merciful people, quick to forgiveness as you are quick to forgive us; quick to be people who have discussions and conversations rather than people who are always judging and putting down. We would never be that, Lord, and I pray you bring healing to our nation, and to all the nations that are listening online or on television, that you'd bring peace to our countries, and help us to be ways in which that peace is coming. And Lord we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.