

The cornerstone is essential to the structure of a building. It binds the walls together. It is of vital importance, therefore, that the builders select not just any stone, but the one which is best. There must not be any flaws in it. Thus, they will inspect it quite carefully making certain that it is fit to be placed into the position of the cornerstone.

This is the meaning of Psalm 118 which Jesus here quotes in our text: "*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*" He directs these words against the scribes and chief priests who are listening. They are the builders. They are the teachers of Israel. They are responsible for laying the cornerstone in place.

And there is a word here that is quite revealing. The word *rejected*. Which stone do they reject? It's Jesus. Psalm 118 is about Jesus. He is the cornerstone, He alone. Without Him the building will collapse. But in Him all things are held together, and especially the Church, His Church, which is "*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.*" Ephesians 2.

But of course, they reject Him. They are simply walking in the same manner as did their ancestors in the Old Testament. Israel's spiritual leaders rejected every one of God's prophets. As the parable points out, they refused to give God the fruits of repentance. Instead, they mistreated His prophets, and worse, and sent them away empty-handed. And now, when God sends His beloved Son, they will also reject Him, but even more, they will kill Him.

One might wonder if they really grasp what it is they are doing. Maybe they need to spend more time in listening to Jesus, actually studying Him. His own disciples are with Him day after day, and they believe in Him. Perhaps these leaders of the people would come to believe in Him, too, were they to spend some quality time with Him.

But there is that word: rejected. And when we look at what it means in the original Greek here in St. Luke, it reveals to us that these builders rejected the cornerstone not in some hasty fashion, but only after a careful and thorough inspection. These chief priests and scribes, and these are Pharisaical scribes, have studied Jesus. They have watched Him for a long time, observing His miracles. They have listened to His teaching. They have discussed His teaching among themselves. This word rejected means that they have rejected Jesus after a careful and lengthy inspection. And they have positively determined that He is not the cornerstone; that He has flaws and is a fraud. And, therefore, He is rejected and must be killed.

Now let's talk about you and me. You are baptized into Jesus. You were taught the catechism. You have come here week after week to listen to Jesus' teaching. Have you not, also, made a thorough inspection of Him? What is your determination? Is Jesus the cornerstone? You answer Yes, do you not? This you confess in the creed, that He is the cornerstone of the Church.

Is He also the cornerstone of your life? Is your life held together by Jesus? Does it need to be? Well, let's turn the magnifying glass around. Instead of us inspecting Jesus with it, let's have Him use the magnifying glass on us to do a thorough inspection. What would He see in your life? What does He see?

Psalm 130 spells it out for us: *"If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?"* You and I are flawed, and not simply with minor flaws. We have the habit of using the magnifying glass on others. Do you know of someone who is a terrible sinner? Of course you do! We so easily inspect their lives and their character so that we see major flaws in them. Yet we fail to see the same flaws in ourselves.

But as the psalm says, not one of us could stand were the Lord to keep a record of sins. Our lives would collapse in a heartbeat. So, no, we are unable to hold our lives together. We need a cornerstone. And not just any stone will do. You and I need Jesus to be our cornerstone.

My friends, He is! This is the meaning of your baptism. That you are God's child. That you are in Christ. And your baptism means that Jesus is your cornerstone. He holds your life together.

Now, you know how terribly windy it has been the last month. But those winds are nothing compared to the evil winds that our sins bring upon us. They blow us first in one direction and then in the other. And never toward our Lord, but always away from Him.

Can our sins blow us off of our cornerstone? Oh yes! If strong winds can knock over buildings and uproot trees, then the winds that our sins bring upon us are more than able to move us off of Jesus.

Yet those same winds will never move Jesus away from you. He remains your cornerstone. And the way back to Him is the way of repentance, returning to your baptism. Here it is in our text. In speaking of Himself as the cornerstone, Jesus says: *"Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."*

Repentance breaks us to pieces. *"A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."* Psalm 51. When your life is blown off course, when your sinfulness overtakes you, your cornerstone is still there in your baptism. Fall upon that stone. It will hurt. It will break you to pieces. But that stone is Jesus. Fall upon Him who stumbled and fell carrying His cross for you. Fall into His arms which were stretched out on that cross for you. Say with the psalmist: *"If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand!"* But then look at Jesus on the cross and hear the words that follow: *"But with You there is forgiveness!"*

Put that magnifying glass back on Jesus and you will see that all your flaws, major and minor, that all your sins and uncleanness, that it all fell upon Him. And therefore, none of it is on you. There is forgiveness in Jesus.

This forgiveness is for all whose sins have blown them off course. This forgiveness is for all who have been broken to pieces. This forgiveness is for you. Jesus forgives you, and He takes your life and He rebuilds your life with Himself as the cornerstone. Amen.