

McCabe United Methodist Church

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Psalm 118:22-24

“Have A Great Day!”

Rev. Art Scanson

Here is a suggestion for tomorrow morning when you wake up. Stand up tall and straight in front of your bathroom mirror. Give yourself a great big smile and declare with gusto that wonderful verse from Psalms, “*This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!*” What can you expect? Well, Bio-feedback experts suggest that this single act can do wonders (yes, wonders) for our mental state.

Don’t shut me off quite yet. The relation between our body and our mind is an interesting one. We don’t smile because we feel great, these experts tell us: we feel great because we smile.

William James, often referred to as the father of American psychology, once put it this way, “I don’t sing because I’m happy, I’m happy because I sing.”

Comedian Steve Martin once said that he gets his laughter juices going each morning by looking at himself in the mirror when he first gets out of bed. This act, he says, is good for about three or four minutes of hilarity. For some of us, we could stand there laughing all day. But how we start our day can make a difference! Stand tall, give yourself a big smile, and declare for all the world to hear, “This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!”

Football coach Gill Walsh was recognized as having one of the best minds in professional football. He was the originator of the famous West Coast offense. He says something quite interesting in his book, Building a Champion. He says that when a zebra is trapped by a lion, the trapped animal will submit to the inevitable. Its head drops, its eyes glaze over, and it stands motionless and accepts its fate.

Walsh notes that people, in the face of adversity, adopt this same behavior. He calls it the posture of defeat—chin down, head dropped, shoulders slumped, arms hung limply. This posture, he notes is often visible as players leave the field in the later stages of a game when things are going against them. He often brought this to the attention of his players using this example from nature. As a team they became very sensitive to it. Walsh told his team never to allow this to occur to them. He said, “Even in the most impossible situations, stand tall, keep [your] heads up, shoulders back, keep moving, running, looking up, demonstrating [your] pride, dignity, and defiance.” (Cited by Pat Williams, *A Lifetime of Success* (Grand Rapids, MI: Flemming H. Revell, 2000))

Posture produces performance. You can affect your attitude by the way you stand. If you slump your shoulders and look at the floor long enough, you will get depressed.

So this is the basis for my suggestion. Each morning look in a mirror, smile, throw your shoulders back and cite this ancient promise of Scripture, “This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!” You will feel better if you do this.

Psalm 118 is believed to be the last hymn sung together by Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper. Just a hint as to why. Note the two verses just before the affirmation I have

recited. *“The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.”* After this comes the verse, “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” So you ask, who or what is the chief cornerstone that was rejected? It is Christ himself. Why can we rejoice daily? It is because the stone which was rejected, Christ, has become the Cornerstone of our lives. Therefore we can say with thankful hearts, “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

It is said that these verses may have had their origin out of the building of the temple in Jerusalem when one of the large stones selected for building the temple was the wrong shape and size. They threw it away. Later, it came time to lay the cornerstone, an essential part of the building process. The cornerstone was chosen with great care. Its position at a critical corner of the building meant that it was foundational to the integrity of the walls. If it was faulty, the building itself would be unsound.

To the surprise of the builders they discovered that this very stone which they initially threw away was the perfect fit. As the verse says, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” Thus, that which had been rejected has now become the piece that holds the whole structure together. This is what Christ does. This is who Christ is. He is the cornerstone! So what does this mean for our lives and why should it bring us great joy?

God takes that which is ugly and rejected and makes it into something treasured and beautiful. Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote a little Gospel chorus a few years back that has comforted many hearts: *“Something beautiful, something good; All my confusion He understood. All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife, But he made something beautiful of my life.”* God does that if we will but allow that to happen. The ugliness and sorrow of Good Friday becomes the beauty and joy of Easter.

This is who God is and it is God at work. God takes that which is ugly and rejected in the world’s eyes and turns it into something beautiful and treasured.

Yes, **God transforms both people and events.** Life is at times very difficult. Sometimes there are events that occur that seem unbearable. Some of you have been there, or are there now. The loss of a child, a traumatic diagnosis by a doctor, loss of a job or even a home—never are we promised that life will be easy. But we are promised that God is with us. And God can take that which is broken and make it whole again. Maybe not as we would like, but as is best for us. God can take the garbage of our lives and create something beautiful, something good, something lasting.

How do miracles like this happen? **Our lives are transformed by faith in Jesus Christ.** When we are willing to turn our lives over to him, he will help us find what has been missing. The stone that was rejected often is what becomes the cornerstone of our lives.

Pastor David Holwick tells about a shocking scene that occurred on the television show “Hill Street Blues” years ago. Those of you who may remember Hills Street Blues know that it was known for shocking and sometimes offensive scenes. But this is one that is almost unforgettable.

In this episode, the precinct sergeant hears that a vicious criminal has been released from prison. This criminal had been serving a long sentence for attempting to murder this sergeant.

No one knows where the criminal is now, but he has put out word that he is looking for the sergeant.

All through the program, the sergeant is looking over his back and wondering what will happen to him. In the final scene, they confront each other in a dark alley. The ex-con approaches hesitantly, and haltingly says these shocking words, “When you met me,” he said to the sergeant, “I was a violent man. But now I am different because I have repented of my sins. Jesus Christ has made me clean. I am sorry for what happened. This is all I own, and I want you to have it.”

And with that he hands the disbelieving sergeant a tattered Bible and disappears into the darkness. Astounded, the sergeant stares down at the Bible as the screen fades out. (Rev. David Holwick, <http://www.holwick.com/index.php?>)

My friends, that is what can happen when we make the stone that was rejected the Cornerstone of our lives. Jesus has given his life that we might have life. “The stone that the builders rejected there at Calvary has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing – may it be marvelous in our eyes.

And so tomorrow and every morning may you find yourself standing up tall, giving yourself a big smile and with gusto saying, “This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!” As you do so, may you accept God’s unconditional love by asking Jesus to continue to live in your life as Lord and Savior. Celebrating the good life that only God can provide. Thanks be to God!