

Sermon, Easter 5 2026 (May 3, 2026)

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Our work and worship are *our gift to God* AND our work and worship are *God's gift to us*. It is in the process of working and worshipping together that the Spirit shapes us into the People of God!

Of course we want to offer our best efforts to God, but our human desires for perfection and efficiency do not reflect GOD'S desire. When scripture challenges us to "be perfect therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect," the biblical word for "perfection" does not mean *flawlessness*—on the contrary, it means *wholeness*. To quote a song by Leonard Cohen: *Forget your perfect offering / There is a crack in everything / That's how the light gets in*. The "spiritual sacrifice" GOD desires of us is not our "perfect offerings" of flawlessness and efficiency. The sacrifice GOD desires of us is our offering of participation and patience. *Wholeness* and holiness.

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In today's 2nd reading we heard these words from the first letter of Peter:

***...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)***

I think it's extraordinary that today—just a few days after we started remodeling our sanctuary at St. Mark's—our age-old lectionary presents us with this lesson.

***...Come to him... and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house!***

I believe this is God's beautiful invitation and opportunity for all of us in this season of construction and renovation at St. Mark's. Our beloved church building is undergoing construction and renovation. We have chosen to embrace this opportunity for our beloved worship space to be renewed; to become more open, more accessible, and more flexible. *At the same time* that our beloved church *building* is being remodeled, our beloved church *community* is undergoing construction

and renovation, too! We can choose to embrace this opportunity for our beloved congregation—and for each of us, as individuals within it— to be renewed and to become more open, more accessible, and more flexible, ourselves. It’s gonna be dusty. And it’s gonna be messy. And it’s gonna be fine—in fact, it’s gonna be WONDERFUL!

We’ve been making lots of changes to our ministry teams and patterns over the past couple weeks, to adapt to the challenges of our new worship time and space—and we’ve been amazed and inspired by how many of you have joyfully responded to the invitation to serve. It’s a lot of change, all at once, I know, and it’s a little overwhelming and disorienting for all of us, but I am convinced that this season presents an extraordinary, “once in a generation” opportunity for all of us here at St. Mark’s—oldtimers and newcomers, alike—to deepen into our core congregational values of connection, inclusion and participation. Now more than ever, when it comes to ministry: Teamwork and Training are our top priorities. It’s not just about “getting the job done”; it’s about doing the job *together*.

Let me say that again, so you hear it: **Teamwork and Training are our top priorities. It’s not just about “getting the job done”; it’s about doing the job *together*.**

The mission statement Father Christopher helped craft upon his arrival at St. Mark’s almost 15 years ago is as true today as it was back then:

***St. Mark's is a faith community centered in worship, hospitable to all, active in loving service and generous with the gifts that God has given us. Together we are blessed to be building something beautiful for God in our neighborhood.***

*...Come to him... and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house!*

*...Come to him... and like living **stones**, let **yourselves** be built into a spiritual house!*

I want you to notice something. Those words are **plural. StoneS. YourselfS.**

You don't build a house with One Single Stone. When it comes to building a house, the more stones you have to work with, the better! You want stones of every color and texture and size and shape.

But of course, in today's scriptural metaphor, **we're** not the builders. We're just the *stones*. **God** is the one who is building a house. God is the one picking each one of us out from the pile, and cradling us in Her hand, marveling with delight in our particular color and texture and size and shape, then thoughtfully finding just the right place to incorporate us into the Big, Beautiful House that She is building. There is a hole in the structure of the House of God that no one but you can fill.

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I would not be the priest I am, were it not for the time Deacon David and I get to spend with St. Mark's Montessori School children in chapel each week.

In this week's chapel, Deacon David read a paraphrased version of today's Gospel Reading to the children entitled "God's House". He talked about how Jesus tells us that God's House has many rooms, and he talked about how sometimes people call the church God's House. But of course, we know God's house isn't really a building.

As David read the book to the children, a prayer arose within me to share with them. And today I'd like to share it with you.

God, come make your home in us.  
And help us make our home in you.

(Let's do it together.)

God, come make your home in us.  
And help us make our home in you.

***...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)***

Now all together, one last time:

God, come make your home in us.

And help us make our home in you. Amen!