

Fifth Sunday of Easter

FIRST READING – Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60

Seven Chosen to Serve

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

6:1-7 As noted in the early chapters of Acts, the Christians were devoted to caring for each other, as wealthier Christians are sharing their resources with the less fortunate. Even this was not without difficulty as *goggusmos* indicates a quarrel, disagreement, complaint, or tension that came to a head over the proper daily allocation, *hē diakonia*, service, of the offerings to the widows. The apostles were determined not to let this service of the Church in caring for temporary physical needs interfere with their primary concern of preaching the Word for the eternal salvation of souls. The seven are chosen by the people and set apart for service. We know little about them, with the exception of Stephen and Philip. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

6:1 *disciples were increasing in numbers.* A considerable length of time may have transpired since the end of ch. 5. The church continued to grow (see 5:14), but this gave rise to inevitable problems, both from within (6:1–7) and from without (6:8–7:60). At this stage of its development, the church was entirely Jewish in its composition. However, there were two groups of Jews within the fellowship: 1. *Grecian Jews*. Hellenists—Those born in lands other than Palestine who spoke the Greek language and were more Grecian than Hebraic in their attitudes and outlook. 2. *Hebraic Jews*. Those who spoke the Aramaic and/or Hebrew language(s) of Palestine and preserved Jewish culture and customs. – Given the number of times such an increase in believers has been referred to since Pentecost, very likely the congregation by now numbered somewhere between 20 and 25 thousand. Twenty-five thousand members and 12 pastors! (CSB)

disciples – Here for the first time Luke uses the beautiful word “disciple” when writing about the increase in believers. “Disciple may mean either someone who is learning or under instruction, or it may mean someone who has already learned the Gospel and is actively following Jesus in daily life. Both meanings of that word were undoubtedly in Luke’s mind as he wrote. There were many who were still under instruction, daily sitting and learning more and more about their new Master. Such teaching inevitably led to the mature meaning – those who have become like their Master and were following in His footsteps.

First of 25 occurrences of this term in Acts; emphasizes personal adherence to Christ. (TLSB)

Hebrews. Jews resident in Jerusalem, speaking Aram as their primary (and perhaps only) language; generally resistant to Hellenistic culture. (TLSB)

daily distribution. Help was needed by widows who had no one to care for them and so became the church's responsibility (cf. 4:35; 11:28–29; see also 1Ti 5:3–16). (CSB)

Greek diakonia, “service,” “ministry.” The social service described in 4:34-35 remained a striking feature of the Jerusalem Church and was attractive to outsiders. It benefited especially widows, who were often subject to dire hardship. Cultural factionalism had broken out, threatening the Church's unity described in the two previous summaries (2:42-47; 4:32-35). (TLSB)

The Jews of Jerusalem had developed a system for distributing food money to widows, especially those from other lands. The Christian community set a similar arrangement, funded by the gifts of people like Barnabas. There is no reason to think that there was any malice in the neglect of the Grecian widows. Language barriers and differences in social customs would contribute to their being overlooked. A new resident would not have the circle of acquaintances that the native enjoyed, either.

6:2-6 Example of a local church council; this burning issue affected only the local church of Jerusalem. Luther: “The diaconate is the ministry, not of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present (medieval) practice, but of distributing the church's aid to the poor” (AE 36:116). (TLSB)

6:2 *the Twelve.* At this early stage, the apostles were responsible for church life in general, including the ministry of the word of God and the care of the needy. (CSB)

number of disciples - The sense of plethos here is that of a deliberative body rather than a loose assemblage. Luke may even be thinking of a representative group rather than the entire (by his reckoning now quite large) community of believers. For all the prophetic authority of the Twelve, it is striking that on such critical decisions the discernment of the community is invited. (Sacra)

tables. The early church was concerned about a spiritual ministry (“word of God” and “prayer”; see v. 4) and a material ministry (“wait on tables”). (CSB)

The verb *kataleiro* is strong: to “leave behind,” or “forsake.” The pressures of community growth and the needs of the poor outstrip the administrative capability of the Twelve; a distribution of roles is required. The issue is not a moral one but rather of what is “fitting” or “appropriate.” (Sacra)

This expression could well be rendered “to see to meals.” They were not claiming that the work of seeing to meals for widows was beneath them. It would be a mistake to think that the apostles thought that waiting on tables was “unspiritual” work. The ministry of the Word of God and waiting on tables are both spiritual when they are done by spiritual persons. That is true of every God -pleasing occupation. Service done for Jesus' sake, done as to the Lord is spiritual service. But the particular service to which the Lord had called the Twelve was to proclaim the word. (PBC)

The works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ at all in the eyes of God from the works of the rustic toiling in the field or the woman who is taking care of her household; for all works are measured before Him by faith alone....Nay, it often happens that the domestic and menial work of a maidservant or manservant is more pleasing to God than all the fasting and works of a monk or a priest, because the latter are done without faith. (What Luther Says – Monasticism page 971 & LW on Gen. 18:9)

6:3 *pick...hoose seven men.*† The church elected them (v. 5), and the apostles commissioned them (v. 6). In this way they were appointed to their work. (CSB)

See the qualifications for deacons in 1 Tim. 3:1-13. (TLSB)

full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Both spiritual and practical aptitudes. (TLSB)

appoint to this duty - The people chose the deacons; the apostles instituted their office. (TLSB)

6:4 Christ mandated to the apostles the ministry of prayer and the Word. Later, this apostolic ministry is passed on to the elders and overseers (14:23; 20:28). By instituting the separate office of deacon, the ministry of directing the practical affairs of the Church (especially relief of the poor) is entrusted to a different set of office bearers. Though Christ alone had authority to establish the apostolic ministry, the apostles could establish other offices according to the Church's needs (see list in Eph. 4:11). (TLSB)

Pastors should not occupy themselves with congregational business that takes them away from the public and private teaching of God's Word, from leading in worship and praying for those entrusted to their care. (PBC)

prayer - For the apostles in prayer, see 4:23-30, and now, before their laying of hands (6:6). The combination makes for a striking definition of ministry. (Sacra)

ministry of the word - Luke can use "word of God" for the entire mission (4:31; 6:2; 7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 19:20), so the "service" here probably means more than simply preaching. (Sacra)

6:5 *They chose Stephen ... Nicolas.* It is significant that all seven of the men chosen had Greek names. The murmuring had come from the Greek-speaking segment of the church; so those elected to care for the work came from their number so as to represent their interests fairly. Only Stephen and Philip of the Seven receive further notice (Stephen, 6:8-7:60; Philip, 8:5-40; 21:8-9). (CSB)

The seven men for the task were not to be chosen on the basis of availability or popularity or to "get them active in the church." They were to be men recognized as spiritual and practical, men known to have good supply of sanctified common sense.

Full of faith and the Holy Spirit - Stephen's spiritual gifts anticipate his confrontation with the authorities at Jerusalem (Chapter 7). (TLSB)

The deacons' Greek names suggest that they were likely Hellenists, though some Judeans also had Greek names. (TLSB)

proselyte of Antioch. It is significant that a proselyte was included in the number and that Luke points out his place of origin as Antioch, the city to which the gospel was soon to be taken and which was to become the "headquarters" for the forthcoming Gentile missionary effort. (CSB)

6:6 *prayed and laid their hands on them.* Laying on of hands was used in the OT period to confer blessing (Ge 48:13-20), to transfer guilt from sinner to sacrifice (Lev 1:4) and to commission a person for a new responsibility (Nu 27:23). In the NT period, laying on of hands was observed in healing (28:8; Mk 1:41), blessing (Mk 10:16), ordaining or commissioning (Ac 6:6; 13:3; 1Ti 5:22) and imparting of spiritual gifts (Ac 8:17; 19:6; 1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6). These seven men were appointed to responsibilities turned over to them by the Twelve. The Greek word used to describe their responsibility ("wait on") is the verb from which the noun "deacon" comes. Later one reads of deacons in Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:8-13. The Greek noun for "deacon" can also be translated "minister" or "servant." The men appointed on this occasion were simply called the Seven (21:8), just as the apostles were called the Twelve. It is disputed whether the Seven were the first deacons or were later replaced by deacons (see note on 1Ti 3:8). (CSB)

Luther: “We are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.) And therefore this ‘sacrament’ of ordination, if it is anything at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the church” (AE 36:116). (TLSB)

6:7-9 The Church now refocused, “the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied.” Even “a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (v 7). Now the narrative turns to Stephen, one of the seven. *epoiei terata kai sēmeia megala*, “[he] was doing great wonders and signs.” At this, resistance begins from a synagogue, ultimately leading to his appearance before the council. The text skips vv 6:10–7:50 (with the exception of 7:2a). These words must be read in order to understand properly the context of Stephen’s martyrdom at the end of ch 7. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

6:7 One of a series of progress reports given periodically throughout the book of Acts (1:15; 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31). (CSB)

increased number of the disciples - More people received the apostolic message. (TLSB)

many became priests. Though involved by lineage and life service in the priestly observances of the old covenant, they accepted the preaching of the apostles, which proclaimed a sacrifice that made the old sacrifices unnecessary (Heb 8:13; 10:1–4, 11–14). (CSB)

Given the priests’ vested interest in the continuance of their careers at the temple, they may have been the most difficult to change. But God’s Word can bring faith to any heart. (TLSB)

became obedient to the faith. † Believed in the gospel. To believe is to obey God’s call, but faith also produces obedience (Eph 2:8–10; Jas 2:14–26). – This is another way of saying “believed the gospel” or “trusted in Christ.” (CSB)

6:1–7 The apostles deal with complaints about the relief of the Church’s poor, instituting the office of deacon. Church conflict can often be resolved for the benefit of the ministries, preaching, teaching, and physical care of God’s people. If your congregation is experiencing conflict, take counsel and comfort from this passage. Also, rest your heart and confidence in the Lord, who sends His Spirit and heals His Church. • Lord, let love rule our life, and supply us with pastors and deacons for Your glory and for the good of Your flock. Amen. (TLSB)

Stephen is Seized

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.

6:8-7:2a, 51-60 Although Acts 6:8 is the basic text, the sermon will treat the entire martyrdom narrative, which extends through Acts 7. Stephen was one of the seven deacons chosen to assist the apostles (Acts 6:1–7). The prime requisite for deacons was to be “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (v 3). They were to be men in whom the Holy Spirit had created the wisdom of knowing and trusting in the Savior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

6:8 *full of grace and power* - Stephen was “full of God’s grace and power” (v 8). The Greek word *charitos* is translated “faith” in the AV. The NIV translation, “grace,” is better. However, we do not agree with Dr. Lenski, who writes: “This is not ‘*charis*’ in the sense of pardoning grace . . . but the special favor Dei that was connected with the ‘*dunamis*’ or power bestowed upon him . . . the ability to perform miracles” (R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of Acts* [Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1944] 249). “Full of grace” means that God’s love was upon and within him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

This means that Stephen enjoyed special gifts in addition to the wisdom and faith which were noted at the time of his election as “deacon.” He was able to employ those gifts in doing great wonders and miraculous signs. (PBC)

The signs pointed to God’s grace and power, not only present in Stephen but available for all. They were invitations to hear the gospel message. (PBC)

great wonders and miraculous signs. Until now, Acts told of only the apostles working miracles (2:43; 3:4–8; 5:12). But now, after the laying on of the apostles’ hands, Stephen too is reported as working miraculous signs. Philip also will soon do the same (8:6). (CSB)

To this point we have heard of only the apostles doing great wonders and miraculous signs. Now one of the administrators was doing them as well. Later, we shall hear that Philip too performed such works. These men had faithfully used the gifts God gave them and carried out the responsibilities to which the church had elected them. God added more gifts and gave them further responsibilities. (PBC)

There is no sign that the power of the witness weakens as others begin to share what has been the work of the apostles, for Stephen shares qualities with God’s most important messengers.

6:9 *synagogue* - The NT provides some of the earliest references to synagogues. Later, the Jerusalem Talmud numbered 480 synagogues in Jerusalem. The early Christians may have been regarded as their own synagogue. (TLSB)

Jews living in such places and others in the diaspora used the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT (the Septuagint), and even in Jerusalem they conducted their services and carried on their discussions of the Scriptures in Greek. (PBC)

Stephen was probably a member of the larger group of Grecian Jews himself. (PBC)

It is also possible that Saul was a member of such a synagogue, since his province was Cilicia and he was present at the trial and stoning of Stephen.

Freedmen. Luke describes Stephen’s attackers as those who, like Stephen, were born and grew up in one of the countries listed in Acts 2 and had come back to Jerusalem to live. (CSB)

Jews killed their own too.

Greek transliteration of Latin, likely indicating Jew from Italy who had been freed from slavery. (TLSB)

Freedmen were former slaves who had earned or been granted their freedom. Many Jewish freedmen returned to the land of their fathers and would have been included among those people whom Luke calls “Grecian Jews.” (PBC)

Cyrenians. The chief city in Libya and North Africa (see note on 2:10), halfway between Alexandria and Carthage. One of its population groups was Jewish (see 11:19–21). (CSB)

Recall Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross. Alexandria was the capital of Egypt then, and there were so many Jews there that they enjoyed the privilege of conducting their own civil government, separately from the Gentile population. (PBC)

Alexandrians. Capital of Egypt and second only to Rome in the empire. Two out of five districts in Alexandria were Jewish. (CSB)

Cilicia. A Roman province in the southeast corner of Asia Minor adjoining (CSB)

Cilicia was the province in the southeastern corner of Asia Minor. Asia was what the Romans called their province in the westernmost part of Asia Minor. Its chief city was Ephesus. (PBC)

Syria. Tarsus, the birthplace of Paul, was one of its principal towns. (CSB)

Asia. A Roman province in the western part of Asia Minor. Ephesus, where Paul later ministered for a few years, was its capital. (CSB)

rose up and disputed. Since Saul was from Tarsus, this may have been the synagogue he attended, and he may have been among those who argued with Stephen. He was present when Stephen was stoned (7:58). (CSB)

Luke's overall point here is clearer than the specifics. He wants to show that Stephen is attacked without provocation by Diaspora Jews who frequent (one or more) synagogues within the city. (Sacra)

Stephen's Speech

2 And Stephen said: “Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

7:2 *Stephen said* – Accused of speaking against Moses, God, the temple, and the law and customs, Stephen spoke to them in great order and at some length. He revealed his thorough knowledge of the Scripture in each case, providing that he spoke only the Word of God. (LL)

God of glory - Stephen asserted that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is both the subject and source of his message. (TLSB)

Glory of the Lord - Hebrew *kebod yahweh*. The term *kebod* refers to the “weight” or “weightiness” of something and thereby its impressive appearance or “honor.” Moses introduces the expression during the exodus (Ex. 16:7) to contrast the Lord's majesty with that of Pharaoh and Egypt. It comes to describe the visible manifestation of God's presence in the cloud and fire of the exodus. It is the splendor of God's presence that belongs now to believers in the promise, and that by His advanced preparation will be revealed to them and in them. (TLSB pp. 6-7)

Abraham ... in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. Abraham's call came in Ur, not Haran (cf. Ge 15:7; Ne 9:7). Or perhaps he was called first in Ur, and then later his call was renewed in Haran (see note on Jer 15:19–21). (CSB)

51 “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

7:51-53 Stephen, having reviewed the history of the Jews in their manner of dealing with the Lord, rises to a culmination of indignation at their treatment. Boldly he tells his judges that they are *sklērotrachēloi kai apēritmētoi kardiais kai tois ōsin*, “stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears” (v 51). He continues to tell them that “you always resist the Holy Spirit.” These are serious charges. He further points out their persecution of the prophets. Stephen, with great eloquence, proclaims the thundering Law to these hardened hypocrites in order to show them their sin clearly so that they might be led to repentance and faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

7:51 *uncircumcised hearts and ears*. Though physically circumcised, they were acting like the uncircumcised pagan nations around them. They were not truly consecrated to the Lord. (CSB)

Uncircumcised means, in religious terms, pagan or heathen. Their hearts were not with God. (PBC)

“stiff-necked” refers to an unbending neck, which is a sign of haughty pride. “Uncircumcised hearts and ears”: Although they were physically identified as God’s children, their hearts and ears denied that identification. They “resist[ed] the Holy Spirit” by refusing to believe. Jesus referred to this as “blasphemy against the Spirit” (Mt 12:31) and lamented it in today’s Gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Resist the Holy Spirit – The Holy Spirit works through the Word to turn a heart of stone into one of faith (Ezk. 36:26-27). “God does not force a person to become goldy. (Those who always resist the Holy Spirit and persistently oppose the known truth are not converted)” (FC SD II 60). (TLSB)

7:53 *law as delivered by angels*. The Lord assigned an angel to guard the children of Israel on the way out of Egypt (Ex. 23:20). The commander of the Lord’s army appeared to Joshua. (TLSB)

7:1–53 Stephen’s message recounts how God’s chosen people, by rejecting Moses, rejected God. Israel’s refusal to follow God ended in their dismissal of God’s Son. However, Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world, that we would be reconciled to God the Father. In Holy Baptism, He gives us new hearts and pours out His Spirit for us. • Father, for Jesus’ sake, forgive my sins. Circumcise my heart, that I trust in You above all things. Amen. (TLSB)

The Stoning of Stephen

54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” 57 But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. 58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

7:54-60 Stephen probably did not intend to stop at this point. But they had heard enough! *dieprionto tais kardiais autōn kai ebruchon tous odontas ep’ auton*, they were cut to the heart, that is, “they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.” They would not listen any more. Full of the Holy Spirit,

Stephen is allowed to gaze with his mortal eyes right into heaven and is given a wondrous view of the glory and majesty of “the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (v 56). However, his announcement of the vision raises the Jews’ anger to an even higher level, and they attempt to drown out his voice. Stephen’s stoning goes against all the rules of Jewish criminal law; it is murder. Stephen dies the death of a true martyr. But his death is not without one final witness as Stephen boldly prays to his Lord two requests: first, that his Lord Jesus would receive his spirit; second, that his Lord would not hold this sin against them. The words of Stephen in his dying moments, *kurie Iēsou, dexai to pneuma mou*, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (v 59), and *kurie, mē stēsēis autois tautēn tēn hamartian*, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (v 60), cannot but draw our attention back to the events and words of Good Friday. Stephen’s prayer for forgiveness has at least one notable fulfillment: Saul. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

7:54 *ground their teeth*. The “grinding the teeth” was a sign of hostility and rage, especially of the wicked against the righteous. The phrase is also used for those excluded from the kingdom in Mt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30 and Luke 13:28. (Sacra)

7:55 *gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God* – The Holy Spirit gave this ability of sight to Stephen’s eyes without blinding him. This is a special sight given to him, not as though it were intended for him and his strengthening alone, but through him for all of them as they near death. The Savior stands ready to receive them. (LL)

In the O.T., the visible sign of God’s glory was the Shekinah, the pillar of cloud or of fire that went before the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22). That cloud was an assurance of God’s saving presence and his gracious intentions. What Stephen saw gave him the same assurance: Jesus at God’s right hand, powerful to sustain Stephen’s witness. In the presence of and with the help of the triune God Stephen completed his testimony. (PBC)

7:55-56 Stephen’s vision confirmed Christ’s prophecy that He would send the Holy Spirit, who would teach His disciples what to say when persecuted (Luke 12:11-12; John 14:15-26). Luther: “When you are baptized, partake of Holy Communion, receive the absolution, or listen to a sermon, heaven is open, and we hear the voice of the Heavenly Father;...Heaven is open, as St. Stephen saw it open; and we hear God when He addresses us in Baptism, in Holy Communion, in confession, and in His Word as it proceeds from the mouth of the men who proclaim His message” (AE 22:202). (TLSB)

7:55 *full of the Holy Spirit*. This was more than Spirit-created faith. The Holy Spirit filled Stephen so that he was able to see the glory of heaven. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

7:56 *Son of Man*. Jesus used this title of himself (see Mk 2:10) to emphasize his relationship to Messianic prediction (Mt 25:31; Da 7:13–14). It is unusual for someone other than Jesus to apply this term to Christ (see also Rev 1:13). (CSB)

7:57 *stopped their ears* – The physical gesture is wonderfully expressive of Stephen’s charge that they are “uncircumcised in ears.” They do everything to keep from hearing the prophet’s proclamation that Jesus is the one raised to the presence of God. (Sacra)

Cf John 8:44. Those of the devil refuse to hear the truth but rather attack it. (TLSB)

7:58 *cast him out of city* – The person to be stoned should be taken outside the court (city). (Sacra)

stoned him – It was illegal to carry out the death penalty without permission of the Roman governor, but did not seem to matter when a mob action resulted in murder. (PBC)

Stephen's vision and witness guaranteed his condemnation. His witnesses immediately judged him guilty, stoning him outside the city. They did not fear reprisal from the crowds, as they had in their opposition to Jesus. Cf Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; Luke 20:19; 22:2. (TLSB)

laid their clothes at the feet of... Saul. † Luke's way of introducing the main character of the second section of the book. (CSB)

Saul was old enough to bear public authority (8:3; 9:1-2). Cf Nu 1:3; 4:3. Saul's name reminds one of the OT king Saul, who also came from the tribe of Benjamin and strayed from the God's way. Cf 1 Sam. 1:5. (TLSB)

According to Jewish law, the witnesses had to throw the first stones. They had to take off their outer cloak to do it. (PBC)

7:60 *falling to his knees* – This is the body language of submission and prayer. (Sacra)

The major contrast between the death of Jesus and one of his witness Stephen (apart from the mode of execution) is the fact that Jesus was portrayed as keeping silence in the face of his accusers, whereas Stephen's speech is precisely the sort of response to an accusation a sage would be expected to make. But even this is in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy: "I will give you speech and wisdom such that all those opposing you will not be able to resist or contradict." (Luke 21:15). (Sacra)

Driven to his knees by the blows from the stones, at the very moment of his death, Stephen made one last attempt to reach his enemies and the crowd. At the top of his voice, so that all in the crowd heard, Stephen prayed his final prayer: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them". This prayer for his enemies he had learned from his Savior. Stephen's prayer had one most notable answer, the young man named Saul. (LL)

The similar responses in a similar situation show that Stephen is a true follower of Jesus. They also emphasize important points in the implied author's understanding of martyrdom. The martyr bears witness to the exalted Lord, ruling with heavenly power, whom the opponents cannot see. The martyr trusts in a divine care reaching beyond death and shows no animosity toward the killers, instead interceding for them. In these ways the martyr follows the example of the Lord Jesus. An impressive picture of a faithful follower of Jesus results, a picture that probably had considerable appeal in the early Christian era. (Tannehill)

do not hold this sin against them. Compare with Jesus' words (Lk 23:34). (CSB)

fell asleep – The death of Stephen, in fact, provides the first major transition in the Acts narrative. The Jerusalem story is effectively ended except for those necessary contacts with the Church there that the narrative will demand. (Sacra)

Because Christ conquered sin, death, and the power of the devil, when believers die, their death leads to everlasting life. Cf Rev. 14:13. (TLSB)

7:54–60 Stephen displays the heart of one touched and changed by Jesus' love. Normally we do not forgive people until they ask for forgiveness. Here we see a second type of forgiveness, spoken and requested from God before a person asks for it (v 60). When betrayal, persecution, or abuse breaks your heart, recall Stephen's words. Pray that the Lord would lead you to this type of forgiveness. Know that the Lord, who forgave the soldiers who crucified Him, can forgive all your sins. He can likewise heal your wounds of body and soul. So great is His mercy. • "Jesus, in Your dying woes, Even while Your

lifeblood flows, Craving pardon for Your foes: Hear us, holy Jesus.... Oh, may we, who mercy need, Be like You in heart and deed, When with wrong our spirits bleed: Hear us, holy Jesus.” Amen. (LSB 447:1, 3) (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Peter 2:2-10

A Living Stone and a Holy People

2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation — 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. 4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

2:2 like newborn infants – As an infant craves its mother’s milk, so Christians crave God’s nourishing Word. (TLSB)

Instead of that, the true believers will be found like infants that have just been born, like sucklings. (Kretzmann)

Christians, as newborn children, should desire spiritually pure milk in order that they might develop and reach maturity. This does not say that the readers had just lately become Christian and were, therefore, still in need of milk, rather than in need of solid food as were mature Christians. (Stoekhardt)

long for. The unrestrained hunger of a healthy baby provides an example of the kind of eager desire for spiritual food that ought to mark the believer. (CSB)

For just as a healthy baby at that age is eager for its nourishment, practically hungry all the time, so the Christians should have an insatiable longing for the milk of the Word, for the nourishment which is the proper food for all believers from their conversion to their death. (Kretzmann)

pure – It is ironic that some people spend a great deal of energy scrutinizing the labels of the food they buy, preferring food that are organically grown, wary of chemicals and additives, and yet are careless about the official teachings of the church they join and the denomination to which they belong. (PBC)

There could be no question among the readers that Peter had in mind the Word of God with this expression. God’s Word is the seed of conversion and the food of the converted. God’s Word is pure, without falsehood, without deceit, means it only well for man, aims only at our welfare and salvation. (Stoekhardt)

spiritual milk. Probably referring to God’s word (1:23, 25). The author is speaking figuratively. Milk is not to be understood here as in 1Co 3:2; Heb 5:12–14—in unfavorable contrast to solid food—but as an appropriate nourishment for babies. (CSB)

This Word of the Gospel is a spiritual milk, which, as Luther writes, the soul must draw and the heart seek; and it is a pure, unadulterated milk, it should be used just as it is found in Scriptures, without the slightest addition of man’s wisdom. (Kretzmann)

This wonderful spiritual food helps us taste how good it is to be loved and saved. (PBC)

grow up. The Greek for this phrase is the standard term for the desirable growth of children. (CSB)

New converts may have a minimal knowledge of Christian teachings, but all Christians should strive to mature in their faith, which leads to the full blessings of salvation. Luther: “The milk is nothing but the Gospel, which is also the vey seed by which we are conceived and born, as we heard above. This is also the food that nourishes us when we grow up; it is the armor which we put on and with which we equip ourselves. Yes, it is everything put together. But the admixture is the human doctrines with which the Word of God is adulterated. (AE 30:48-49) (TLSB)

Through this mental and spiritual food, the Word of the Gospel, the growth of the Christian takes place, the growth in grace, the growth in faith, the growth in sanctification, unto salvation. The Word works in us pure, holy, wholesome thoughts, wishes, and works, it gives us the strength both to will and to do according to the good pleasure of our heavenly Father. (Kretzmann)

Man alters natural food when he eats it, in his body, in flesh and blood. On the other hand, by means of the spiritual food of God’s Word the man who lays hold on it is changed into the character and nature of the food. God’s food makes man just like the food itself: clean, godly, chaste, and pure, impels him to be faithful to God and man, sincerely to serve and to please God and neighbor. (Stoekhardt)

We are to long for the wholesome spiritual nourishment we find in God’s Word, just as infants seek the nourishment they find in milk. That milk provides just what their growing bodies need at that tender stage of life. We also need to express the same longing for the spiritual nourishment of God’s Word that we may grow. This is particularly true of new believers, such as those Peter was addressing. Still, even mature Christians find their solid food in God’s Word (Heb. 5:12-14). In any case, Peter may have had this psalm verse in mind when he spoke of good the kindness of the Lord tasted: “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:38) (LIfELight)

2:3 *have tasted*. The tense of the Greek verb used here suggests that an initial act of tasting is referred to. Since this taste has proved satisfactory, the believers are urged to long for additional spiritual food. (CSB)

Infants are satisfied by their mother’s milk. Christians likewise find that God’s Word satisfies their deepest needs. (TLSB)

The note on Psalm 34:8 says, “Perceive. This is an invitation for the saints to experience the Lord’s trustworthiness. If you do not taste, you will not see. (TLSB)

In order to call the attention of his readers to the importance of this food and of the growth thereby, the apostle refers to an Old Testament passage: If, indeed, you have tasted that good is the Lord. Ps. 34:9. He assumes as a matter of course that the Christians have enjoyed the food to which he has referred. But the excellence of this food is in itself an incentive for the believers to be eager for the proper spiritual growth. The very first taste of the goodness, of the kindness of the Lord, as shown in the Word of His grace, is

bound to make the Christian eager for more of this wonderful benevolence, for more of this glorious news of the forgiveness of sins through Christ. Thus the faith that accepts and holds Christ is increased and strengthened through the Word, and out of this strength there flows, in turn, a truly righteous demeanor, true goodness of heart, Christian kindness and benevolence. (Kretzmann)

The theme of Christian interaction with the world is central to 1 Peter. Since Peter is exhorting the newly baptized, the boundaries of separation between Christian and world need to be reinforced, since believers continue to interact with the world in many areas, including their own households. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

The heart of vv 4-10 is a midrash based primarily on Is 28:16 and secondarily on several other biblical texts cited below. By drawing together these OT texts, Peter says the Gentile communities are the new Israel and the fulfillment of the OT institutions of the temple, monarchy, and priesthood. These images are concretized in the One who transcends ethnic boundaries: Jesus Christ, the cornerstone. Christ's atoning sacrifice is implied in the image of the stone, since stones were used for altars (Ex 20:25, etc.) as well as the Jerusalem temple. The church is not a lifeless, literalistic fulfillment, but a "living" and "spiritual" fulfillment (2:5), even as Christ Himself is the new temple infused with resurrection life (John 2:19-22) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

Here is introduced an entirely new concept: the idea of a spiritual house. Previous exhortations were directed to individual Christian. Now believing Christian appear to be united into a whole, into a congregation. The idea of a house, a temple, runs over into another, into one of a holy priesthood. (Stoeckhardt)

2:4 *as you come to him* – The Greek means "to whom coming," "approaching": continuous action possibly related to a previous verse. The Word of God draws us to Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

This entire paragraph refers to the Lord, of whom St. Peter had spoken in verse 3. Making use of a new figure or picture, the apostle writes: To whom coming, to that living Stone, rejected indeed of men, but chosen on the part of God, precious. The Christians have become partakers of the new spiritual birth, they are children of God. Mindful, therefore, of the sacred obligations and privileges which their new state lays upon them, they will come to the Lord, they will be joined to Him, they will range themselves on His side. (Kretzmann)

In the original "to whom coming" has the sense of "to attach oneself to someone". The apostle exhorts Christians to attach themselves to Christ, who offers Himself to them in the Word. This attachment to Christ is nothing else than faith in Christ, synonymous with "believing on Him" (v. 6) . (Stoeckhardt)

living Stone. Christ The Stone is living in that it is personal. Furthermore he is a life-giving Stone. Christ as the Son of God has life in himself (Jn 1:4; 5:26). See also "living water" (Jn 4:10–14; 7:38), "living bread" (Jn 6:51) and "living way" (Heb 10:20). (CSB)

Cf vv 6–8. The people of God are the temple in which He dwells; Christ is the cornerstone. (TLSB)

These former-pagans-turned-disciples must have found it strange to find themselves suddenly part of a holy temple, a royal priesthood. And yet that is what being set apart by the Gospel does. We look strange and out of place to those who do not understand or believe. (LifeLight)

They know that their Lord, Jesus, Christ, is the living Stone, Ps. 118, 22; Is. 28, 16, the Source of all spiritual life, and that they can retain their own life only in proportion as they remain in fellowship with Him. (Kretzmann)

Not a natural rock, but a stone cut for a special use. Exodus 20:25 prohibits the use of dressed stone for altars, perhaps to prevent images from being inscribed on the (First Commandment). For the Jerusalem temple, Solomon used stone dressed only at the quarry (1 King 5:17; 6:7) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

Stones are dead; we even say “stone-dead.” This fact makes the paradox of the living stone all the greater. (Lenski)

rejected by men but chosen by God. Peter repeatedly makes a contrast in Acts between the hostility of unbelieving men toward Jesus and God’s exaltation of him (Ac 2:22–36; 3:13–15; 4:10–11; 10:39–42). (CSB)

God often does his most wonderful works by instruments which the world rejects. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

This living Stone, Jesus the Messiah, was indeed rejected by the builders, by the leaders of the Jewish nation, by men in general, for most of them concur with the Jews in rejecting the Savior. (Kretzmann)

chosen and precious – These words used for select cuts of hewn stone or for gemstones, take on a deep theological significance in God’s election of Jesus as the instrument of salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

The Father chose His own dear Son to be our Savior. This is God’s eternal plan. (TLSB)

But the judgment of God does not agree with that of the blinded world, for He has chosen this Stone as a most precious stone, as the Headstone of the corner, Is. 8, 16. This fact, that Christ, although scorned and despised by the children of the world, is given such great honors in the sight of God, should encourage the Christians at all times to set aside the scornful attitude of the world and accept the judgment of the Lord instead. (Kretzmann)

2:5 living stones. † Believers are not literal pieces of rock, but are persons. In addition, they derive their life from Christ, who is the original living Stone to whom they have come (v. 4), the “life-giving spirit” (1Co 15:45). These references to stones may well reflect Jesus’ words to Peter (Mt 16:18), in the sense that a believer’s faith, as implied in Peter’s confession, rests on Christ. (CSB)

This identifies the community of the baptized as built on the foundation of the Living Stone, and as “living stones” themselves. The life of the Living Stone is in the lives of the stones. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

We become little stones, and it is Christ’s goal to mortar us together into a grand building call the holy Christian church. Isn’t it interesting that we are called stones rather than bricks? Bricks are all alike; stones are all different – in color, texture, size, and shape. But there is a place for all in God’s building. (PBC)

The Christians who hear the Gospel, are those who are built and the stones one must join to this Cornerstone, so that we place our confidence in Him and our hearts rest and repose in Him. (Luther)

With the reference to Christ as the living Stone agrees the description of the believers: And yourselves like living stones be built up as a spiritual house, unto a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are well-pleasing to God through Jesus Christ. In order to remain in fellowship with the Corner-stone, Christ, it is necessary that the believers partake of His nature, be filled with His life. (Kretzmann)

spiritual house. The house is spiritual in a metaphorical sense, but also in that it is formed and indwelt by the Spirit of God. Every stone in the house has been made alive by the Holy Spirit, sent by the exalted living Stone, Jesus Christ (cf. Ac 2:33). The OT temple provides the background of this passage (cf. Jn 2:19; 1Co 3:16; Eph 2:19–22). (CSB)

The Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit, where He dwells. (TLSB)

We joined or built ourselves upon Christ when we became Christians. At that time Christ, the Living Stone, drew us unto Himself. And so the intent of the apostolic exhortation is for Christians to let themselves be built unto a spiritual house. If one asks how this happens or should happen, the answer lies in the words: “since you are attaching yourselves to this one”. Since Christians attach themselves to Christ in faith, build themselves upon Him, they unite themselves into a uniform building. Since one stone upon another adds itself to the Cornerstone, the house is surely built. What the apostle demands of Christians is basically one thing, that they believe in Christ, grow and increase in faith through diligent use of God’s living Word. If they do this, then the summons “let yourselves be built upon into a spiritual house” is fulfilled. (Stoekhardt)

It is then, and then only, that they can be built up as a spiritual house, their faith sinking deeply and ever more deeply into this unshakable foundation of His eternal love, their mutual faith uniting them in mutual love, connecting them in one vast organization. In this way the Christians are built up as a spiritual house, built up on Christ and in Christ, unto a holy priesthood. The apostle is here describing the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the sum total of all the believers in Christ, an edifice of living persons filled with the Spirit of God. (Kretzmann)

oikos pneumatikos – This centers the thoughts of Gentile Christians on the household of faith, its profoundly spiritual nature, and its foundation in Christ. These house-based communities, in mostly urban environments, followed a pattern familiar to the Greco-Roman society of the time. Clubs, organizations, workers guilds, and the immigrant groups gathered in cities in this way since they had insufficient status to use favored public spaces and insufficient funds to build private facilities. A house church established under the blessing of a patron was an acceptable way for the a new institution to enter the life of a city. As Christian house-based communities grew, so might tensions. The honored patron (or patroness) might well house a mixed group under one roof. Reciprocity (You scratch my back; I’ll scratch yours”) was the established model and could easily lead to a dilution of ideals and practices. So the apostles exhorted Christian communities to understand themselves much like other “aliens and immigrants: forming their house-based groups. While Christians interacted with the world on a daily basis and desired that their institution be accepted by the world, they were to abhor and abstain from the many immoral practices of that world, and this created tensions in communal living. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

As Peter was writing this letter, the one thousand-year existence of the Jerusalem temple was about to come to an end. (PBC)

Ephesians 2:20-21, “²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.”

holy priesthood. The whole body of believers. As priests, believers are to (1) reflect the holiness of God and that of their high priest (see 1:15; Heb 7:26; 10:10), (2) offer spiritual sacrifices (here), (3) intercede for man before God and (4) represent God before man. (CSB)

All Christians are priests, having direct access to God through Christ. (TLSB)

The function of the NT priests is to bring spiritual offerings unto God, before whom they stand and walk. Just as Christians, each according to his own person, are born again by, and are filled with, the Spirit of God – therefore, build a spiritual house and are spiritual priest – so also their offerings are spiritual, stem from the Spirit, are wrought and are permeated by the Spirit of God. These are no longer sin and atonement offerings since through the one offering of Christ was completely atoned, but they are offerings of praise and thanks. (Stoeckhardt)

Every member of this Church is incidentally a priest of God in the sacred edifice which is erected upon Christ. Whereas in the Old Testament there was a special hierarchy, composed of members of the house of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, Heb. 5, 1, there is now, by virtue of the vicarious action of Christ, a general priesthood of believers. Every Christian has direct and free access to God, because the sin which formerly divided between us and God has been removed by Christ. Of this priestly dignity the believers should always be conscious; they should keep their relation toward God intact and ever draw more closely to the heavenly throne. (Kretzmann)

This is the true priesthood. As we have heard, it embraces these three things: to offer spiritual sacrifices, to pray for the congregation, and to preach. (Luther)

In his writings regarding the priesthood of all believers Luther makes this point several times: Through baptism all of us are consecrated to the priesthood...and there is no difference at all between clergy and laity except that of office. During his earthly sojourn with Jesus, Peter boasted of his self-sufficiency: “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will” (Mt. 26:33). He had learned that a disciple cannot live in isolation from the others. Paul devotes considerable time sketching the same truth that the body is not member but many (1 Cor. 12:12-26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

This involves sacrifices. In this case they involve proper worship and holy living. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

Our holy relation to God as His holy and royal priesthood makes us foreigners to the profane world. (Lenski)

We have become not only part of the great temple of God, but we are made priest in that temple, holy priests, holy through the blood of the Lamb. (PBC)

Hebrews 13:15-16, ¹⁵Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

spiritual sacrifices. The NT refers to a variety of offerings: bodies offered to God (Ro 12:1), offerings of money or material goods (Php 4:18; Heb 13:16), sacrifices of praise to God (Heb 13:15) and sacrifices of doing good (Heb 13:16). (CSB)

Christians should thank God from the heart and with the mouth. Christians should also render thanks to God through their works. To the spiritual offerings of the New Covenant belong all good works, works

that flow from the Spirit and from faith and by which Christian praise their Father in heaven. (Stoeckhardt)

At the same time, all these spiritual priests should be active in offering to the Lord such spiritual sacrifices as are well-pleasing to God. The entire life of a Christian, all his thoughts, desires, and deeds, are such sacrifices, because it is the Spirit of God that lives in them and teaches them to be duly grateful to the Lord for the gifts of His salvation, both in hymns of praise and in good works, Rom. 12:1. (Kretzmann)

The OT temple and altar with their rituals and sacrifices are replaced not by a new set of rituals and shrines, but by the self-giving of a person, the very Son of God. Henceforth, true worship pleasing to the Father is none other than the saving life, death, and resurrection of Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

These sacrifices that God invite us to bring have nothing to do with sprinkling blood or burning incense, and they do not need to be offered in one particular place, such as Mount Zion in Jerusalem. We offer our bodies as spiritual sacrifices, dedicating our entire lives to His service. (PBC)

Priests offer sacrifices; thus Christians offer the sacrifices of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. These are acceptable to God because of the greatest sacrifice, Jesus Christ (cf Heb 9–10). Luther: “Since Christ is the Groom and we are the bride, the bride has everything that the Groom has, even His own body. When He gives Himself to the bride, He gives Himself entirely as what He is; and the bride, in turn, also gives herself to Him” (AE 30:53). (TLSB)

acceptable to God. Through the work of our Mediator, Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 14:6). Believers are living stones that make up a spiritual temple in which, as a holy priesthood, they offer up spiritual sacrifices. (CSB)

That is the charge of 1 Peter 2. We are to live each day as if we are playing for the King – for we are! We are “elect,” chosen by God (Deut. 7:6-9; Is. 44:10, 20; 44:1-2). We are part of a priestly team. As priests, we may come into God’s presence, bringing prayers and sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. It is a royal priesthood because Jesus, the great High Priest, has decided to possess us. We have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23), the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 5 1:19). (LifeLight)

Serving God in the NT is, according to Romans 12:1, reduced to this that Christians give their lives as offering to God, that each Christian places his body with all its members and skills: eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, hands, and feet, himself with everything that he is and has, into the service of God. (Stoeckhardt)

These spiritual offerings are pleasing to God through Jesus Christ. Certainly, everything that comes from the Spirit and is spiritually oriented is pleasing to God. Yet since the flesh with its aversion, reluctance, indolence, unconcern, vanity, selfishness, still clings to the Christians and to their good works while God desires perfect offerings, their works and offerings are yet perfectly pleasing and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, who by His perfect merit covers all their deficiencies. (Stoeckhardt)

2:6 Is 28:16 prophesies that though Jerusalem would be destroyed, God would build a new Jerusalem that could not be destroyed. This prophecy was fulfilled in the creation of the Church. (TLSB)

a cornerstone chosen and precious. See Ps 118:22; Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Ac 4:11. This is an obvious reference to Christ, as vv. 6b–8 make clear. The cornerstone, which determined the design and orientation of the building, was the most significant stone in the structure. The picture that Peter creates is of a structure made up of believers (living stones, v. 5), the design and orientation of which are all in

keeping with Christ, the cornerstone. – The word here refers either to a massive cornerstone placed at the upper corner of the building in order to bind the walls firmly together, or it refers to the keystone in the middle of the archway. (CSB)

Peter goes to three majestic OT prophecies that describe the Messiah as a stone. The first is from Isaiah 28:16, in which God the Father proclaims that the real foundation of the people of God is not a block of granite, not an “it” but a “Him.” The Father placed somebody as the cornerstone, and everyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. Each of these three OT prophecies describes Christ as a different kind of stone. The first is as a cornerstone. Today the laying a cornerstone has a mostly ceremonial purpose. The real structural value of the cornerstone, if you are a stone mason, is to serve as a point of reference for the straightness of the building. The cornerstone is the first and also the largest, stone above grade. That first stone will determine the straightness of the building lines of depth, width, and height. If the cornerstone is off a little, the whole building will end up looking crooked. (PBC)

In Support of these statements the apostle does not quote an Old Testament passage outright, but makes it the basis of an explanation in which he uses also other texts: For it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a Stone, a Corner-stone, chosen, precious; and he that believes on Him shall not be brought to shame. Cf. Is. 28:16. Note that the reference is to a book which is a definite, well-known entity, which went by the name “Scripture” and was generally conceded to be the Word of God. The gist, or tenor, of the passage in Isaiah is given. In Zion, in His Church of the New Testament, the Lord places or appoints a Corner-stone, one that is at the same time a Rock of Salvation. For not one person that puts his trust in Him will be found ashamed on the last day. The congregation of believers that is built up on this Stone shall not be overcome even by the portals of hell. (Kretzmann)

Now I have also stated what the building is. It is faith. Through faith we are placed on Christ, put our trust in this Stone, and thus become like Him. And this must take place in such a way that the building fits together; for the others stones must all be adjusted and arranged according to this Stone. This is love, a fruit of faith. (Luther)

Christ is the cornerstone because He brought the Gentiles and the Jews, who were mortal enemies, together. Thus the Christian Church was gathered from both. (Luther)

Everything that does not rest on this foundation will have to fall. But only he who relies on it will not be put to shame; he will remain, and no power can harm him. (Luther)

the one who trusts in him. Two attitudes toward the cornerstone are evident: (1) Some trust in him; (2) others reject him (v. 7) and, as a result, stumble and fall (v. 8). (CSB)

will not be put to shame –The congregation of believers, which is built upon this Rock, will not be overpowered by the gates of hell; it is a building solidly constructed; it moves onward towards heavenly salvation. (Stoeckhardt)

Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

2 Timothy 2:19, “Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”

2:7 honor – Citizenship in the new Jerusalem is not something earned; it is a gift of God that honors us. (TLSB)

cornerstone – Peter’s second stone metaphor is drawn from Psalm 118:22, the psalm that the adoring crowds on Palm Sunday chanted to their Messiah. – A capstone (or keystone) is the wedge-shaped stone at the top of an arch. Roman architecture was one of the greatest achievements of Roman civilization, and Rome’s architects and engineers had developed the arch into their trademark. An arch or series of arches was not only beautiful, but it provided a brilliant way to pierce a load-bearing wall for doors or light without weakening the wall. In the same way, suffering Christians need to be reminded that Christ Jesus is the capstone of our lives. If He is knocked out of that position, our lives collapse. (PBC)

The apostle now makes his application of the prophetic passage: To you, then, that believe He is preciousness; but as for the unbelievers, the Stone which the builders rejected, this has become the Corner-stone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, where unto also they were appointed. C. Ps. 118:22; Is. 8:14. In the case of all believers, in which number Peter pointedly and emphatically includes his readers, the living Stone, Jesus Christ, the Rock of Salvation, is preciousness; they partake of the wonderful value of this Stone, and should properly appreciate the honor which is thereby conferred upon them. Altogether different is the case with the unbelievers. To them that prophecy of the rejection of the Corner-stone applies, for they follow the Jews in their blind foolishness, in scorning the one way of salvation, through the redemption of Christ Jesus. (Kretzmann)

This wondrous stone means everything also to any and to all who refuse to believe: their rejection is fatal to them. In the first place, God nullifies this rejection and makes this stone the corner-head; in the second place, this stone destroys them. (Lanski)

2:8 *a stone of stumbling* – To stumble literally means to strike against something so that one stumbles and falls. Since they will not build upon him, desire not to believe in Christ and be saved by him, the inevitable result is that they rush headlong into him, as they would an abomination, become more hostile to him as time goes on, and in the end fall prey to destruction, even to eternal damnation. – Peter’s final stone metaphor is drawn from Isaiah 8:14, and it sends a chill down your spine. Jesus does not like to be rejected and thrown on the ground. When that happens, the rejected capstone becomes a stumbling stone, that is, He will move Himself to trip these proud builders so that they come crashing down. Christ promises unlimited blessings to all who put their trust in Him. But He promises unlimited curses on those who disobey and disbelieve the gospel message. (PBC)

And therefore they, who should have been built up with the saints, in their blind enmity stumble over this Stone, trip over this Rock, since they refuse to be obedient to the Word, to accept the truth of the Gospel. They stumble, they fall, they perish in the destruction which their stubborn refusal of salvation has brought upon themselves. (Kretzmann)

For the unbelieving He is in the bad sense of the word a Cornerstone, against whose sharp edges they rush and are shattered. These words do not mean that Christ contributes, as some believe, to the unbeliever’s destruction. (Stoekhardt)

“To stumble” literally means to strike against something so that one stumbles and falls, and “stumbling” is the obstacle on which one trips causing the fall. In a figurative sense the words are used in classical Greek of moral failure and cause for moral failures. (Stoekhardt)

A slight variance of this concept is found in later Greek, where “to stumble” means as much as to take offense, to feel oneself repulsed, to become weary, become unwilling, to deter from, to abhor, and “stumbling” itself is the object of aversion and ill-will. (Stoekhardt)

Christ has become to unbelievers, and will continue to be to them, a Stone of stumbling and Rock of offense. (What will you do with Jesus?) This Stone is laid in their way; they cannot find their way around it. And since they will not build upon Him, desire not to believe in Christ and be saved by Him, the inevitable result is that they rush headlong into Him, abhor Him as they would an abomination, become more hostile to Him as time goes on, and in the end fall prey to destruction even to eternal destruction. Religious leaders of Jesus day) This destruction-causing onset against Christ, this vexation towards Christ is the final fruit of unbelief, is unbelief reaching its highest potential. (Stoekhardt)

The Jews stumble over this Stone to this day, and they will continue to do so until the Last Day comes. Then the Stone will fall on all unbelievers and crush them. (Luther)

Hebrews 2:3, “how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.”

they disobey – Is 8:14 explains that although Christ was to be a sanctuary for Judah and Israel, those who rejected Him would fall in unbelief and be crushed. (TLSB)

They harden their own hearts against every effort of the Spirit to reveal the Savior to them. And thus the judgment is carried out in their case; their unbelief condemns them. They come under that terrible sentence of God according to which those that harden their hearts in spite of all calling of the Lord are finally appointed to that lot that the Word of Salvation becomes to them a savor of death unto death. It would hardly be possible to warn against the sin of unbelief in a more emphatic way. (Kretzmann)

For this reason they will not see eternal life, the consequence – not the cause – of their obduracy: “Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (Jn. 3:18). It is not possible to be neutral toward Christ. He is for all persons either Savior or Destroyer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

The unbelieving take offense at Christ. But how and when do they even come into contact with Christ? Answer: Through the Word about Christ, through the Gospel, which is preached to Jew and Gentiles throughout the countries of the world. In this selfsame Word, in which Christ presents Himself to the believers and lets them see and experience His blessings (2:3), He draws nigh unto all who are within hearing distance. How man relates to the Word will dictate his attitude to Christ. (Stoekhardt)

The unbelievers are called here “disobedient”. Being disobedient, as being disobedient to the Gospel is unbelief. The Word of Christ has come to the attention of many unbelievers, but they have rejected it. They vigorously opposed the saving effect of the Word and so stumble and become annoyed at the Word. Yet they cannot toss it out of their minds completely. And the closer their contact with the Word, the greater is their feeling of repulsion, the greater becomes their nausea and loathing for the same unto their eternal loss and damnation. (Stoekhardt)

as they were destined for. † Peter means that unbelief is destined to result in eternal destruction. (CSB)

Unless they repent and come to faith, sin will destroy them (e.g., Judas). (TLSB)

So Simeon’s prophet words to Mary: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

The unbelievers, who absolutely choose not to obey the Word, are according to God’s righteous judgment and appointed to become more and more soured and hardened through the Word, that for them the Word of salvation becomes a smell of death unto death. In the end God surrenders them to their corrupt

hardened disposition. More earnest could the apostle not be in his warning against unbelief, against contempt for the Gospel. (Stoeckhardt)

From Portals of Prayer – May 3, 2012...

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. – John 3:17

Do I have to share heaven with him?

Eeewww! Children say this when they see something particularly disgusting. Among the OT kings (and ancestors of Jesus!), there is one king who deserves the word particularly well. Manasseh was the son of good king Hezekiah. But what a contrast he was father! Idolatry, blasphemy, murder, witchcraft and necromancy, even burning his own children alive as offerings to false gods. Surely if ever a man were a hopeless case, it was he. And yet we are told that in the end, he repented and God forgave and restored him. (2 Chronicles 33:1-19) Eeewww!

We might say, “That man’s sin is too horrible. Do not forgive him Lord!” Who wants Manasseh as a neighbor in heaven? Yet, when we see our own evil as God must see it, it is easy to think God should not forgive us either. But God chooses differently. God offers forgiveness freely to even the worst of sinners – yes, and even to us. No matter how horrible the sin, God removes it from us. Jesus takes it away nailing it to His cross, where He paid the whole price for our redemption. And now He gives us His righteousness, and we share in His resurrection life.

Lord Jesus, I cannot grasp the greatness of Your love and forgiveness. Keep me Your own forever. Amen

2:9 *chosen race*. As Israel was called God’s chosen people in the OT, so in the NT believers are designated as chosen, or elect. (CSB)

As the Israelites were once the chosen people of God, now Christians are the new Israel, chosen by God. (TLSB)

Isaiah 43:20 refers to election in Christ, “the chosen one” (Is. 42:1, quoted at Jesus’ Baptism). By the second century AD this term was applied to Christians as the “third Race,” in which the Jews (the first race; cf. Romans 1:16) and Gentiles (the second) are one. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

God so loved not only the world, but He loved you in particular that He sought you out and brought you to faith – He wanted you. (PBC)

How far above their adversaries stand believing Christians! Unbelievers are the kingpins in this world, possessing power, honor, authority; on the other hand, Christendom is but an insignificant flock, despised by the unbelieving world, as is its Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Yet in God’s eyes this contrast looks altogether different. Unbelievers, who have run up against Christ, the Cornerstone, have already been confounded. They lie on the ground as though shattered, wedded to eternal damnation and torment. On the other hand, those who believe in Christ, are deemed worthy before God, they are in truth God’s people. Some day they not will share in the glory of God but are even now endowed with divine honor and glory. (Stoeckhardt)

The appellations enumerated in v. 9 are taken from the OT. The main passage upon which Peter reflects is Ex. 19:5-6: “if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar

treasure unto me above all people...and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation". (Stoeckhardt)

royal priesthood. The priests belong to the King, God Himself. Luther: "Each and all are...equally spiritual priests before God...Faith alone is the true priestly office...Therefore all Christian men are priests, all women priestesses, be they young or old, master or servant, mistress or maid, learned or unlearned" (AE 35:101). (TLSB)

"King's priesthood" is what Lutherans call the priesthood of the entire body of baptized believers, which was God's original intent for Israel (Ex. 19:6), as opposed to a priestly intermediary caste. In this verse, the honor is less in the specifics of priestly duties and more in the identification as spiritual Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

You must exercise the chief function of a priest, that is, to proclaim the wonderful deed God has performed for you to bring you out of darkness into the light. (Luther)

True believers cannot keep still, they simply must speak out with life and with life. (Lenski)

Not one or the other, but both. You are both adopted into the royal family of heaven and anointed into the holy priesthood of God. This means that you have full and free access to communicate with God, to pray directly, needing no other mediator than Jesus Christ, and you are commissioned to a lifelong spiritual ministry of love and service. (PBC)

This generation has a priestly-royal character. We Christians have been elected unto obedience to the truth and unto the sprinkling with the blood of Christ and so also unto a priestly position before God, a position resulting from faith and justification. Our priesthood has been decreed by God from eternity. (Stoeckhardt)

Believing Christians are priests before God, have free access to God, stand before God, deal with God. And they all together form a family of priests, all have equal rights before God. At the same time, they have royal honor and glory. This goes completely beyond the concept of the OT priesthood. Their royal glory results from the priestly. Believing Christians, reconciled as they are to God by Christ, are very close to God; they stand in a very close relationship to Him and, therefore, have power over all ungodly forces. (Stoeckhardt)

holy nation. God's people, individually and collectively, are set apart to do His will (Ex. 19:5-6). (TLSB)

Here God designates His gift of his own holiness as well as His call to Spirit-led conduct. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

By faith in Christ you have become a part of the great army of believers, that invisible network that has become what the visible nation of Israelites under their monarchy never were: a nation of holy people. Faith in Jesus Christ makes you holy and it makes you part of the great Christian church on earth and in heaven, the communion of saints. (PBC)

The Christians' third title of honor, "the holy nation", corresponds to the "holy" in "an holy priesthood", V. 5. What Israel should be according to God's determining, Ex 19:6; Deut. 7:6; 14: 2-21; 26:19; 28:9 what God demanded already of the people of the OT: "Be ye holy; for I am holy", 1:16, that the NT community is indeed and in truth. (To be sure, it should be noted here that spiritual Israel of the Old Covenant had also demonstrated this intrinsic character). We Christians are sanctified by the Holy Ghost

through Word and faith, are freed from the sinful existence of this world and translated into the spiritual, divine existence, just as, according to 1:2, we are chosen unto sanctification of the Spirit. God's Spirit dwells and works in us, sanctifies and renews us from day to day. Sanctification is the ornament of God's house, especially of the priests of God. It is not completely hidden. That priestly nation, which ever and anon stands and walks before, deals with, God, reflects the nature, the holiness of God. That nation shines as a bright light in the midst of this murderous generation. Of course, one sees in Christendom still many spots and wrinkles, but they do not completely obscure its divine, godly nature. From this one discovers that in this generation and in all its members, even in the weakest, there dwells a force different from that dwelling in the world and in the children of the world. (Stoeckhardt)

people for his own possession. See Dt 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; Isa 43:21; Mal 3:17. Though once not the people of God, they are now the recipients of God's mercy (see Hos 1:6–10; Ro 9:25–26; 10:19). (CSB)

Repeats the truth that God's people belong to Him. (TLSB)

Means a people belonging to God; a treasure owned by God. "You will be my possession" (Deut. 7:6); "my treasured possession" (Mal. 3:17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

This represents God's a Greek translation of the Hebrew word in God's promise that out of all the nations, Israel will be his own treasured possession. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

There is an enormous satisfaction in realizing that you are connected to God, that you have a place, a spirit home, connections of mutual obligations. We are God's possession not as slaves, as things that are owned, but as children for whom He accepts a huge and unending obligation. (PBC)

God has elected the Church to be His own from the very beginning. When the apostle at the end of his description of the glory of the Church once more mentions God's right ownership, he wants to point out that what God has chosen will remain His in time and for eternity. God does not abandon His people. The opponents of Christendom, the enemies of faith and salvation, will never succeed in tearing away from God thus His precious possession. Thus already in the very beginning of his letter Peter had given the elect strangers and assurance that they will be preserved unto salvation by God's power through faith. (Stoeckhardt)

proclaim the excellencies. Actor William Booth once played before the king of England and gave a great performance. The next three nights he played before smaller and less distinguished audiences, yet his performances were still masterpieces. When asked, "How can you keep that up night after night?" he answered, "I always play for the King! Both meant the heavenly King. We also are "play" always for our King. That is the thought of St. Paul, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). (LifeLight)

This indicates a response in worship, mission proclamation, and holy living. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

In the narrow sense the expression mostly likely means acts of worship (Is. 42:10-12; 43:21); in a wider sense, spreading the Word of God (Mk. 16:15); also the witness of holy living. This would fit well with v. 12, "Living such good lives among the pagans that...they may see your good deeds and glorify God." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

Taking it even another step, Paul begins his exhortation to holy living with "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your

spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1). “Living sacrifices” in contrast to dead creatures offered to God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

A greater contrast cannot be conceived of than that which the apostle here presents with regard to the unbelievers and the believers. The unbelievers, by their own fault, have become subject to the condemnation of the Lord, and their lot is inexpressibly sad, since, if they persist in their unbelief, they are forever cast off by God. But to the believers the apostle applies all the honoring designations which were given to the people of God in the Old Testament: But you are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people of His possession, that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His wonderful light, Ex. 19:6. These excellencies do not appear, of course, before the eyes of men. According to the opinion of the world, on the contrary, the believers are a negligible quantity of misguided fools, to whom no sane person will pay serious attention. But hear the opinion of the Lord. He calls them the chosen generation; they have been chosen, or elected, for the position they hold by the resolution of God before the foundation of the world; not only the individual sojourners, but the entire congregation of saints was included in the plan of God; a royal priesthood, for Christ has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, Rev. 1:6; the holy, the consecrated nation, separated from the world and reflecting the holiness of the Lord; the people of His possession, of His purchasing, that belong to Him, with regard to whose members all the plans of their enemies will prove futile. Because we occupy this wonderful position in the sight of God, therefore it behooves us, therefore it is natural for us to publish, to proclaim freely and widely, the virtues, the excellencies, of our God, to tell men of, to praise, the goodness, kindness, mercy, grace of God. We can do this with all the greater impressiveness, because we have experienced these attributes in ourselves, because He has called us out of the darkness of our natural condition into the wonderful light of His love in the Gospel, assuring us, at the same time, of the complete forgiveness of all our sins. (Kretzmann)

This statement states the purpose God has in mind when He grants Christendom honor and glory. The chief function of the OT priests was to offer God sacrifice for the people. Christians exercise their claim to priesthood before God when they bring Him spiritual offerings. That was stated in verse 5. Another function of the Levitical priests was to instruct the nation in the law. (Deut. 17:11) Christians fulfill their priestly mission when they instruct the ignorant. To this the apostle now draws attention. (Stoekhardt)

The relationship of Christian to the world, which theme runs through the entire following section comes to the fore here already. We Christians should share with others what we ourselves have recognized and believed. We should not keep these things to ourselves but shout them out loudly to the world. As His priests we should say to the world that the God before whom we stand, whom we serve, is a holy and righteous God, who is not pleased by godless existence, who will judge each one according to his works. As a priest of God, however, we should above all extol to all the world the goodness, kindness, mercy, and grace of God, particularly that virtue or divine attribute implied in the designation of God as “him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”. This calling is again that efficacious, successful calling identical with conversion. (Stoekhardt)

According to the context darkness is the former wretched condition under sin and light of God is God’s salvation, His grace in Christ. This NT salvation is wonderful because it goes far beyond our thinking and comprehension. (Stoekhardt)

Colossian 1:13, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.”

called you out of darkness - Sin and alienation from God. (TLSB)

marvelous light - Only in Jesus, the light of the world, can we truly see things as they are. Cf. John 1:4-13; 3:19-21. Luther: "We must recognize in our hearts and believe that we receive everything from Him and that He is our God. Then out with it, and freely and openly confess this before the world - preach, glorify, and give thanks! This is the real and only worship of God, the true office of the priest, and the finest, most acceptable offering" (AE 14:32). (TLSB)

2:10 The allusions to Hosea (1:9; 2:1; 2:23) are obvious throughout this verse. God's "mercy and faithfulness," is a central concept in Hosea. God calls Christians (both Jewish and Gentile) "my people" and "receivers of mercy" after the previous warrant and subsequent disenfranchisement of Israel. The precious nature of God's commitment to His people in Christ radiates throughout this section. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 6, Part 2)

Of this the apostle has still more to say: Who formerly were not a people, but now the people of God, who had not become partakers of mercy, but now have received mercy. Cp. Hos. 2, 23. The readers whom Peter addresses had formerly, before their conversion, been a non-people, they had not been in the kingdom of the Lord. But now they have been transferred out of the darkness of heathenism and enmity toward God to the glory of the Kingdom of Grace. In their former state they were not under mercy, but under God's wrath and condemnation. But now they have become partakers of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. It is the same miracle which the Christians of all times have experienced. And this fact they are to make known to others, telling them of their deliverance from destruction, of their redemption from death, of their salvation through the blood of Christ. That is the best occupation in which Christians may engage. (Kretzmann)

you are God's people – God calls Christians (both Jewish and Gentile) "my people" and "receivers of mercy." - Peter wants his hurting brothers and sisters to know that their suffering changes nothing. Remember who you are! Remember what you were. In verse, Peter quotes Isaiah's contemporary, the prophet Hosea, whose whole message could be summed up by those few words: "Not my people..but now you are my people." (PBC)

Apart from God, humans are isolated and not in relationship with Him or others. Having received God's blessings, He places us in His Body, the Church. Now we belong; we are part of God's people. (TLSB)

John 1:12, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Ephesians 2:12, "remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world

GOSPEL – John 14:1-14

I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." 8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have

I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. 12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

14:1-12 The Gospel of John applies 10 of its 21 chapters to the last days of Jesus’ “dwelling among us” (1:14), and 5 of these 10 relate Jesus’ conversation with his disciples on the evening before his death. Our text as narrative has three natural parts: (1) Jesus urges the disciples not to be unsettled, because they would follow him to the Father’s house (vv 1–4). (2) He responds to Thomas’ question about the way to the Father (vv 5–7). (3) He responds to Philip’s request, “Show us the Father” (vv 8–12). Words to be specially noticed because they occur repeatedly in the text include: *Father, I, way, know* (see below), *see, show, and believe*. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

These familiar words of Jesus, heard often at funerals, are part of Jesus’ Maundy Thursday “Farewell Discourses” (chs 13–17). They are spoken in the Upper Room. In ch 13 Jesus speaks words that are ominous and unsettling: “One of you is going to betray me” (v 21); “I will be with you only a little longer. . . . Where I am going, you cannot follow” (vv 33, 36); “You [Peter] will disown me three times!” (v 38). Jesus’ glorification was now at hand (13:31; cf. 12:23)—his death on the cross in fulfillment of the Father’s plan (cf. 14:31) and his subsequent resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. Who can imagine what was going through the minds of the disciples at these disturbing utterances? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

14:1 *let not . . . be troubled*. The apostles had just received disturbing news (13:33, 36). (CSB)

The words “Do not let your hearts be troubled” come after matters that were solemn and stressful for the disciples: the washing of their feet by Jesus (13:1–17), the announcement of his betrayal by one of them (13:18–30), the news of his imminent departure from them (13:31–35), and the prediction of Peter’s denial (13:36–38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

mē tarassesthō (sem, “stop being troubled”—(present imperative) implies “stopping” something already happening. Jesus himself was “troubled” at Mary’s weeping at the death of Lazarus (11:33) and prospect of Judas’s betrayal (13:21). “Hearts” is actually singular, reflecting a Hebraic distributive singular. “Trust (“believe,” RSV) . . . trust . . .” Although verbs could be either indicative or imperative (resulting in at least four possible alternatives), it is most likely that both verbs are imperative. As such, they call forth resolute faith, not absent faith. God gives what he demands. Note that trust in God and trust in Jesus are placed on the same level. John regularly stresses the essential equality of Jesus and the Father (cf. 10:30; 12:44; 16:15; 17:21). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

pisteuete, “believe,” in the second person plural, addresses all the disciples, while *hē kardia*, “heart,” is a singular but corporate concept. Both times *pisteuō* is in the imperative (durative present) to strengthen their *hē kardia*, in the Semitic sense of their will and emotion. Through personal relational trust in the Father and in Christ, the disciples now know how to face trials. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

Trust. The antidote for a troubled heart. (CSB)

Both words are imperative. This is the cure for their fear. He gives what He asks for of them. To trust is God is to trust in Jesus.

Jesus clearly equates Himself with God. (TLSB)

14:2 *my Father's house.* Heaven. (CSB)

tēi oikiai tou patros mou, “my Father’s house.” In 2:16 it refers to the temple (but the noun is masculine, cf. Ps 23:6; 27:4). Since in heaven there is no temple, because “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Rev 21:22; cf. 2 Cor 5:1), it is not hard to make the “heavenly” connection. *monai*, “rooms”—literally, “dwelling/abiding places” (from cognate verb *menō*, “stay” or “remain”). The idyllic but false picture of antebellum mansions here comes from a misunderstanding of the Latin *mansiones* (“lodging places”). “Many rooms”—room not just for the “Son,” but all God’s children. (For the translation difficulties of this verse, see Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John: XIII–XXI* [Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1970] 619–20.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

rooms. Lit. “dwelling places,” implying of permanence. (CSB)

Lit, “dwelling places.” Imagery depicts not temporary housing, such as a hotel room, but permanent residence with the Father in heaven. (TLSB)

monai, “rooms,” occurs twice in the New Testament, here and in 14:23. Here it is in the plural, external to the disciples and connected to when Jesus went to the Father at the cross (Jn 19:30). In 14:23, it is in the singular and describes the mystical union. *pollai*, “many,” reminds us that in the New Testament culture many dwelling units formed an extended household. Every Christian has a room prepared for her or him by Christ in the Father’s glorious *hē oikia*, “house.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

Monai are dwelling-places, abodes. Cf. the related verb *menō*, “remain, live, dwell,” which John uses frequently (e.g., v 10). “I am going to prepare a place for you”: cf. Heb 6:19–20; 9:23–24. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

prepare a place for you – Jesus is introducing the subject of his suffering and death. Its grand and great purpose is the individual and personal assurance of everlasting life. Human beings by nature have no place in God’s house because sin has barred the way. Jesus’ death would atone for sins and prepare the room. His resurrection would signal that all was ready. (PBC)

Christ prepares a new “promised land” for the Church, the new Israel. (TLSB)

14:3 *I will come again.* Jesus comes in many ways, but the primary reference here is to his second advent. (CSB)

After the resurrection. (TLSB)

“I will come back.” Among the possibilities of when this might be include (a) following the resurrection; (b) at believer’s (physical) death; (c) whenever Christ comes in Word and Sacrament. The most logical meaning would be (d) at Christ’s Second Coming (cf. Acts 1:11). Because at death we enter eternity, timelessness, b easily coalesces in our minds (and funeral sermons) with d. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

Some commentators say Jesus is referring to his resurrection, but this verse includes the words “that where I am you may be also.” The verse, therefore, seems more in line with the second coming of Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

Jesus will not abandon his disciples. He will personally come and personally take them to himself. The Christian’s certainty of spending eternity in the Father’s house is no less certain than the fact that Jesus will spend eternity there.

14:4-5 *hē hodos*, “the way,” points to Jesus’ impending holy Passion and death. The cross of Christ is our way to the Father! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

14:4 *way*. *oidate* means to know without further information or approval. They had been told time and again.

14:5 *Thomas*. He was honest, and plainly told the Lord he did not understand (see note on 11:16). (CSB)

we do not know – Thomas was trying to comprehend the atonement. Because he could not do that, he was confused about the way to heaven. – Thomas, like any good Bible class member, admits his ignorance and seeks clarification. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

Thomas remained perplexed about the significance of Jesus’ departure. Jesus’ teaching would not become clear until after the resurrection (cf. 2:22; 20:19-20). (TLSB)

14:6 *I am*. This is one of the seven “I ams.” Jesus followers were known as “The Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14,22). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

the way. To God. Jesus is not one way among many, but the way (cf. Ac 4:12; Heb 10:19–20). In the early church, Christianity was sometimes called “the Way” (e.g., Ac 9:2; 19:9, 23). (CSB)

Christ is not merely a way, but rather the only way to God. John Hus: “Let the humble pilgrim look at Christ... Behold he who wants to go, has the way, for Christ is the way, and whither he wants to go, for Christ is the truth, and where he wants to abide, for Christ is the life” (*The Church*, p 90). (TLSB)

“Way”: cf. vv 4, 5. “Truth”: cf. Thomas’ question, “How can we know?” “Life”: cf. the dwelling places in the Father’s house, v 2. The text touches a number of major topics of Christian doctrine, any of which could prompt a full homiletical exposition: Jesus’ divine Sonship (vv 2, 9, 10) and Messiahship (v 11; cf. 7:31;10:24–28); the personal union of God and man in him (vv 6 [“I am”], 9); the indivisible work of the Father and Son in the *opera ad extra* (v 10); Christ’s suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension (v 12: “I am going to the Father”); the sufficiency, particularity, and exclusive claim of Christ and the Gospel (v 6; cf. Acts 4:12; Gal 1:6–9); the participation of believers in the works of Christ (v 12); Jesus’ Second Advent (v 3); and the eternal blessedness of believers (vv 2–3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

egō eimi. Like last Sunday’s “I am the Gate/Door,” this is one of seven “I Ams” in John. “The way.” Jesus’ followers became known as “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22). Jesus doesn’t just show the way (which would leave it in the realm of Law), he is the way (Gospel). “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Prov 14:12). By the emphatic position of “I” and the threefold use of the definite articles, Jesus is making an exclusive claim: “I—and no other—am the Way, the Truth, the Life.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

Everything of God has its source in Christ and is reached through Christ. We must keep on trusting in Him. We approach the Father through Jesus. (PBC)

There is no other way, no greater truth, and no other life. All are found in Jesus, and Jesus is found the Father in heaven. (LifeLight)

the truth. A key emphasis in this Gospel. (CSB)

alētheia, “truth,” is a very important concept in John, starting with 1:14, 17. It retains overtones of the OT concept of faithfulness, which is a cardinal trait of God himself (cf. Deut 32:4). It is not just static, but dynamic (you “do the truth,” literally, 1 Jn 1:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

We can trust Jesus because all that is real and true is found in Him. He is God the Word, and through His Word He reveals His salvation. (PBC)

the life. Very likely the statement means “I am the way (to the Father) in that I am the truth and the life.” (CSB)

Take Jesus away and there is no spiritual life.

The uses of *kai* are exegetical. *zōē*, “life,” is what Jesus came to give us “to the full” (10:10). In his first letter John will declare, “This life is in [God’s] Son” (5:11). *ei mē di emou* reinforces Christ’s exclusive claims (cf. Acts 4:12; 10:9). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

Jesus is the source of physical and spiritual life. Whoever believes in Him has eternal life. (3:16). (PBC)

except through me – This teaching is exclusive. What a contrast to the popular teaching that says all religions reach God, but just follow different paths. God teaches that there are no other paths. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus. Anyone ever lost in a forest or other wilderness knows that taking the wrong path makes a person even more hopelessly lost. So it is with the spiritually lost. Only one way leads to safety, to salvation – Jesus. (PBC) – Croucher and exactness with drugs, surgery.

Christ comes to embody the way of the cross and resurrection. *dia emou*, “through me,” defines *egō eimi hē eijmi hodos*, “I am the way,” as Jesus is presented as the means to the Father. Put in a different manner, Jesus is the only one capable of revealing God, since he alone descended from heaven and is from God (Jn 3:13; 6:46). He is also “the true God and eternal life” (1 Jn 5:20), manifested to earth to give his flesh “for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51). Christ is clearly teaching that he is the one and only way of salvation (Acts 4:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

14:7 *now...do know...have seen* – Christ is so fully divine that to have seen and known Him is to have seen and known the Father. (TLSB)

The Greek text of v 7 has a variant reading of paired verbs which the preacher must note, because the theological difference is great. (1) The preferred reading in both the 3d edition of the UBS Greek text and the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland text is *ei engnōkate me . . . gnōsethe . . .* This is translated by TEV as ‘Now that you have known me . . . you will know my Father also,’ and by the NRSV as “If you know me, you will know my Father also.” This reading suggests—or at least leaves open the possibility—that at that point the disciples did in fact know Jesus. The force of the perfect verb is past action that continues through the present time: “If you have come to know me and continue to know me now . . .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

(2) The second reading, relegated to the critical apparatus of the Greek texts, is *ei engnōkeite me . . . engnōkeite an . . .* This is translated by the KJV as “If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also,” by RSV as “If you had known me . . . “ and by the NIV as “If you really knew me . . . “ This “contrary-to-fact” or “unreal” construction with pluperfect verbs implies that up to that point the disciples had not known him. Bible translations that adopt this reading probably do so because it is the harder one. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

There is no separate word in the Greek text corresponding to the NIV’s “really.” It may be justified if the NIV is attempting to convey the contrary-to-fact version of the statement. However, if it implies a wish to soften or explain the text by distinguishing “knowledge” from “real knowledge,” it adds something to the text that is not there. Let the preacher be careful not to confound the Law and the Gospel by “giving a description of faith, both as regards its strength and the consciousness and productiveness of it, that does not fit all believers at all times” (Thesis XVII in C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1928] 308). All believers “know” Christ; we do not want to set up a false hierarchy of Christians who “really know” Christ, who are superior to those Christians who simply “know” him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

A sermon on the theme “If you know me” might address the malady that takes Jesus to be less, or other, than he in truth is; religious, quasi- or pseudo-Christian “knowledge” of Jesus that is man-made, for man’s self-interest, tailored to carnal standards, and for that reason more agreeable to the world, and more palatable to the Christian’s old nature. That kind of knowledge is in fact not knowledge or light at all, but is rightly called darkness (Jn 1:5). For example, see in 6:42: “They said, ‘Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”; Jn 4:22: “You Samaritans worship what you do not know”; and Mt 7:22–23: “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.’” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

Alvin Toffler, in his book *Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth, and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century* (New York: Bantam, 1990), portrays how throughout human history knowledge has always been employed as a source of power. He then shows how in this decade, the ever-changing and more powerful means for obtaining and controlling knowledge are bringing with them sweeping and disturbing changes everywhere. By print, radio, television, telephone, etc., pseudo-religious and pseudo-Christian “knowledge” invades our homes, work-places, schools, and churches, as Christ foretold (Mt 24:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

Scripture replies, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor 8:1). It also points out that rejection of the knowledge of God leads to moral depravity (Rom 1:28). Paul warned against “what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Tim 6:20). That false knowledge stressed man-made teachings and rules, false humility, self-imposed regimens of worship and asceticism which had “an appearance of wisdom” (Col 2:20–23). “They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him” (Titus 1:16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

In contrast to all these is the knowledge of God and his gift of grace to those he calls. This gift is given by Christ to the disciples in our text: “From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (v 7b). Such knowledge of God comes through Christ and is received as a gift of the Holy Spirit. It produces fruit (in 15:5). The Spirit that God gives to Christ and to his people is “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding . . . of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Is 11:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

Solomon began his reign by asking the Lord for wisdom and knowledge (2 Chr 1:8–10). Paul’s goal, above all others, was “to know Christ and the power of his resurrection” (Phil 3:7–11). “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

have seen him. Once more Jesus stresses the intimate connection between the Father and himself. Jesus brought a full revelation of the Father (cf. 1:18), so that the apostles had real knowledge of him. – We look for God nowhere else than in the Person of Christ. (CSB)

“You have seen him (the Father)”—Jesus makes knowing and seeing himself as equivalent to knowing and seeing the Father, whom, technically, no one can see (1:18). This is high Christology, expanded in vv 9–11. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

According to Heb 1:3, Jesus “is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,” so that to know Christ is to know the Father. *heōrakate*, “you have seen,” is in the perfect active indicative, indicating that as the disciples presently know Christ, they have also seen God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

14:8-9 Philip wants a theophany and wants to see the glory of God. Like Philip, we struggle to accept that God is hidden in Jesus, the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14). After being with Jesus for three years, Philip makes a request that saddens the Lord. Jesus loves him enough to respond with only a slight rebuke. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

14:8 *Philip* - Philip also appears in 1:43; 6:5; 12:21. “Show us the Father” is reminiscent of Moses’ request to God: “Show me your glory” (Ex 33:18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

show us the Father – Philip apparently wanted a more physical experience of God’s presence (a “theophany,” e.g., Ex 33:17–23). (TLSB)

Exodus 33:17-23, “Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

14:9-10 Poignancy and frustration characterize Jesus’ questions to Philip. Three years of on-the-job training, and they still don’t get it! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

14:10-11 The words of Christ are verified because the Father’s works are done through him. Christ’s works were given to him by the Father (Jn 5:36), so that he did nothing on his own authority and spoke as the Father taught him (Jn 8:28). The disciples were commanded to believe in his words of his indivisible unity with the Father, and, to counter any doubt, they were also commanded to believe on account of the Lord’s divine works. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

14:10 *the words...on my own authority.* Jesus’ teaching was not of human origin, and there was an inseparable connection between his words and his work. – Jesus and the Father do not work apart from each other. (CSB)

dwells in Me does His works. Another expression of the complete unity of Father and Son. (TLSB)

14:11 *Believe ... that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.* Saving faith is trust in a person, but it must also have factual content. Faith includes believing that Jesus is one with the Father. – If nothing else, look at the very works themselves. They prove that I am in the Father and that the Father is in Me. (CSB)

works – erga, “miracles/works”—not John’s favorite word *sēmeion*, “sign.” Jesus had already challenged the Jews to believe in him on the evidence of his “miracles” (10:38). Faith here has content—Jesus’ words and works. It is *fides quae creditur*, as well as *fides qua creditur*. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

14:12 *greater works*. Miracles (see v. 11). These depended on Jesus’ going to the Father, because they are works done in the strength of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus would send from the Father (15:26; cf. 14:16–17). (CSB)

They are greater not because they are more miraculous but because many miracles will take place after Christ has completed His work of redemption and gone to the Father. (Cf. Acts 5:12-16. (TLSB)

meizona, “greater things,” are not limited to miracles. This came true, for example, on Pentecost, when more people were converted than in Jesus’ entire ministry. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 2)

On account of the cross, much fruit was born (Jn 12:24). That is, empowered by the Holy Spirit and filled with Christ himself, his followers would bring salvation through the Gospel of Christ to more people than ever before. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

The greater works were the miracles in the spiritual realm, such as the conversion of the Gentiles. By the power of Jesus’ gospel, every believer in Jesus can have a part in changing hearts from sin to the Savior, in giving eternal life to the spiritually dead, in opening heaven to lost sinners. To this day, we can do those works all around the world. God in His grace uses us for that purpose. (PBC)

The ministry of Jesus was limited to one people; His witnesses, after the pouring out of the Spirit, shall go forth to win the nations. But these greater works must be based always upon the great work of Jesus. Besser justly points to the fact that all the life-giving miracles of power done by Jesus were firstfruits, pledges of something even greater, and that it was only after His exaltation that the floodgates of heaven were opened wide so that streams of living water might overflow the arid earth, and course from the lives of believers filled with the Spirit of God. (Ylvisaker)

14:13-14 To pray in the name of Christ is to pray according to the will and purposes of God (1 Jn 5:14–15). This promise is not for the purpose of working the greater works above (which is the fruit of the Gospel), but to train the disciples to live in faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

in my name. Not simply prayer that mentions Jesus’ name but prayer in accordance with all that the person who bears the name is. It is prayer aimed at carrying forward the work Jesus did—prayer that he himself will answer (see also v. 14). (CSB)

Not simply a formula appended to a prayer, but prayer in keeping with Jesus’ revealed will and teaching. Cf. James 4:3. (TLSB)

14:1–14 Through His death and resurrection, Christ went to prepare a place for us in heaven, where we will dwell with God forever. The true God cannot be known apart from Jesus Christ. Because of Christ’s work, we can know the Father and enter His eternal presence. • O risen Lord, with great anticipation I long for my home in heaven. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen. (TLSB)