



50 YEARS OF RESHAPING

One Generation Away | 8.23.26

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Libin Abraham 0:00

There are many ways to preserve history. Some people preserve a story and preserve history by building monuments, and monuments do a great job of preserving names and sacrifices. Monuments put a mark on the ground and say something significant happened here. And the thing about monuments is they're never meant to change. You are to keep a monument, preserve it just as it is, and we need monuments to remember. So the generations will remember what happened. But the Church of Jesus is not a monument. The Church of Jesus is a house. In fact, it's a living house. Think about the difference. A monument is there to preserve what was, but a house is ever growing. A house is ever being reshaped because people move in, and children are born, and guests show up sometimes unannounced. Meals are shared, and rooms sometimes have to be repurposed. If you got kids like we do, you got to repaint the walls. And our kids seem to be always on wheels. Somehow they're on. They don't want to walk on their feet. They want to be riding something. Stay saying I say we love the first year of our marriage because we didn't own a house. We lived in an apartment, and when something broke, you just called the first floor and told them to come up and fix it. It was awesome. But when, Amen. But when you got kids and you're living in a house. Things break, and you got to repair it. But all of that is an incredible sign of life. It's a sign of living activity. So something good and beautiful is happening. A monument is there to remember what was, but a house is there to show you what is, and prepare for what's next. Today we remember, we honor, we celebrate all that God has done in the last 50 years. But mentory, we are not a historical monument. We are a living house. We're not just a monument to the past. We are a living house because here, right now, currently, God is still at work. He's still moving. He's still shaping and reshaping. He's still growing His spiritual house. We are a living house for His glory and His renown. This anniversary is not just a milestone; it is a defining moment. Yes, to look back, but also to become a part of this altar of renewal for our future, for what Jesus continues to do, and that is the moment we have found ourselves in. We have sort of themed this weekend the reshaping, because we're celebrating how God has shaped our hearts and how through us God has shaped the world. You've seen images of that of God touching neighbors and nations with the gospel through what was started here at Bentry. The Apostle Peter gives language to this in First Peter chapter two. Peter is writing to the early church across Asia Minor, scattered, dispersed, a church consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. They're living in a city that's marked by by ornate, beautiful, majestic structures and temples and civic monuments. But these group of Christians-they're misunderstood. They're not all that socially impressive. But here is what Peter says to them in First Peter chapter two, the word of the Lord from verse six on says, "As you come to Him, a living stone, rejected by people but chosen and honored by God, you yourselves as living stones a spiritual house. Say with me, a spiritual house. You are being built to being a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture. See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame. Verse nine says, "You speaking of every one of you in the spiritual house, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, so that for the purpose of that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Peter is saying to a group of people that look. I know people around you aren't impressed with you. I know you don't have temples that people admire, but you are the temple God inhabits. You may not be honored in your city or society, but God has chosen you. God Himself has honored you.

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The beauty of the church has never been the buildings it's constructed. The beauty of the church has been in the people God has inhabited. This is the house of God. We, the spiritual house of God, that God chose. To make his residence in inside of us, and this is the miracle of Bentry and of the church that God would dwell among and within His people. Two things about

the reshaping Peter tells us: first of all, that it's Jesus who shapes us; it's Jesus and Jesus alone, who shapes us. Notice verse four: As you come to Him, Jesus, a living stone, rejected by people but chosen and honored by God. Jesus is the foundation we have come to. He is the source of our life. Peter says He's a living stone. That sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? An oxymoron. How can a stone be living? We often say that thing or that person is dead as a rock. But Peter says, "No, no. Jesus is a living stone because yes, he was dead. He was crucified. He was rejected by humanity. But three days later, up from the grave, he rose. Amen. We have a living and risen Savior, and I'm gonna just tell you the reason we are here today, 50 years later, is not because a great group of people maintained an institution. The reason we are here today is because Jesus is still alive, and Jesus is still building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail. Amen. He is our living stone. Peter goes on in verse seven to say, "The stone that the builders rejected, this one, he, he has become our cornerstone. As you know, in ancient architectural history, the cornerstone, and still today, the cornerstone was the first and most important stone to be laid because the rest of the building they got its shape, its alignment, its direction from the cornerstone. You mess up the cornerstone, you mess up everything. You mess up what you build on the whole building does not take shape. So Peter is saying, what gives shape to the church is Jesus our cornerstone. What shapes us, Bentry? It's not the pastor. It's not the worship style. It's not any personality. What shapes is what aligns is what gives life and form to us is Jesus our cornerstone. And let me just tell you: for the next 50 years, what determines the success of this church and any church is: Will we build our life aligned with Jesus? And our wholehearted answer is yes. We will build. We will take form. We will take shape after our living and cornerstone, who is Jesus? The story at Bentry didn't actually begin with 15 families at TCA. The story at Bentry began with Jesus. Those families gathered because Jesus called them. People served and sacrificed because Jesus was worth it, leaders stepped in because they were following a calling from Jesus. Missionaries were sent because they were obeying Jesus. Lives were transformed because they met a living stone. People entered the waters of baptism because when they met Jesus, they came alive. Families were restored, and marriages experienced healing, and children were dedicated because Jesus is alive, and He is the living stone. And 50 years later, Jesus is still the living water for the thirsty. He is still the bread of life for those who hunger, for those who are weary. Jesus is rest for them. Maybe you're here today, weary, tired, and hungry for something more. Friends, we just have only one person to point you to. It's not us, but it's Him, the risen and living Savior who gives us life, who sustains us from the beginning to the end. Peter says in verse five about this shaping of the church: you yourselves, as living stones, you come to living stone, you become like him, you become alive. So as we living stones, a spiritual house are being built to be a holy priest. So said that was me, being built. It's about three of you being built. Notice he doesn't say we have been built. No, we are being presently, continually. We are being built. We're being formed. We're being shaped. We're being reshaped. Even a lot of people love the idea of Jesus finding them, but resist the idea of Jesus forming them. We love Jesus as a savior, but don't shape my life.

Libin Abraham 9:46

Let me keep my things under my covering. But no, no. Jesus who saves is a Jesus who shapes. The Jesus who finds is a Jesus who forms. And even today, Jesus. Is shaping our priorities. He's reshaping our loves. He's reshaping our attention. He's shaping how we give and how we use our life for His glory. He's reshaping how we see one another and welcome the stranger and welcome the neighbor. He is reshaping His church, and the moment a church believes that it is done being built. Is actually the moment that a living house begins its journey towards being a monument. Until Jesus returns, we are being shaped, reshaped. We are being formed. We are being built. The language of First Peter is not just that Jesus shapes me, but that Jesus shapes us, because the shaping He is doing is in this collective community. All of the use in First Peter are plural, and if it was the NTV, the New Texas Version, it would say, "As y'all come to Him, the living stone, y'all are being built up into a spiritual house. Because that's the truth. Jesus does not merely shape us individually; He fits us together collectively. He shapes us together. A rubble of disconnected stones. No one looks at that and says that's the building. No, no, that's just the rubble. But what makes the difference is how those stones all fit together, based on a cornerstone, according to the design of a builder. It's the coming together that shapes us and forms us. And there are people in this room who have walked with Jesus for 5060, years. You began your journey at Bentry. You were sent out to start this church, and you have walked with Jesus for many decades. We need you. We need your story. We need your lived experiences. We need your faith, your spiritual inheritance. Our church needs you now more than ever before. And there are others of you who are new to faith and you're new to Bentry and you're new to church and you're still trying to figure out what's the difference between the Old and New Testament-that's awesome. We are glad you're here. And hear me-you are not a visitor into someone else's story. You have been specifically handicpicked by Jesus as a living stone, and God has placed you in this mosaic called Bentry. You are here on purpose. You are a missing piece that we have needed that God orchestrated for you to be here. So your story matters, your perspective matters, your culture matters, your struggle, your doubt. It's welcomed here. What's beautiful about this church that he is building is that it's not our preferences that keep us together, surely not

our politics, surely not our age or life interests or anything else. What keeps us together and holds us together is we have one cornerstone. We are built on one person, and while the world will love to pull people apart and create hostility, we believe that as long as Jesus is our cornerstone, He is enough for us. He's what we've got in common, and He can keep us church together. He can keep a spiritual house in one piece. Amen. As long as He is our cornerstone, and when we build our life on Jesus, the cornerstone, this spiritual house is big enough for anyone God brings. This house is wide enough for whoever God brings into the spiritual house-married or single, young or old, a brand new Christian or a mature Christian. It's big enough for the neurotypical and neurodivergent. It's big enough for families with kids or families without kids, for the widow, the divorced, whoever you might be. And people from different nations and tribes and tongues. No, no, this spiritual house is big enough for whoever Jesus brings, because it's as we grow together as one people that God says you are one royal priesthood, one holy nation, one possession for Him. So we are a house continually being built with new living stones that Jesus is bringing into this faith family. But not only does Jesus shape us; Jesus, second of all, reshapes the world through us. He shapes the world through us. The beginning of Scripture is in Genesis one, where God is shaping the world. He is forming. He is creating life. He is bringing order into chaos. He is bringing light into the darkness.

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And God is continuing to shape the world. When we see the brokenness around us and the pain of those we love and the brokenness around the world. May we never forget that God is still shaping the world. He's not done. God does have a plan, but here's a plan. God's plan is that through the church, indwelt by His Spirit, the very incarnate presence of. On Earth, that He would touch the world through us. There is no Plan B. That's what Dr. Jean gets at a tear up the syllables, because we got to go back to the Scripture and see our life, our church, our communities as the mechanism God uses to touch and reshape the world. Peter gives us two purposes for why we exist, and through these two purposes, God reshapes the world. Look at verse five. Peter says, "You yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood. Here's why: to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. That's why we exist to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ. Here's the second purpose, verse nine: so that you may proclaim, declare, announce the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, Peter describes two purposes: one's an upward purpose, and one's an outward purpose. Our upward purpose is worship. Worship. We exist today to present our lives, to offer our whole being as a living sacrifice, an acceptable sacrifice through Jesus, the old covenant, the priests would bring animal sacrifices over and over again to maintain their relationship with God. But in the new covenant, Jesus has come. He is our once and for all perfect sacrifice, and because of what Jesus has accomplished, we have direct access. No other mediator needed. We can go directly to God. Hebrew says we can go boldly, with our heads not hanging to shame, but thrilled, rejoicing to be in the presence of God, and we can approach His throne of grace any moment. But as we come to His throne of grace. We actually don't come empty-handed. We come with spiritual sacrifices, sacrifices not to earn God, but to thank Him, to show Him our love, to show Him our affection. So we come with spiritual sacrifices. So what are these sacrifices? Well, first of all, Hebrews 13 verse 15 says, "Our praise is a spiritual sacrifice, the fruit of our lips. That's why we spend time singing. That's why we encourage you to have moments of worship and honor to God, where you pour out your affection, your love for Jesus in words. Our praise, the fruit of our lips, and I pray for more and more worship and the intensity, the joy, the passion of praise, to rise in our gatherings, because our worship is a spiritual act of service and sacrifice to Him. Revelation five eight says that our prayers are spiritual sacrifices as we intercede for one another. As people say, "Would you pray with me, man? I'm struggling. Isn't that what makes the church? We stop and we pray. We lift up each other's burdens, and we are there for one another. We don't let them walk alone. You know, we pray, we intercede, and when we do, those are beautiful spiritual sacrifices we bring. Romans 12 would say that our bodies are living sacrifice. In view of God's mercies, we offer our bodies as living sacraments. We don't live for ourselves or towards our flesh. We live in the Spirit and for His glory. Philippians 4:18 would say that our giving, our generosity, is a spiritual sacrifice God accepts to meet needs around us, to open our homes, to open our life, to give of ourselves, our energy, our dinner table to expand and let people come, experience hospitality. That's a spiritual sacrifice. When you put all of that together, our upward response of worship is God. Here we are as a whole being, mind, soul, body, everything we are. We are available to you. That's what you're worthy of-not just some of me, but all of me. So, for the next 50 years, we offer our lives as this fragrant offering of worship and prayer and generosity, and our whole being at the altar because Jesus is worthy of all that we could ever give Him. The upward purpose of worship, but here's the outward outward purpose.

Libin Abraham 19:26

If worship is our upward purpose, our outward purpose is witness to share Christ, and that's what Peter is saying that you would proclaim him, the one who brought you out of darkness into marvelous light, that you would declare him with your

words and with your life and with your deeds, and I believe as we worship him, as we enjoy his presence, as we are reminded consciously of who he is, we are compelled to share his love and to share his grace and to tell our story and to see our neighbors and our. Nations in dire need of the only good news that can save and redeem them. Our worship must lead us to witness, to declare the God who has rescued and saved us. So we say here eventually that our mission is simple: it is to experience and share the love of Jesus, because it's like good tacos. Once you've experienced it, you can't help but share it. You gotta write a review. You gotta tell people about God. You gotta say, "Man, I still smell like these tacos a year later. If you're Indian like me, Indian food, a decade later, it was so good. I gotta tell you, once we've tasted how good the Lord is. We proclaim Him. The grace we've received is the grace we extend. Our heartbeat, our ethics here at Bentry, is that because we have been so loved by Jesus, we're compelled to share His love. Not because we have to, but we get to. That because Jesus has made a unique group of people who should have been differentiated by what the world says is different about you, but He's made us one. We commit to being a group of people united in our diversity, and because we are all living stones indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we believe we are gifted with purpose, and because God's not done building His house, every one of us we are sent on mission. We're sent with purpose and on mission. God has written so many amazing stories here at Bentry, and we've told you many of those stories of what Jesus has done, what you might have not heard is that over the last 10 years, just over the last one decade, 672 people have been baptized here at Bentry. Isn't that amazing? 672 people experience His grace. What you might have not heard is that 345 children were dedicated here in the last decade. Next generation sent out into the world with prayer and petition. What you might have now heard is that because we are so committed to proclaiming Jesus among the nations, that over the last 10 years we've given nearly 15 million dollars completely to missions around the world to see the Church of Jesus be built around the nations. There's so many stories like you saw today of what Jesus has done, but can I just tell you this, church? Hear me. The most important story in our ministry is actually the story that hasn't happened yet. The most important story is the one that hasn't been told because it hasn't happened yet. As we cross over this threshold here to the next 50, our mind is on the next person who has yet to experience the grace of God. There is a child somewhere, maybe not even born yet, we believe we'll meet Jesus here, and we'll be a missionary to a country we may never go to. There is a student somewhere who has yet to encounter his identity or her purpose in Jesus. There is a family experiencing so much brokenness they've been unraveled by life. They have yet to walk in through these doors and experience healing. There's some family navigating disabilities of a various kind who have not yet found belonging and community within the family of God. There is some adult, a young adult or an older adult, who is who is plagued by addiction and brokenness inside that want to take their life, but one day they're going to walk through these doors and recognize that God loves them, that He's crazy about them, that life is worth living. I envision one day somebody in our baptistry, maybe next year, maybe next decade, will get up and share their testimony, and they will say, "In 2026, I wanted nothing to do with Jesus, but now I've met the living stone. He's made me alive.

Libin Abraham 24:05

I'm here to declare my heart belongs to Him. There are still stories yet to be written, church. Still lives to experience the grace of Jesus. So we live today for those stories, and I pray that today God would give us a holy imagination, a holy vision for what He has ahead, for the strongholds still to be pulled down, for the chains still to be broken, for lives still to be saved and for wounds still to be healed, because He reshapes us so that He can shape the world through us. But the future of our city, the future of God reshaping the world, won't just be determined by. What happens on this platform is determined by every single one of you joining God on this mission. Because hear me, you are moving temples, temples on wheels, where you take the presence of God wherever you go. So when you pray for the sick, they experience healing. When you meet a person who's in dire condition, and they hear the gospel, when they receive God's love and generosity through you, when you see your work as holy, and you step into that moment as an agent of God's kingdom, and you see your neighbors with fresh eyes, and you see the nations with the heart of God. That's when the world is reshaped through everyday ordinary believers making themselves available as living spiritual sacrifices, proclaiming His praise, because He has brought us from death into marvelous light, and close us with this last verse that we read, First Peter 2:10. This is, I believe, the story of God at Bentry. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. This story is not a story of a people who are smart enough, or wise enough, or eloquent enough. All of this is a story that God has been merciful. He's been gracious. He's been so kind. Even when we lacked faith, He was faithful. Even when we didn't know what to do, He came through, and we have experienced the relentless mercy and kindness of God. And what we need for the next 50 is what we've needed for the last 50: the mercy of God, the grace of God, the power of the Spirit, the presence of Jesus being shared with the world. I want to invite us to finish our weekend together in a posture of surrender. Beginning of the service, I ask you to stand based on when you came into Bentry, and now I'm going to ask you to stand not based on when you came, but because of where we're going, not because of when you came, but because of

where we're going. 50 years ago, these families-they were available, but they could not imagine a moment like this. They had no idea where God would take them, but they said yes. They gave their yes to God. They were available, and look what God has done. And 50 years from now, most of us may not be here. I hope some of us will be, but there will be another generation who will be shaped by our yes today, by our availability to be a living spiritual sacrifice with our praise and our prayers and our generosity and our bodies and our time, that we would say, God, use me to proclaim Your praise in my city and in the nations. So, if that's you, you're saying, God, I'm available. Would you stand right where you are? Just stand right where you're. If you're saying, God, I'm in for the next 50, and even if you don't go to church here, but you attend another 50, if you're available for what the Lord wants to do in through you, in and through your life, this is our posture, our response to what the Spirit's done. Would you just stretch out your hands with palms up? It's a posture of surrender and availability, Father, we hold nothing in our arms but Your grace and Your mercy, and we are positioning both our life, our heart, our families, our church for whatever You want to do. Keep shaping us, keep sending us, keep saving lives through us. Today, you have our yes, you have our availability, you have our hearts, holding nothing back. Jesus, we say, our whole life belongs to you. Our world belongs to you.

Libin Abraham 29:19

We exist for you, God. There is somebody in this room with open hands and open arms needs to receive Jesus today as Lord and Savior. Maybe they're realizing, man, He's the one that I've been missing. He's the only living stone that can give me life, friend. If that's you, make today the day of surrender and new life. Find Jesus to be your source of life, sins forgiven, hearts made whole. Experience the living water of Jesus. But Father, I pray that you would save some today, that you would restore hearts today, and as a church assembly. On this day in this sacred gathering, we offer our yes to you. Use us, shape us for your glory and for your kingdom. And one day we will hear your words. Well done, good and faithful servant. And until that day, keep us on the mission of God on the world and how you are reshaping our world. We love you. We thank you. Thank you for inviting us. Our answer is yes. And in Jesus' name, we pray. And the church said together aloud, "Amen, amen, amen. Come on, let's give Jesus a thanks and give and give praise for how He's working in us and through us.