

Sunday Sermon October 4, 2026

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” The Cornerstone.

The Book of Job in chapter 38 describes God laying the cornerstone upon which the world was built. In architecture, a cornerstone is the first stone laid for the foundation. All the other stones are placed in reference to the cornerstone. All are oriented in relation to that stone. The keystone. It is the key piece of a sturdy foundation upon which the building is built.

The cornerstone.

Ephesians 2 reminds us that we, followers of Jesus, are “members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone. In Him, the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.”

Jesus is the cornerstone upon which the church – the people of God -are built into a holy temple, “a dwelling place for God.”

Each of us pieced together and oriented toward Him. Oriented toward love. So that we become a dwelling place for God, for love, within ourselves and in the world.

I love the image of the cornerstone, Jesus, as our point of reference, our focal point. Our lives always directed toward Him, like the needle of the compass always pointing north, guiding us, showing us the Way.

I like using Google maps when I’m in the car. Plug in the destination, and the app give you every direction: “in 300 feet turn left.” Have you noticed what happens when you turn off course? You’re going along, and you exit the highway to get gas or lunch. The program tries to re-orient you. Make a U-turn. Turn left at the next stoplight. Get back on track. It’s always working to get you back on track to get you to your destination.

What if our lives were like that? Always oriented toward Christ, the cornerstone. When we get off track, we're called back. Focus on me, Jesus says, focus on love. I am the destination and the journey. "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" – keep your eyes fixed on me, your lives in closer union with me, Jesus says.

Today Jesus tells a sobering parable, an allegory really, about a group of tenant farmers. In what was a common practice in the ancient world, a landowner would plant a vineyard and provide all the necessities for a winery. He would then lease it to tenants who would make their living in addition to giving the owner a share.

The story goes that when the owner sent folks to collect his share, the tenants beat, stoned and killed them. The owner even sent his son. "Surely they will respect him." Not so.

The tenants had lost their way. They had lost their focus, their orientation. The vineyard was a gift. They were to be good stewards of it and give the owner a share in addition to being blessed by its abundance.

But they were not grateful. They wanted it all, not just the portion they had coming to them. That sounds like the story of Adam and Eve in the beautiful garden of Eden that God had planted and gifted them in Genesis. They lost their focus, lost their way. They wanted it all.

In response, Jesus says "I am the cornerstone." I am the stone on which all the other stones are placed so that they will be properly oriented and built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Our call, our task, our challenge is to live a life pointed at God in Jesus, the Cornerstone, as we make our way in a world that tells us that life is all about me, and what I think, what I want.

My friend Bishop Craig Loya had this to say about living a life centered on God in Jesus. I'll conclude with it:

“It all seems like a simple allegory foreshadowing the religious leaders’ rejection of and violence toward Jesus, with an overlay of divine vengeance we might find distasteful. It would be easy to dismiss it as just that, or hear it as a critique of the way leaders in any context can be clueless from time to time in their closed-mindedness.

But it’s always a mistake to deflect and imagine the scriptures are addressed to someone else, and not to us. There’s a profoundly important question being put to all of us here: who does your life belong to? To whom or what are you accountable? For whose benefit do you live, and work, and strive?

We’re all naturally inclined to think like the workers in the parable. We tend to imagine our life is about what we want, or think we deserve. I will get mine, and you can get yours. But following Jesus calls us to make a shift that is as shocking as it is liberating: Your life, the gospel tells us, is not ultimately about you. Your living is not for your own benefit. Your life as a beloved, baptized child of God is about God, and we live to give ourselves away in love toward the God who gives Godself away to heal and save the whole world. (True liberation and healing are found, not in choosing or possessing anything we want, but in giving ourselves away to God.)

Paul gives us a glimpse of what this looks like in our reading from Philippians. When considering the many gifts, credentials, and identities he carries, he simply states: “I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

God has planted, tended, cared for, and nurtured the life you live, and the life of our beloved church. It all belongs to God. Our work is to hold tight to Jesus, to be held tight by Jesus, and to offer every beautiful fruit that ripens among us to God’s great work to embrace the whole broken world in love.”

Amen