



# 'Worship at home' May 7<sup>th</sup> 2023



We continue in the season of Easter, and are reminded of the continuing presence of the risen Christ, our rock and our shelter throughout our lives.

As you come to worship, you might find a small stone as an aid to prayer. Hold it in your hand as you read and pray.



## Opening

Praise the Lord,  
who has shown us the wonders of God's unfailing love;  
and who leads us and guides us throughout our lives.

In you, O Lord, we put our trust.

You are our God, and our lives are in your hands.

Lord, let the light of your face shine on us  
as we celebrate and give thanks in your presence. Amen.

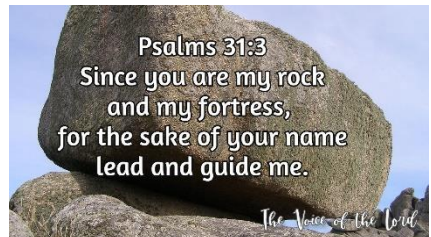
- adapted from Christine Longhurst <https://re-worship.blogspot.com>

## Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

*In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me. Keep me free from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, LORD, my faithful*

*God. My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.*

*New International Version*



Psalm 31 is a psalm of lament, and a prayer for help. There is a sense of trust and hope in the Lord who is firm and secure in the midst of trouble and turmoil.

***Hold your stone in your palm as you reflect on this psalm.***

***How might you experience God as a rock of refuge?***

***Give thanks for God's unfailing presence  
with you at all times.***

### **1 Peter 2:4-10**

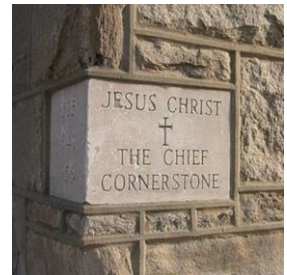
*As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*

*Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the*

*cornerstone," and, "A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

*New International Version*

Stones and rocks can be found as interesting natural formations. They can have many uses – building houses, making roads, decorating gardens, constructing fences and walls. Many old churches have a cornerstone which determines the position of the whole structure. All other stones are set in reference to this stone.



This text calls us to be living stones, basing our lives on Christ as our cornerstone, and making him the reference point on which our lives are structured. We are reminded that the church consists not of the building but the people. The property may be used for worship and other activities, but the people are the living stones. Together we are the people of God, this is not dependent on our property or buildings or location. Like stones, each one of us is unique: old, young, brittle, strong, shiny, fractured, solid, differently shaped and oriented, and we are each precious gemstones to God.



***Reflect once more on your stone.***

***It is probably hundreds of thousands of years old. Imagine its story: Where has it come from? How has it been shaped over the years?***

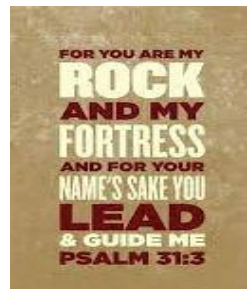
As living stones, God shapes us. As we are tossed around in the events of life, we are weathered by wind and rain and sun. We are formed to become who God is calling us to be. By the spirit of the risen Christ continually at work in our midst, we are fashioned alongside each other into a holy priesthood. We are not random rocks scattered across the landscape, but unique and precious individuals belonging to a dynamic and life-giving structure, built on Christ. Once we were not a people, but now we become the people of God, living in the fullness of God's mercy and God's love.

**Reflect on your life, and the times when you can see God has shaped you.**

**How is God continuing to shape you?**

**How can you make opportunities for this to happen?**

This scripture also tells us that we are chosen "that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." We are called to proclaim the good news of Easter, that Christ is in our midst and with us always, to those around us, witnessing to God's love and grace, and bringing hope.



## Prayer

God of grace and light, mystery and love;  
you cannot be contained,  
but we know you are present with us always.  
May we know your presence and your grace.



Shape and form us as your people, the body of Christ,  
supporting each other in every aspect of our lives,  
with Christ as our cornerstone.

May we build each other up in love  
and share with each other in fellowship,  
that each one might know their worth and find their place.  
May our communities cultivate relationships  
where those who feel lonely might find friendship,  
those who feel marginalised might find welcome,  
and those who feel unloved might find acceptance.

Shape and form our living,  
as we seek to follow you and to live out our faith.  
May we proclaim the good news of Easter  
and your presence with us, bringing hope.  
May we live in such a way that  
those who are troubled might find peace,  
those who are saddened might find comfort,  
those who are hungry might find food,  
and those who are weary might find rest.

Shape and form us, as your living stones,  
to follow you more closely,  
to witness to your love and grace,  
to bring hope to others;  
in the name of Christ, our cornerstone, we pray.  
Amen

## Closing

You are a chosen people, royal priests, God's very own;  
make time this week to be shaped by God, in order that you might  
proclaim the goodness and grace of God to those around you.  
Know that the presence and the power of God go with you! Amen!