

The Victory of the Rejected Jesus Christ

Joon Park Easter Sermon. Excerpt of Transcript for April 9, 2023

Ps 118:21–24 *I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

Mt 21:42 *Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?'*

If I am asked to choose one English word, which I dislike the most, it would be “rejection.” Personally, I hate to be rejected. Don't you? Who would like to hear the word, “You are rejected,” or to feel rejected? When a friend refuses to hang out with you, when a young man is turned down for a date, when a student does not receive an invitation to a classmate's birthday party, when a grade 12 student receives a rejection letter from the college he or she had longed to get in, when a long-term partner leaves you for someone else, when a pastoral candidate hears from the church that he or she is underqualified so cannot be hired, and when a person of colour is dealt with a different standard because of his or her skin colour. I just named a few examples of being rejected or feeling rejected.

During this most holy season of which we have journeyed with Jesus in passion and death, and longed for His resurrection, I came to reflect on this very weird word, rejection, that has not been fully embodied in my spiritual life.

In contrast with my life, throughout human history, there is one man who knew and embraced rejection through his life. Not once, not twice, but his life as a whole. The man is Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a divine mystery that our God, enfleshed as human Jesus, came to Earth to be rejected and even killed by the people whom he had created. Thus, being rejected belongs to the essence of Jesus' salvific story in his earthly ministry.

He fulfilled the prophecy of the Old Testament in Isaiah 53:3, 4-5:

*He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.
Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.*

Yes, he was born to be despised and rejected by the world but upon him was the great affliction that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. By his life being rejected by the world, we are now reconciled to the world. By his defenceless receiving of "rejection" from birth to death, we are now accepted and invited to his kingdom of God. What a divine irony that he was rejected and we are saved!

What Jesus had said in John 6:35 is now true: "I will not reject anyone who comes to me." Anyone! Despite how many times you have been rejected in the world, it does not matter: "Come to me as you are! No qualifications, no ethnic differences are needed! I am not a God of retaliation and discrimination, but a God of justice and reconciliation, a God of love."

Christ, the rejected, is risen today, Alleluia!

If you have been rejected and suffered with Christ and for his name's sake, rejoice now! The past of being rejected no more has power. Darkness has gone, and light has come. Gleaming light now streams from people's rejected hearts and souls, for they are truly Christ-like. Along with Jesus Christ who is resurrected, they are now lifted with bountiful blessings and promises.

From this day on which our Lord Jesus is risen, the rejected will no longer feel life-shattering pain, grief and loneliness. Because on this very day of Easter, "the stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner." (1 Peter 2:7) The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes (Ps 118:22-23). Only through that stone, all who were rejected, hurt, wounded are now healed and reconciled, and finally invited by our divine Host, Resurrected Jesus, to the heavenly banquet.

Rejoice and rejoice and rejoice!

Jesus the rejected is now risen, risen indeed. Alleluia!

Prayer

Gracious God, as all of us face rejection in our walks with you, helps us to see in our rejection the opportunity to find creative ways to love, to serve, and to give ourselves in humility and in faithfulness, even to those who despise and refuse us. This is your servant's prayer on this very day of Easter. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.