**The stone that the builders have rejected has become the cornerstone, this was the Lord’s doing.**

I wonder if you have ever felt rejected. Maybe when you were at school you were never chosen to be in the netball or football team. Maybe there was a group of friends that you hovered on the outside of, but were never included, never brought into the centre of. I think many of us have had experiences of being left out, even pushed out. We yearned to be included but were not.

I went to boarding school when I was 9 and one of the terrible things that I can remember, was boys being put into Coventry. This was a vicious punishment exercised upon an individual, in which for a period of 1, 2 even 3 days nobody would speak to them. No communication with the individual and there was enormous collective pressure for everyone to adhere to this, to not break the communal ostracism. Thankfully as I went up the school it fell into disuse. Maybe even as young boys we recognised the emotional damage that this sort of action can cause.

Rejection is a dreadful thing to receive, to live with. It can come in many forms and can damage our self-esteem and dent our confidence.

If you have ever been rejected, and you carry the scars of that, then take heart. For we have an amazing God who takes what others reject and makes something beautiful out of it. Something durable, lasting, of high quality. Something essential.

In this verse Jesus is talking about himself. He will become the ultimate rejection. For his rejection by the Jewish leaders will result in the cross and the salvation of all. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, this was the Lord’s doing. The corner stone, the key stone, the stone that holds and supports others, that is the foundation for others. He was rejected by the Jewish leaders, God’s chosen people, yet God has made him into the most important stone in the building. The corner stone of humanity. It was the Lord’s doing, God has done this. Achieved through rejection.

So what part of our lives is the stone that the builders rejected? Is it a broken relationship? A failed exam? A moment of weakness? Of embarrassment? Is it something that we are still angry about? Disappointed? I know that there are moments in my lift that I regret, that I am ashamed of. What do we do with these memories?

We start by naming them, and then offering them to God. Laying them before him, setting them out for God to see, exposing them. And letting God transform them into his cornerstone.

And this is not just about our personal rejections, it is about the things that we have put aside, the things that we considered unimportant. An ability perhaps, a musical gift we have not pursued because someone said you cannot sing. God can take that and bring out from you worship that is pleasing and enriching to Him and to others. God transforms, makes whole, brings life and vitality, especially where it was lacking.

Look at the New Testament. Peter was named the Rock, the stone on which Jesus would build his church. He was a fisherman, a common man, without an education. He rejected Jesus three times, and yet he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and through him God healed many people. Acts 5 tells of the sick being carried out into the streets and laid on mats in the hope that Peter’s shadow would fall upon them and they would be healed. He who rejected Jesus, became the rock on which Christ’s church was built.

Look at how time and again Jesus sought out the common people, the weak, the vulnerable. Those rejected by society. Ostracised, pushed out. Welcome into my Kingdom says Jesus, come to my Father’s banqueting hall. I have prepared a place for you. Come and enjoy it.

Right at the beginning of the Good news about Jesus, who were the people who first saw the baby Jesus? Not the dignitaries. No, it was the outcasts of society, dirty Shepherds. The ones who others did not trust and thought of as thieves. God called the rejects of society to the manger. They were the first to see Jesus. God loves rejects.

Think for a moment of a diamond. We are captivated by its wonderful crystals, sharp edges, clear lines, reflected colour. But do we remember that it was formed by being crushed? Crushed under tonnes of weight? At high temperatures? If God can do that to a lump of carbon, then embrace your rejection and let God transform it into a beautiful part of you. Into something amazing within you.

Finally let us think about Paul. For Paul, Jesus was everything. He rejected all his past, his upbringing as a strict Jew, his zeal and passion as a Pharisee, his whole life adherence to the Torah and Jewish laws, he rejected all of this in preference to knowing Jesus. To following him, trusting in him, suffering on behalf of him. Always straining forward, holding in mind the goal that is there for all of us, the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus: Welcome home my precious child, here is a dwelling place I have prepared for you. That was the transformation that Jesus brought about in Paul. What transformation can he bring about in you? Amen