MESSAGE: *"The Living Stone"*
   Text: **I Peter 2:2-10 (Matthew 21:33-44)**

Purpose: the purpose of this message is to look through heaven's eyes as we learn to value what God values.

   Have you ever thrown something away, thinking it had no value, only to find out that it had great value? Some years ago, I donated a bag of clothing to Goodwill that sat in the trunk of our car for many weeks. A few days later, my wife asked where it was, and I told her it had been donated. "That was my best theater outfit," she lamented, "I put it in the car to be dry-cleaned—I paid about $200 for that outfit!" I hastily tried to retrieve the donation, but alas, someone else received the blessing.

   To be sure, everyone makes mistakes, but sometimes the loss is truly consequential. The Bible tells of Esau who returned from hunting in the field, famished. He traded his family birthright for a bowl of lentil soup, a decision he would regret, with consequences extending to his children's children's children and beyond.

   In the history of 'misjudgment of value,' however, none was more consequential than the judgments which led to the crucifixion of Jesus on a Roman cross. In the words of Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest at the time, "It is better for one man to die, than a whole people!" His words were more prophetic than he could have ever imagined; for through his death, Jesus would take on the sins of the world. In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter speaks to this as he describes Jesus as 'the stone the builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone' of Easter faith…

   Read I Peter 2:2-10.

   Talk about 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater!' The religious leaders of Judaism, the very ones who pledged their lives in God's service, completely misjudged what God was doing right in front of them! Believing they were doing God's will, they accomplished the exact opposite of God's will. They rejected Jesus and silenced his voice, or so they thought. But God transformed the Rejected Stone into the Living Stone by raising Jesus from the dead. God made him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom they sacrificed.

   Sadly, there have many times throughout history when Crusaders for God's will have done the exact opposite of God's will: thousands killed to take possession of Jerusalem, the Holy City, slaves tortured and molested, because the Bible includes Paul's instruction, "Slaves, obey your masters," genocide of devastating degree waged to supposedly 'save' the souls of infidels.

But we don't make those mistakes, do we? We seek to do God's will. Surely, we have a more accurate idea of what God wants than they ever did! (pause) I wonder. (pause) Do we truly know what God wants? Henri Nowen was an extraordinarily gifted spiritual coach. He was a Dutch Catholic priest, author of forty Christian classics, visiting professor of psychology, spirituality and social justice at the most prestigious universities of the world. When he was in greatest demand, he left it all to serve those with developmental disabilities, first in Trosly, France and later, at L'Arche Daybreak near Toronto, Canada. He cared for a young man who could neither feed nor dress himself. He released what others believed was God's will for him to focus on what he felt God valued.

As we prepare to fashion a vision from the seed-ideas, projects and perspectives that are contributed and growing in our Vision Garden here at the United Methodist Church of Auburn, it is essential that we listen for God's voice. We do well to learn what God values, which may be quite different from our own design. I suspect that whatever God calls us to, it will have something to do with the least, the last and the lost.

Here again the words of Peter, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness and 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."

"In Heaven's Eyes"