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‘D.I.Y.’ ‘Do It Yourself’ is one of the trademarks showing contemporary Australian life. DIY shops are always crowded, and DIY stuff is one of the most popular gifts on Father’s day. Being a handyman is cool in this country and many boys dream to be like their fathers who can seem to fix everything.

There was a boy and his dad was a great handyman. There was nothing his dad couldn’t fix, so the boy was proud of his father. For him, his dad was a superman. One day his father said to him, “Son, I am confident and enjoying repairing almost everything, but there is one thing I cannot fix. That is your mum’s personality.” Yes, no one can fix anyone. People cannot change easily at all.

Healing a lame beggar by Peter and John was one of the Last Sunday’s Bible stories. We analysed the narrative deeply by appreciating Albrecht Dürer’s interesting engraving. Do you remember the picture?



This was the engraving we investigated carefully last Sunday. As you see, all the people around the crippled look disturbed or unhappy. We examined the reasons together, and found good insights worth our reflection. If you want to read the sermon, you can download it at our church website.

Since there was a 4R participatory worship at Barwon Heads last Sunday evening, I designed an after-sermon activity for deepening our understanding. Look, there are three groups of people in the picture except for the lame beggar.



Peter and John on the right side, three religious people on the left side and centre, and a hidden figure just behind the big rich-looking guy. We are just able to see one eye of the hidden figure, but the eye says lots of things. The eye might be Dürer’s, the artist, as well as ours reading or hearing the story.

After the sermon, I distributed an activity paper asking people to think and write down and discuss the changes of the three groups comparing the before and after of the miracle. Many good imaginative ideas were shared. This morning, I want to focus on the three religious leaders. Strictly speaking, we do not know how they thought and felt at the miracle healing the crippled man, but from today’s Bible reading of Acts we can assume that they did not change.

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According to verse 2 of Acts 4, the religious leaders of the day were greatly upset because of the apostles’ healing and preaching at the temple gate. So, they arrested Peter and John in the evening, and put them in jail for a night. The next day the priests and the teachers of the law met at the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious council, and brought Peter and John before them together with the healed man, and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?” Have you found these kind of questions before in the scripture?

Yes, at Jesus’ clearing of the temple courts. After Jesus drove out all those who were buying and selling at the temple courts, the priests and the teachers of the law asked Jesus a very similar question: “By what authority are you doing these things?”

The religious leaders stayed the same; they did not change at all. At the divine miracles or teachings, they could not realise God’s presence all the time, but had tried to judge those happenings from their religious beliefs and customs. Their unchanging inner world could not help repeating the same questions and responses with fixed ideas.

At this, Peter’s answer to their questions is remarkable. In verses 10-12, he proclaimed as follows: “It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the

cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

[3]

What simple but powerful proceedings! Here, we need to focus on Peter’s changing. Look, how courageous Peter was, which was totally different from what he did when Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin. You know, that night Peter disowned his rabbi three times due to fear.

We know that people do not change easily. Then, what happened to Peter? Between his betrayal of Jesus at the court of the Sanhedrin and this courageous declaration before the members of the council, two critical events happened to him. One thing was that he met the resurrected Jesus personally, and the other thing was he received the Holy Spirit at the Pentecostal day.

His experiences of encountering Jesus risen again and being filled with the power of the Spirit had transformed everything from inside for him. Thus, his proclamation before the religious leaders was his faith confession. In verse 11 he said, “Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’”

This was a quotation from Psalm 118:22; Peter intentionally chose the passage. Why? Reflecting on the passage, a word caught my eyes, which wasn’t the word *cornerstone*. Of course, *cornerstone* is the core in the passage, but I became more interested in another word, which was ‘*builders*.’

Peter called the religious leaders ‘you builders,’ which was different from the original scripture. Peter added the word *you*. As builders, they rejected and threw Jesus the cornerstone. Why did they dump him? Because what they had wanted to build was not the kingdom of God. What they were keen to build was their own kingdom selling God for their power and benefits. For them, Jesus was just a stumbling block.

Likewise, depending on what we are building now, Jesus could be the cornerstone or a stumbling block in our life. Depending on what we are focusing, we could accept Jesus as the foundation of salvation or reject him.

Sisters and brothers, what are you looking for? What have you been building in your life?

[4]

Last week I happened to read a sad story. The story is about a mum dying of cancer just after giving birth to daughter. She was Tracy Keers who had lived in Middlesbrough, England. She was pregnant, but was diagnosed with the return of her breast cancer. She was given three months to live but battled to give birth to baby Kyla who was born premature at just 28 weeks. After a week later, she passed away.

It is a heartbreaking story, and also it shows how powerful a mum’s love is. She had fought against her cancer 16 weeks more than doctors’ anticipation without chemical treatment or any other medication that would harm her baby. She did not give up, no, could not give up her life to protect the coming new life. For she was the cornerstone of her baby; as the cornerstone joins two walls at a corner of a building, she connected her daughter to the world. This is exactly what Jesus did for us; he joined us and God for our new life fighting against evil.

[5]

Sisters and brothers,

The kingdom of God will come here and now through our faith in Jesus Christ, in which God’s spirit will fill us, and God’s love and justice will be revealed in our community through our words and actions.

Then and there, we can proclaim like Peter, “Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” Amen.

[#Music video: Cornerstone]