

Reflection on the Scripture: 1 Peter 2:2-10

[\[The video of the reflection.\]](#)

How have you tasted that the Lord is good?

I mean, church is cancelled. No one is going to be able to tell if you watched this video or not. Yet, God love you, here you are, attending church as best you can.

For me, it was a long way from the church of my childhood, to a curiosity that perhaps I was meant to be a preacher right out of college, to going to seminary in my late 40s. As someone who stood between the technologists who could make the computer hum and the marketing people who could sell hamburgers to vegans, I was really good at my job. I worked really hard at it, wanting to get promotions and raises, to be chosen, corporate royalty and set aside as someone special (1 Peter 2:9).

But here's the thing. I wanted to be chosen and set aside, but I didn't want anyone else to be chosen or set aside. When someone had a cool innovation or a way to solve a problem that was going to gain them some recognition, I wasn't exactly the head of the mob to throw stones, but I was definitely good at holding everyone's coat (Acts 7:58).

I mean I wasn't awful with it. I was just human. I wanted to be part of the inner circle and once I had clawed my way somewhere near the center, once I was special, I didn't really want too many other people being special. Or at least they had to meet my definition of special.

So when God showed up in my life, whispering in my ear, well, it was more like shouting, but I wasn't really paying attention. Shouting was probably the only way to get through to me. When God showed up and asked me if I thought God only wanted a part of me, I was staggered. All those people who gave me fancier titles and more money and a better office, those people definitely wanted only a part of me. They wanted the part that had a quick, sharp tongue, the part that could cut someone down, the part that would deny mercy to someone who had tried and failed. Because we're a results driven organization.

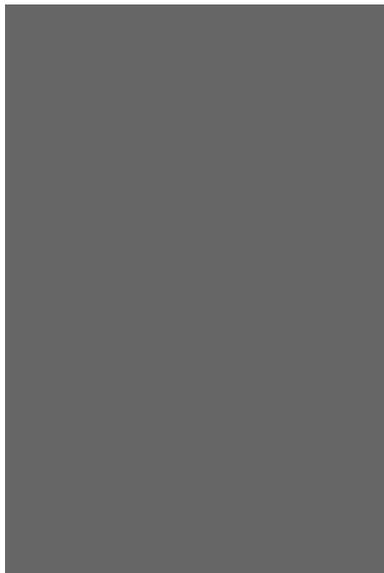
No one ever wanted the part that doubted. No one ever wanted the part that was afraid. No one ever wanted the part that was appalled by the mob turning on one of our colleagues. But God did. In fact, God insisted on it. I had to bring my whole

self, the i-dotting, t-crossing, team-leading, revenue-generating woman who would work every hour in creation to make a deadline. I had to bring her, the woman who was increasingly exhausted and brittle. But I had to also bring the confused, doubting, frustrated, appalled, not sure how to speak up woman too. And that experience of bringing my whole self, that tasted good to me.

It tasted good to me that I could be a living stone being built into a spiritual house. I didn't have to figure out the design or whip a whole bunch of kids fresh out of college into building the house, working them 18 hours a day fueled by Red Bull and pizza. I didn't have to cannily assess the gifts of my team and defend them ruthlessly against others to build a spiritual home with a beta release in two months. The gifts I had been given could be just that, gifts. I didn't have to turn them into possessions,¹ possessions I could then wield to determine who was in and who was out. I didn't have to take those gifts and use them to punish others to make sure that me and my team came out on top, special and chosen.

Instead of being jostled by the crowd, and holding their coats so they could hurl stones at someone we had decided to scapegoat, I could stay centered in my

¹ Beverly Gaventa, "Fifth Sunday of Easter: 1 Peter 2:2-10" in *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV – Year A*, ed. Walter Brueggemann et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 297.



own self. Look at the story of Stephen from today's reading from Acts. Of everyone in that story, he is the only one not displaced, he is the only one who stays in his spiritual home the whole time, even as he is killed.²

The reading from 1 Peter can sound like an “us against them.” It can sound like you want to be on the inside, because then you get to say who’s allowed in God’s spiritual home. Over the past 2,000 years, Christianity has definitely taken far too many opportunities to say who should be stoned, who should do the stoning and who should hold the coats. We have taken too many of our great gifts and turned them into possessions that we jealously guarded against others.

But we’ve been thinking about this all wrong. When we are called out of darkness into light (1 Peter 2:9), we are not given a gift that our flawed human nature will convert to a possession that we must defend against all comers. No, we become a possession. We are owned by God. God will build us into a holy house, if we would just stop wriggling so much while we insist on being in charge. Pretty ordinary people become extraordinary once they accept that they belong to God, in their entirety.³

This pandemic is reminding us of how little we control. And that’s driving us nuts. If nothing else, I want to control the shoppers in my Hannaford’s, possible by ramming them with my shopping cart. But this pandemic is also reminding us of how much we control. We can control the amount of love we send out into the world. We can control how loudly we shout “We believe” with our actions, including when we just wait there with our shopping cart six feet away. We can show we believe. We can show we know we are chosen and special, set aside, which is the original meaning of “holy”.⁴ And that tastes so good.

So let me ask, how have you tasted that the Lord is good?