

## Matthew's weekly musing, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020

A friend from my school days spent his working life as a civil engineer in Scotland. His patch ran from Rannoch Moor, through Glen Coe and on to Mallaig. He has a fund of stories.

One goes like this:

"There's a 300 year old stone bridge accessing a farm near Arisaig that isn't wide enough for modern traffic. We were asked to replace it with simple steel girders and decided to test the old bridge to destruction. We reached 250 tons and gave up."

"My new bridge won't last that long!"



So now we can look at a moment in this week's gospel. Jesus was in the temple, in dispute with the élite of the day:

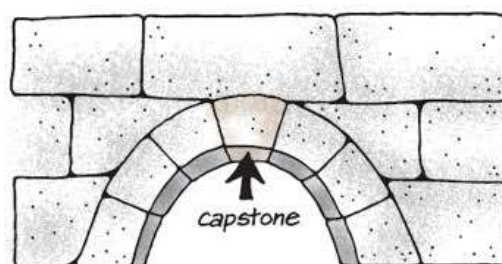
<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'?" <sup>43</sup> Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. <sup>44</sup> The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

Matthew 21

I think another picture may help us at this point. The cornerstone or capstone is the one that gives a bridge its strength. They are the wonder of every arch you will ever see.

We can understand that, if the cornerstone is not suitable, it will be discarded. Jesus is quoting Psalm 118 v22. The psalmist had mistakenly discarded the law of Moses, and in

his walk through life, had tripped up. He had fallen out of the presence of God because he was not making the law the centre of his life.



The psalm is actually a celebration of the steadfast love of the Lord. The psalmist has been rescued and restored (forgiven) by God out of sheer love. He begins with a threefold, "Let Israel say, 'His steadfast love endures for ever'." We see the steadfast love of the Lord brought to us in Jesus. He is the living presence of God amongst us. Hooray and Alleluia.

But there is a sad note left to explore in these verses. When in the temple, Jesus went on to say that he was being rejected by the people around him. Indeed, within four days he was to be assassinated. Those who arranged this death at the hand of the Romans would find that they had rejected the new cornerstone. They would trip over him and fall out of the presence of God.

More cheerfully for us, Jesus says, "The kingdom of God will be ... given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom." He is saying to you and me that if we make him the cornerstone of our lives, we will find ourselves in a new kingdom, the kingdom of God.

Now I do wish our Lord would not mix his metaphors quite so quickly! His switch from 'cornerstone' to 'fruit' is almost too fast for me. I think here he was saying the fruit we produce is the fruit of the kingdom when we honour him for who he is; when we lift him to the central part of our life; when we find he is the keystone which sustains us.

So may every arch we see remind us of our faith and evoke in us the prayer of the psalmist, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases."