**Stones** – The Back Page, June 5 & 8

Stones figure prominently in the Bible—more prominently than one might expect, perhaps.

* Abram set them up as an altar at the place God appeared to him.
* Jacob slept on one the night he had a vision of a stairway to heaven (no, he didn’t write the song for Led Zeppelin!)
* When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to claim the promised land, a dozen priests were each to hoist a stone onto his shoulder from the middle of the now-dry Jordan, then to set them up as a pile on the other side to remind future generations of God’s salvation.
* David picked up five smooth stones, then used just one to kill Goliath.
* Jesus was called the Living Stone, the cornerstone, and a stumbling stone.
* Peter—whose name means stone—said that Jesus’ disciples are living stones, too…a spiritual house, an altar for worship to God.

Recently while at beautiful Moonstone Beach in Cambria I was reflecting on the different ways God spoke to people in the Bible. About that time I looked down and noticed a stone that had unusual markings: two pairs of white, almost parallel lines that ran across each other in the middle of the stone – as if they were two sets of railroad tracks crossing at about a 75º angle. Those lines remind me of the fact that God doesn’t always speak (or act) the way we expect.

The Bible speaks of another stone, too – a white stone (see Revelation 2:17). And one day Jesus Christ will hand a white stone to each one of his followers, his disciples. And when we each look at the stone we are given, we will see a new name – a name no one else knows, but that tells us who we really are; tells us who God knows us to be. It’s a name that wipes out the false identities we’ve come to accept about ourselves, the names (or nicknames) we’ve never wanted but were given us by others.

The new name God will give is a name of hope, of power, of honor, of transformation. I wonder what my name will be. I wonder what your name will be.

I wonder, too, if there are people in our lives who are living with the despair of a name they’ve been given that they just can’t shake: a girl who struggles in school and has been named Stupid; a man in jail who will forever be called Thief; a friend condemned to wear a Scarlet Letter identifying her shame. These need the hope of a new name, too. Will you introduce them to the New Name Giver?

I am honored to be called your pastor and excited to see God’s renaming work through the people of Cold Springs Church.

Pastor Randy