

**Matthew 21:42-44**

Four weeks from Tuesday you will be asked to make a choice. If you are eighteen or older, you will be asked to cast your vote either for the senator from Arizona, or for the senator from Illinois. The day is soon approaching. It will not be long before option A and option B is put in front of you. There are those who, looking at these two options however, wish that there was an option C. They don't care for either A or B. They would prefer that neither one became president. "Isn't there anyone else, besides these two," they wonder, "That we can choose on that fateful day?"

We may wonder the same thing with regard to Jesus' words in our text. "The stone the builders rejected," He says, "Has become the cornerstone...and the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." He is speaking of Himself. He is the cornerstone. And no matter what we do with Jesus...it's going to hurt. Option A is to fall on Christ and be broken to pieces. Option B is to have Him fall on you and be crushed. We may prefer option C; but there is none. We do not have the option of avoiding Jesus Christ altogether. It's A or B, and whichever option we take, it will be painful. Jesus Christ, in a certain sense is like the Grim Reaper. Sooner or later we will all have to confront Him; and for our sakes we'd better hope that it's sooner than later.

To fall on Christ and be broken to pieces is option A, and that is repentance. To repent is a painful thing, like falling hard onto a stone. It breaks you to pieces. And falling on Christ does just that. Repentance means breaking up our heart and life. But they must be broken because they are full of sin. A surgeon must break the skin open in order to heal a disease in the body. And so our hardened hearts must be broken as we fall onto Christ. We may not particularly enjoy those elements of the worship service that deal with our sins. But they are necessary, for if we ignore God's Law then it's something else besides Christ that we're going to fall on. If we can come to church, speak the words of confession with the congregation, hear the harsh accusations of the Law against ourselves, and not be in the least broken up about it, then we're not falling on Christ—we're falling in the mud somewhere; because falling on the cornerstone is going to hurt.

He's not a sheet of drywall lying somewhere on the floor. He's not a roll of insulation. Christ is a stone—the cornerstone of His church. And to come to Him; to be included with Him, and have a place in Him, we must come with repentant hearts—hearts that are broken. Jesus accepts thieves, but when a thief falls on Him, he will repent of his life of stealing and turn away from it. Jesus accepts adulterers, but when an adulterer falls on Christ, he will repent of his life of sexual immorality and turn away from it. Jesus accepts you and me, and falling on Him we will be broken to pieces; we will repent of our sinful ways and turn away from them. "Create in me a clean heart, O God," we sing..."A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Now there are those who select option C, even though there is none. And if we're honest with ourselves we all lean toward that option of avoiding Christ and His Word. Wouldn't it be nice, our flesh thinks, if I could confront Jesus and come to Him later in life? I have too much living to do right now. I want to enjoy my Sunday mornings. I enjoy drinking to excess now and then with my friends. I don't enjoy reading my Bible. I don't want to live

a life of repentance. I don't want option A. Our flesh would prefer to live the way that pleases us now, and deal with Christ—repent and all that—just before the end.

And many do. In fact, by nature we are all born choosing option C. Our first parents did not come running to God in the Garden. They chose to avoid Him; to hide from Him. It's no different today. The way of the Lord is not the way of most people. Most avoid, at all cost, coming to the House of the Lord. Most avoid reading His Word and searching it. Most would deal with Jesus later rather than sooner...option C.

But as we've said, there is no option C. Option C is really option B. Those who do not come to Christ with repentant hearts; who do not fall upon Him and are broken to pieces will, as He says, be crushed by Him when He comes in judgment. To avoid Christ now is to be confronted by Him on Judgment Day. To ignore His Word now is to hear His word of judgment on that fateful day. No one would purposely choose option B—to be crushed by the Righteous Judge and spend eternity in suffering, but what people do not realize is that option C—ignoring Jesus and His Word and Sacraments—becomes, in the end, option B.

Friend, you are here today not because you chose option A, but because God in Christ chose you. You were and are God's choice. He chose you in Christ before the foundation of the world was laid. He chose to give His Son to suffer and die for you. He chose to make you His in Holy Baptism. He chooses to give you Christ by bringing His words of life into your ears week after week, and His flesh and blood into your mouth time after time. We can choose our politicians, but we cannot choose our Savior. Rather, your Savior chose to give up all He had so that you may have eternal life with Him. He chose to be laid down on a cross so that, as the cornerstone of His church, you would be built upon Him.

And even though you and I still today often continue to choose sinful ways over the way of the Lord, He chooses in mercy to forgive you. And He, again and again, breaks apart our hardened hearts leading us to repent of our sins, so that His Word of Absolution is received in a heart of faith. Option A is God's option for you. Your life of repentance is not your choice. We would, by nature, reject such an option. It's God's choice to save you from your sins. It's His choice to have you fall onto Christ.

But think of this...option A is not just falling onto the cornerstone; it's falling onto your Friend...falling into the arms of your Savior...falling upon Him who loved you and laid down His life for you. If you were up high in a burning building, but the firemen down below held out a net for you, what option really, would you have? To burn and perish in the fire? Most people choose that option by doing nothing; by delaying their repentance; by refusing to jump upon Christ their Savior; by turning away from the strong net of His Word.

Today you are in the net. You are in the safety of your Divine Deliverer. The fires of hell cannot harm you. Here is Christ Jesus for you. He is yours and you are His. You are His forgiven child even though we often hesitate to jump. You are His forgiven child even though we're afraid that His net may not hold us. But friend, be at peace. That cemetery over there attests to the truth that Jesus is the Savior of sinners; that His Word is strong to save. Men and women with the names of Becker, Beumer, Diederich, Fuhr, Kemner, Nadler, Oberdick, Paul, and others lived and died in Christ; they rest from their labors; their life is now with their Lord. Option A was God's choice for them—to fall upon Christ so

that they may be with Him forever. May He in mercy, for the sake of Jesus, keep choosing for us that same life of repentance in Christ that we daily fall upon Him who is our dear Savior. Amen.