

SERMON FOR JANUARY 17, 2021

TEXT: 1 PETER 2: 9-10

THEME: CHOSEN FOR A PURPOSE

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In the name of Jesus:

I have brought with me today my passport and my driver's license.

Both are essential forms of identification. When I travel overseas, my passport will not only show my picture as a form of identification, but it will also show that I am a citizen of the United States of America.

In what ways do you identify yourself? By a street address?

Occupation? A member of a particular political party? Peter in our text for today states that as Christians, our main identity is as a child of God. As he writes to the Christians who are dispersed throughout Asia Minor, people who were immigrants and had no homeland to call their own, Peter tells them and us, that we are, as Christians, first and foremost, a chosen people of God.

Listen to what he says: "**9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **10**

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Peter quotes from the OT book Hosea. The prophet Hosea took a prostitute, Gomer, to be his wife. Gomer kept cheating on Hosea and being unfaithful to him. God told Hosea that this is how God' people have treated God, God was faithful to them but they were unfaithful to God. So Hosea's message to God's people was to remind Israel of the Lord's faithfulness and how God gives new life to His people.

Now, Peter, picking up on the imagery of Hosea, proclaims that now you all are God's people, having God's mercy and grace in Jesus Christ. Just as God called Israel His chosen people, so God calls the Church, those who believe in Jesus Christ His chosen people. No earthly nation is God's chosen people, no people of a particular language or color are His chosen people. The Bible says that all who believe in Jesus Christ are God's chosen people. This is why we confess that we believe in the holy Christian and Apostolic Church. The Church is now and always has been God's chosen people. You, through faith in Christ, are a member of His Church and are God's chosen people. This is why the Church is called holy.

God here calls us His chosen people in that we are now a people set apart for Him and His purpose. To be holy in this way means that God the

Father sent Jesus to pay the price for the forgiveness of all of our sins. You have been bought with a price, the price of Jesus' own precious blood. At one time we were separated from God because of our sins, we were at one time not a part of God's people, but now we have received the mercy of God in Jesus Christ and are now His chosen people, chosen to live lives according to God's will and for His purpose.

This was the calling of the people of Israel. God chose them as His people so that they would be His own possession, and they would then be set apart from all the other nations to live according to His will. In like manner, God has chosen you in Christ to be His own possession so that you and we together as His Church conduct our lives together according to His will. The Apostle Paul puts it this way: "Do not be conformed to this world."

We are set apart by God and we are to live our lives differently from the society around them. We are called to see situations and events that happen around us differently than other people see them. We are called to live differently, see things in a different way, because we have been forgiven by God in Jesus and we now obey God rather than man.

So the Christian Church and Christians within the Church represent Jesus in all we do. I have said this before and I will say it again, you and I are called to be the voice, face, hands, and presence of Jesus Christ in this world.

We are living in different times. Some Christians are even promoting violence. But violence is not and never has been the way of Christ. Take time to read the entire Sermon on the Mount. Even at the end of His life and ministry, when Jesus was betrayed by Judas in the Garden, Peter took up the sword to defend Jesus, but Jesus told Peter to put the sword back in its sheath, for Jesus' kingdom is not of this world.

We are called to follow Christ in peace. While the world rages on God calls us to love one another even as He has loved us. Jesus says blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the kingdom of God. The way of Jesus, the way God has chosen us to live, is to live in peace and in harmony. We are called to model Jesus in what we say and what we do.

We are to have the same attitude as Jesus had, who didn't count equality with God as something to be used to His own advantage, rather He lived His life as a servant, humbling Himself to the point of dying on a cross. This is to be our attitude and our life, as Paul writes to Timothy, "to live peaceful, quiet, and a godly life, dignified in every way. This is what God wants us to do, this is pleasing in His sight, because God wants all people to be saved and to come to know the truth of His love." (2 Tim. 2: 2-4). Elsewhere Paul says, "As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, and patience."

But Pastor, how can I do this? How is this done? Peter notes in his epistle that people live their lives in one of two ways, a person will either live to serve themselves and make decisions based on their emotions, or they will base their decisions in life on the will of God. Look at how this is playing out in the lives of many Americans today. Sadly, many act immediately on their emotions and feelings. And so angry words are exchanged and things are said that can't be taken back. People act on their emotions and do irrational things without thinking. We have lost our ability to think rationally according to the will of God. Instead of stepping back and considering the consequences, people will post an angry note on Facebook and other social media. More and more people speak before they think, and with dangerous consequences!

Peter exhorts all of us to live no long for human passions but for the will of God (4:3). So how is this done? First, remember who you belong to! You belong to Jesus, who has purchased and won you from sin with the price of His holy precious shed blood on the cross. Remember and live out your Baptism each day. Daily repent of your sins, asking God who is faithful and just to forgive you all your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. And then, once you have done that, commend yourself, and one another to Christ your Lord. To commend yourself to the Lord is to place yourself in God's hands.

We do this in prayer, praying for ourselves and for one another, asking God for protection and help in every time of need. Luther goes to great length to explain this in his Large Catechism. Just listen to what he says: “one must urge and encourage... to honor God’s name and keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences...To defy the devil, I say, we should always keep the holy name upon our lips so that he may not be able to harm us as he would like to do. For this purpose it also helps to form the habit of commending ourselves each day to God— our soul and body, spouse, children, servants, and all that we have—for his protection against every conceivable need, we ought to every day devote ourselves God’s Word and carry it in our hearts and on our lips.”

Today the modern world lives and manages without God’s Word. And sadly, so many Christians today act like atheists, living their lives as if God is in some faraway place, totally removed and distant from what is happening in their lives, relying on themselves instead of relying on the grace of God. We as Christians are to be different. And here is an example of what this type of difference looks like.

There was a time in David’s life when King Saul was pursuing David to kill him. Saul retreated into a cave and David’s men saw this as an opportunity for David to kill Saul. What did David do? Nothing. He didn’t

take matters into his own hands because he knew that to kill the man that the Lord put in place as king of Israel would be to commit a sin. Rather, David placed his trust in the Lord. Knowing the God would place him as King, David trusted in God to do it in God's time and place.

We all have found ourselves placed into situations where we could have acted on our impulses or emotions but in doing so we would be going against God's will. In those situations it does us well to look at the situation with ears tuned to God speaking to us in His Word. To let Him to guide us instead of being guided by impulse or emotion.

As the Church of Christ, we all have been called to live, think, and act differently, for we have been called by the Word of God to follow Jesus. So be the people of God and the difference makers to the world and people around us today. For "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. "

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires know, and from whom no secrets are hidden, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord. Amen