

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

May 16, 2021

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Between Two Worlds

PART

6

TITLE

Proclaiming His Excellencies

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 2:4-10



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Well, Providence family, it's so good to see you. I hope you've had a week. And if are new with us, we are thrilled that you are our guest. We hope this time will be encouraging to you. If you're at home, welcome. We're also glad that you've joined us. In your bible, if you want to turn with me, first Peter chapter two. We're in a series and just walking verse by verse through first Peter, and we happen to be up to chapter two and verse four. And so, even before we read it though, I think it's really important for you to remember something. And for some of us, it takes more than memory, it might take instruction, is that it may feel like that this is a one, I guess, directional moment where I'm going to just read and talk and you're going to sit and do nothing. But what the bible says is that this is very much a two way street. Is that there's something for you to do in this moment when we open up His Word. And it begins, your participation begins by asking God specifically to speak to you, to teach you something you don't know, or to you remember something that you do.

So what I want to do is I want to pray. And at the very beginning of the prayer, it's simply going to be silent. And what I want to ask you to do in this moment is simply to pray. To pray for yourself, to pray for your heart and ask God, God would you invade the space and change my life. Okay? So, let's pray.

Father in Heaven, nothing in all the world compares to your mercy. For you to look at us in our sin and our spiritual insensitivity, to be created in your image to worship you and to pay no attention to You. Such an enormous slight, our sin was against you and yet in mercy you forgave us of our sin. In mercy you sent Jesus Christ to us. In mercy you gave us a bible. In mercy, you allow us to live and to wake up even today fresh with new air in our lungs, opportunities to honor you and to learn. And we come before you in this moment thanking you for mercy. I ask God that you would do what only you can do. And for that to take place, we need an outpouring of your spirit upon us and within us. God, without your spirit we cannot believe, without your spirit we cannot understand. We can't see, we can't appreciate, we can't marvel at mercy, we can't live, we can't obey, we simply can't honor you if you don't first move in our life.

And so we humbly come before you and ask that you would invade this space. Our own hearts, our lives, our families, our relationships and our church family God, that you would pour out your spirit to help us to believe and to have courage to obey. When you search our hearts, you know what you find. And not only do you find in all of us remnants of sin, but you also find in so many within this room longing for you to work in their life. And so I ask God, that you would move. God, you also find questions. you find questions in our life, you search every nook and cranny, every space within us, and you know very well that we have asked questions about life and purpose and destiny. You know that when we go through pain we ask the question why. We know that when we're associated with Jesus and Jesus was ridiculed, you know that we ask the question, is Jesus worth associating with. And so I ask God, that you would be gracious to us and use your Word to answer those questions this morning. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

To be human with the unique capacities to see and to hear and to taste and to touch and to think and reason and plan and design and create and hope and love, it's an astonishing gift. It's an astonishing gift to be a human being. We have a dog, his name is Champ, right? This is our dog. And I love Champ, right? I love my

dog, all right? I walk outside and he's just happy, he's happy to see me every time. It's just a joy, right? We have a dog. But having him raises my awareness throughout his entire life that I am not one, that I'm not a dog. It also raises my appreciation that I'm not a dog. You see, unlike you and me, Champ never feels the weight of eternity. He never looks at the blessings in his life through the lens of how they are related to his creator. Which means he never looks at his food and before munching down he pauses and he puts one hand over his chest, and God, I thank you for your mercy and providing this food. He never asks questions about where he came from, where he's going when he dies, and what to do in the meantime. And he doesn't do that because he's a dog.

And that's unlike each one of us. Each one of us have been created in the image of God. The law of God has been written upon our heart. Eternity has been stamped upon our conscience. Heaven and hell waits before us. We look in the world and we see pleasures and we see pains, and when we go through pains we ask the question, God, even though I look up and You're so big, it seems so big, do you care about my life? Am I significant? Where did I come from? Where am I going when I die? And how am I supposed to live? Who am I in the meantime? This is what it means to be human. And Peter, the author of this letter, is writing people who are going through a season of life that's full of pain. They're exiled from their homes, they're distant, separated, isolated, disconnected from their life, from their homes, from their foods, languages, cultures. They're in different places. Everything is strange, and they're asking the same questions. What is my life? Does God see me?

He knows some things that are true about every believer. One of things He knows is that our citizenship is in heaven, and from heaven we wait a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. That when we trusted Christ we became a citizen of Heaven. But He also knows that therefore, we're dual citizens, that we're also citizens here on the earth. And there's things that when we're here on the earth we look, we feel these pains and we look up and we see the stars and the expanse and we see glory and we see sometimes just our life. And we say, "God, how does my life matter? I know there's more than this. So, how do I invest my life in significant ways?" And sometimes we don't have answers for that, and it's difficult. Sometimes as citizens of heaven we see in other things that are treasured, having virtues and values and honor and truthfulness, integrity, justice, and we don't see those things in the very place where we're citizens on the earth and we think, "God, what is the disconnect and how am I supposed to live in between these two worlds?"

Peter knew that when we were living between those two worlds we ask a lot of questions of God, a lot of them begin with a question or with the word why. Why? And so, he wants to answer some of those questions. This passage is one of the most important passages in the entire New Testament that speaks to those questions about origin, purpose, destiny. Who are we, not as only as Christians, but as a church family? It's going to talk about identity, and it's going to talk about the purpose for which we were created. And so, listen with intent. Starting in verse four, Peter writes, as you come to him, that's Jesus, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in

Scripture: behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

They stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do. 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. 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." You notice these words that we just read, they are all built on the back of five English words, as you come to him. If you are here today and you've never come to Christ, then the rest of what Peter said simply does not apply to you yet, but it can. You can become this kind of worshiping people, part of the spiritual house that's acceptable, that does things that's acceptable to God. You can become this, but you have to come to him. And so what this text does, I want to simply show you some things that are true, what happens to us when we come to Christ.

The first thing that we're told here is that we are made alive and placed on a firm foundation. Every one of us asks the question at some point in life, is following Jesus worth it? You trust him and then you go through some difficulty, people ridicule him and they ridicule everyone who associates with him, and you ask the question at some point in time, is it worth sticking my neck out for this Jesus? And so, this first point answers that question emphatically with the word yes. And the reason is because he makes us alive, and he builds our life on a firm foundation. Let me show you. The bible tells us that we were created by God, for God, to live in a relationship with God and be held accountable to God. And then the bible says that we sinned against God. We died spiritually, we became unresponsive spiritually. We're supposed to be mesmerized by him, and yet we could look up into the clouds and we can see the glory of God and we not worship Him.

And then the bible also says, not only do we die spiritually when we sin against Him, but something else happens which is utterly tragic and it creates this enormous fallout within culture, and that is that we become untethered to Him. We become adrift. Now this is really important. If you're created by someone for someone to live with someone and be held accountable to someone, and you lose that someone, you become untethered to that someone, then by default you lose your reference point to your origin, you lose your reference point to your destiny, you're going to be held accountable to Him, and you lose your reference point to what you're supposed to be in the meantime, your purpose. And so, the bible has a word for when we become untethered, and it's the word lost. Lost doesn't mean ignorant, it doesn't mean unintelligent. It means we've lost our way.

When you open up your phone and you need to go home, and you hit the app that says the maps and all of a sudden you hit home. Suddenly, magically because you've already inserted your address into that space called home, suddenly no matter where you're at in the world, there's a red dot that falls down and hits your map, and now you know you have a reference point, it's fixed. And no matter where you're at in the city or state or even in the country, it'll find you. And you're the blue dot, home is the red dot. And suddenly, it'll

find the fastest way home. But when we untether to the Lord what happens is this, is the red dot forever goes away. And not only that, not only do we not know where we're going, but it's sort of when you go through the country and you try and you pull it up and suddenly it's not reading as fast as it needs to, and so it shows no roads, it shows nothing, it just shows this blue dot that's simply moving in space, this is what it's to be untethered to God in this world.

There's no reference point to where you came from, what to be, or where you're going when you leave this place. But the New Testament tries to explain very clearly what it feels to be untethered. In the book of Titus 3:3, Paul says this. He goes, "This is what it feels." We know it because this is where we all were at one time. He says, "We were once foolish." Foolish. That means we made decisions that other people said, "Are you seriously going to do that?" Thinking it was the best decision. We were disobedient. That's what happens when you're untethered. Folks say, "Hey, did that this is what God says?" And you're, "Well, I don't even care what God says. This is what I want to do," and we begin to sin even more so.

When we're untethered, we're led astray. There are all manner of people saying, "Hey, this is the way. The prize in life is behind door number three." And we're like, "Well, okay, where's door number three?" Only to find out that when we open it up, it's death. He says that we're slaves to various passions and pleasures. We just said, you know what? If I have a whim, I'm going to follow it because it must be authoritative only to find out that many of the whims that we had were actually very destructive in the end. And because we're untethered, we have to pass our days doing something. He says, "We pass her days in malice and envy." Literally saying we had to figure out how to spend 24 hours a day. And so, we deduce. We have no idea where we came from, no idea where we're going, and no idea what to be in the meantime. There's no reference point for life. Then why not pass our days being mean and wishing we had everyone else's stuff?

And when we become untethered, we become a people that sometimes becomes very, very angry with people. And therefore, people hate us and we begin hating one another. This is what it feels like to be untethered. This is what it is to be untethered. And because we are untethered, we cannot bring ourselves back to the Lord. And so, what did God do? Peter says this is what he did. He laid a fixed Stone in Jerusalem, in Zion. Anew reference point that from now on, you want to think about life, you want to think about where to go, what to be, what to do, you pull up the map of life and there is always a fixed point to where everything will be judged on this point. Belief in that rock, resting in that stone, that cornerstone, it becomes everything you see.

He laid a stone and that stone was Jesus. Jesus came from heaven to earth. The son of God, he lived in Israel. He loved, he cared for people. He taught, he did miracles. And then he said, "We are going to Jerusalem. And when we get there, the son of man is going to be betrayed, he's going to be delivered over to his enemies. He's going to be beat and spit upon and flogged. He's going to be crucified. He's going to be buried in a grave, but on the third day, he's going to rise from the dead." And then Jesus went and did just what he said. And therefore, 30 Years after this moment, Peter's writing about this stone that was laid in Jerusalem. And he is

quoting from somebody who lived nearly 600 years before Jesus, Isaiah chapter 28. And what does he say? “Behold, I am laying in Zion, a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious. And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” You know what shame is, right? It’s that horrible feeling, rises within us when we fall short in front of people whose approval we desperately want. It happens when we sin in public, and suddenly all these people saw us at our worst. And we feel ashamed because we want them to esteem us.

Sometimes it’s not sin. Sometimes it’s simply falling short or failing. You come in last place in a race and you’ve done nothing wrong. You were just slower than everyone else. But it can still feel shameful to have to run in in front of all these people, when we really want them to say, “Wow, look how fast. Look how you beat everybody else.” When we come in last place, we can feel ashamed. And there’s another way we feel shame. And that is when people whose approval we want desperately when they ridicule someone that we’re associating with. In this world today, there’s a lot of people who ridicule Jesus, who don’t understand Jesus. And therefore they ridicule and they don’t understand people who associate with Jesus. And so therefore, it can feel at times if we desperately want their approval, that to rest of our life on Jesus to spend time on a Sunday morning in your weekend to come and sing to this Jesus, you ask the question, should I be ashamed of what I’m doing when my friends are ashamed of me for doing it?

He says, if you believe, you will not be ashamed. And the reason is because the cornerstone is the first stone that is laid in order to make the walls firm. You rest on that stone, what he’s saying is that you find security and a firm foundation forever and ever and ever. So then he moves to verse seven and eight and he quotes two more Old Testament passages, one from Psalm 18, and one from Isaiah 8, both of which say, “What happens to those who don’t believe in this stone, this reference point for life?” What it says here is this, is that even unbelief of man will not frustrate God’s purposes. You see, Jesus’ authority is the cornerstone, it’s not built on the back of human’s belief. He is who he is, whether everyone or nobody believes in him.

And so, because he can’t be thwarted, verse eight says, “They stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do.” In other words, people can betray Jesus. They can mock him. They can deny him. They can just own him. They can spit upon him, and they can slap them. They can crucify him. They can argue about the credibility of his resurrection. But no amount of rejection can change the fact that he is the cornerstone for eternity. And so the question then comes, how do we respond to this? If there is a fixed reference point, then the question is this, where are you on the map? Where is the blue dot of your life? And is it focusing, fixed and resting towards the red dot, the cornerstone of Jesus that was laid in Jerusalem?

How do we respond? Well, he tells us in verse four and five, notice what he says, “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men.” I know some of you feel this. You have family, friends, and they reject Christ. And therefore, they shame you for worshiping Christ. Who in the world would come to somebody who is rejected by so many people? It’s those who share God’s sight and they see in Jesus someone who is chosen and someone who is precious. And what happens to those who come to him and believe in him? We who were once dead stones, we come to the living and he makes us alive. You see, when you connect the living stone,

he gives his life.

This is not turning a new leaf. This is receiving a new operating system. That's why Peter, he quotes Jesus and he begins talking about a different metaphor called born again. To be born again. In verse three, we read according to his great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And then in verse 23 and 25, he says, "You've been born again through the living and abiding word of God. And this word is the good news that was preached to you." So, how is somebody born again? This is how. Before you were even here, God moved in mercy and He sent Jesus Christ to come to the earth to die for our sin. He was buried, and in authority, he rose from the dead. When he rose from the dead, he extended an invitation that for those who believe in him, they would be forgiven of all their sin and be given his righteousness and his place in heaven, to be with him forever. People started believing, not being ashamed of Jesus Christ. And do you know what happened? They've been preaching that to other people.

And this has gone literally down through the centuries, all the way down to today. There's some today who are not born again in this room or at home listening. And 25 says, "This word is the good news. The gospel that was preached to you." It's happening right now. How are you born again? You believe in the word of God, that is the gospel. And you do so because God opens up your eyes to actually believe it. You see for the first time he is consequential. He is relevant. He is authoritative. And by His mercy, He causes us to be born again. So let me encourage each one of us, let's believe in Christ and build our life upon him. You see, friends, if you believe in Jesus, I want you to know you cannot lose.

And if you do not believe on Jesus, you cannot win. Jesus said at the end of his sermon on the mount, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them and does them, is like a wise man who built his house upon a rock. Suddenly, the rain fell and the wind blew and the floods rose and beat against the house, but it didn't crash because it was built on the rock." This is what it is to be built on Jesus Christ. And for those of you who have never trusted him, you can trust him right now by admitting your need by believing in Christ and confessing him as Lord. You simply pray to him, I believe that Jesus rose from the dead after dying for my sin. Would you forgive me? And the Bible says he will. He will today. You say, "Brian, you sure like to talk to unbelievers when we come to church."

I do. I do because we were all once there. But I want you to know something, this passage is actually not written to unbelievers. When he says, "As you come to him," he's talking to believers. This is what that means. For those of us who have already trusted Christ, it's imperative for us to keep coming, to keep looking to him, to keep opening up the map and saying, "Now, where are you? Where is the reference point? Where am I in relationship to you? How do I live to honor you? How do I spend my money to honor you? How do I treat my friends or my family members in order to honor you?" You see, you continue to open up the map, you find the reference point of the crucified and resurrected savior in Jerusalem, that cornerstone. You build your life upon that and you will not be ashamed. The day will come when you will stand before him. It may happen here on the earth that you may be in social circles to where in that moment, you feel that shame. You think, I

shouldn't feel that shame. Let me tell you something. When you build your life on Christ, when you see him with your own eyes and you stand in judgment among the community of believers for all eternity, on that day, you will know, I had no reason to be ashamed.

He is who he is. He wants to make you alive and build your life upon him. So trust him today. And then Christians, go on trusting him today. There was surely a second question that they all had, is now that we're all disjointed from all of our social networks, and I feel lonely, what now? Do I just live in isolation? No. No, no. So Peter, he goes, well, let's keep reading. You come to him, he does something else. And that is that he connects us to his people. We become connected to his people when we come to him. You see, each one of us, we know instinctively it's not good to be alone. We don't like loneliness, right?

Even the most introverted among us who just love to live in their basement drink Mountain Dew, you need friends. Even you know you need friends, right? I'm introverted. I need friends. I need people around me all the time. I need people and you need people. And so what do we do? We make friends. And how do we make friends? We make friends on the basis of three things, proximity, affinity, and kindness, okay? Proximity. We live close to one another, right? And so if you are in school together, there's a pretty high chance you're going to find somebody in that network because they're close and you're going to be friends. Second, affinity. Because they're close, we find out who likes to do what. Oh, you like to play basketball. I like to play basketball. Let's play basketball together. Now we have a friend.

Kindness. You need kindness to stay friends, right? Because if someone's always being rude, I don't really want to be around that person. So three things, proximity, affinity, kindness. But here's the problem in life. We move, and now we're not close. We get older. And sometimes the very things that brought us together in a certain affinity, we can't even do them anymore. And we're sinful, which means we're not always kind. And as a result of that, relationships constantly through our life are unraveling, because they're built on the wrong thing. So what does the gospel provide for us? A possibility for us to build our relationships on something that's stronger than proximity, affinity and kindness. Something that says no matter where it is that you live, you can be friends. Even if somebody from our midst, you're really close and they go and they live on the other side of the world, you can still have a relationship with them. Something that's so strong that even if your affinities change, you have something that holds you together. And something so strong that when you sin against one another, there's a basis to forgive, to keep that friendship together. It's the gospel.

And so notice what Peter says. That Christ not only makes dead stones into living stones, but then he connects those living stones together to make a spiritual house. He says you, yourselves, plural, you, yourselves, like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house. If you read this and you go, "Oh, so I'm a spiritual house?" No, you're one stone. You don't make a house. You have to be connected with other living stones to become the spiritual house that can make spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to him. You try to live the Christian life alone, you're like a stone, not a house. You need one another, we need one another. You see, I just love this. God wants to be known.

He's like an artist. Every artist I've ever known, they not only want to create something that looks like something. So it was a landscape. They're like, "Hey, here's the landscape." But every artist, there's something about them. They also want to be known through their art. And so when we see their portrait or landscape painting, it's not just, hey, that is a sun. That is a mountain. That is a river. It's also their perspective of that mountain and river. And so, we learn something about them by the things that we create. Well, God wants to be known just like an artist, a artist. He creates. Psalm 19:1 says, the heavens declare the glory of God. You look around the world today, you see beautiful things don't you? Mountains and flowers and landscapes and sunrises and sunsets. You see all this created beauty. People around the entire world, even people who don't know who Christ is, they look up and they're like, "Wow, I don't know if there must be God." He wants to be known.

But if you want to see the most vivid display of God's mercy in the entire globe, the most vivid display of His wisdom in the entire globe, then you don't look at mountains rivers. You look at a healthy church. Ephesians 3:10 tells us this much. He says, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is made known. Manifold, colorful, the colorful wisdom, the pact wisdom of God. This is how. In a healthy church, he takes all these once dead stones, rebellious stones, hard hearted stones. He gives us life. He connects us together so that we can be a spiritual house, so that we can offer spiritual sacrifices too. I mean, when you find a healthy church, what does that mean? It means a Jesus church. It means a Bible church. It means a gospel church. It means a church where there's only one celebrity, and as Jesus Christ. There's only one hero that we celebrate. There's only one person we sing to. There's only one person genuinely we want to hear from, and that is Jesus Christ.

When we're so overwhelmed by the love that we have from him, that we want to love him and give that love to other people, we become a healthy church. And then, because we're so overwhelmed by mercy, we become a humble people. And a humble people becomes a praying people. A praying people becomes a powerful people, because God's spirit drops down upon people who humble themselves before him. And then a powerful people becomes a unified people, and a unified people says, "We've got to get the gospel to the ends of the earth," so they become a missional people. That's what a healthy church is. When you see a healthy church on the earth that's made up of people that were once dead and unresponsive to God, we're looking at a display of God's wisdom.

But you're a stone. I'm a stone, but not a house. And so, if you ever deduce in your mind from what's happening in the world, that I can do this thing without other Christians, Peter says that's embarrassing. You're like a cornerstone, the one stone on top. Be mesmerized. No, that's not mesmerized. You see a church that gets along, that forgives one another, that cares for one another. All of a sudden, you have something powerful. You see, community is an absolute gift that does echo with our desires. Peter's intent is deeper here than encouragement. He remembers just how vulnerable he was to deny Christ when he was isolated. He remembers what Jesus said to him before he did it. He says, "Peter, when you return, when you repent, when you turn again to me, here's your job description, strengthen other brothers and sisters in Christ who may be isolated as well." And now all of a sudden, he looks out and he sees all these Christians isolated around the Roman

empire.

And so, he writes them in order to say, look, wherever you're at, I know right now, some of you a hold up, but you got to hold up together. You got to pray together. You got to talk together. You got to help one another together wherever you're at, because you need one another. The mission of God can only be accomplished when living stones remain intact. And so Peter, what he's doing, is he's subtly reminding us to stick together. So let me encourage you with this application. Let's connect to a local church in meaningful ways. Each one of us. And I know the church can be a mess. Some of you are like, "I'm just now coming back. And the church can be a mess. So, this is about all the connection that I want." Look, I get it. It may be good just for us to pause just for a moment, just to imagine the miracle of the church. Satan hates the church, the world misunderstands the church, and Christians mistreat the church. And she's still here. She's still here.

And the reason is because Jesus said, "I will build my church. One person at a time, they're going to come. They're going to worship me. I'm going to connect them together. I will build my hi church." And I want you to know something. And this may be counterintuitive to say, but it's so important. If you connect to her, you will hurt. If you obey this, you will get hurt. People will mistreat you. They'll take your parking spot. They will. And they'll talk about your singing. And then they may sin against you. I've lived 47 years on this earth. And the greatest wounds that I have, have come from the church. You connect to her in a meaningful way, you will get hurt. You say, "Well, then why in the world would we connect with her?" Because that's where God's family on earth joins together. That's why. It's the same thing with your family, right?

Outside of this family, probably my own family, is where a lot of the tension of life happens. And yet, we still drive home together. Why? Because that's where we live, right? This is where we live. Welcome. We're glad you're here, right? You open up the Bible and every time you find instructions on how to get along, it's going to say, "Love one another and forgive one another." Why? Because love one another feels good, but then we sin against one another. And so the only way to stay together is to forgive one another. And so, it's goes back to the gospel. Ephesians two, it says, "You're members of the house of the God, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone." You see, I know that God moves people here from other churches. And he moves people from this church to other churches. Blessed to be the name of the Lord. He moves you. He inclined your heart to be wherever you're at, be meaningfully connected. And I realized, I realized that this is sort of a tenuous place in this message, right?

Because we've just been through it like a year and a half to where, for a lot of reasons, we've not been together. There's still some people who are at home right now. And some of you who are at home, you're there and you need to be there. And you believe everything that I'm saying. And the great fear that you have in your life right now is that people who know that you're not here are going to conclude that you don't believe this. And you know that's not the truth. And so, we need to be merciful to people who are not here yet.

But let me also say something to those who aren't here, and it has nothing to do with risk, is everything to do with your conscience comfortable. It's time to come back here, anywhere. Find a church, be meaningfully connected. You see, you can learn where you're at. You can hear where you're at. You can sing where you're at. But there is a communal loop that God has designed to propel growth. Here's what I mean, my sermons today are a little bit better than when no one was in the room when I was preaching to that piece of glass right there. And the reason is because I had no idea if you were getting it. You see, I've said some things and I've seen some you ago. And so I thought, "I better dig a little deeper," right? You're communicating and I'm communicating. And so there's this loop. When we sing together, what happens? All of a sudden you're like, "I feel apathetic. But that girl over there, she's not an apathetic. So I feel like she believes, I believe, and so, maybe I should wake up and sing." There's a power. Do you see? There's a power to coming together, studying the bible, singing, praying together. So, be meaningfully connected.

The last thing, what happens when we come to Christ, we're given an identity with a purpose. We are given an identity with a purpose. You say, what's the question here that they're asking? Well, they're asking the question, where did I come from? Who am I? And what should I do with the rest of my days? Peter knows that identity motivates behavior. Meaning what we think about ourself, it motivates how we behave. And so, notice what he says in verse 9 and 10. He says, "You are a chosen race." That's the first identity. You're a chosen race. This race of the church is not a color of skin, or is it an ethnicity, nor does it erase the color of our skin or ethnicities.

This new race is a people chosen by God as his people from among all peoples. And when people understand that the identity that Christ has given to us in him, because he rose from the dead, it's the truest thing about us. That when we, the people of God, start to say things like, those are my people. What we think when we say that is the church. Not only are we a chosen race, that's one identity, the second is, we're a royal priesthood. Now that doesn't mean that we get a box and we open it up for people within our neighborhood to come and confess their sin to God because we're all priests. That's not what it means. It means that we have direct access to God. It means our life is always before him. It means that there is no part of our life that's secular and then Christian, we're near the temple and not near the temple. So here I can speak these words and here I can speak these words. No, not only that, not only do we have direct access to God because we have one great high priest, Jesus, the mediator between God and man, but it also means that we get to lead people to Christ.

People come and say, "Hey, can you explain?" Yeah, I would love to explain. And we're simply pointing this is who he is, this is what it says about him. Not only are we a royal priesthood, he goes on and he says we're a holy nation. We're cut out to be apart. We were not better than the rest, than anyone else. We're simply called to live differently from the rest. We looked at this a few weeks ago. The word holy, it means to cut or set apart. So if you're on Facebook and you're scrolling through all kinds of different posts and suddenly you find something you think, "That's useful. I want to have that later on. I don't want it to be lost." You might save it, you might print it, you might repost it so that it's somewhere where you can find it. What's happening there among all those other things that are being posted. you saying, "I want to cut this out and I want to set

it apart because it's going to be useful."

When he says that you are a holy nation, that's precisely what it means among all the people. He cuts you out. And he says, "Now look, live differently." You are a people for his own possession. That's the fourth identity. We've been purchased by the blood of Jesus. And therefore, he has created a rights over our life. And the fifth identity is that we are a people who have received mercy. All of these benefits that we've received, we didn't earn any of them. We received them because he's kind. If identity then motivates behavior, we should ask the question, we're going to end here, what behaviors are these identities motivating? And he lists two. Once in verse five and once in verse nine.

In verse five, he says this. He goes, "You're a living stone." You came to the living stone, you became one being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. And this is what we're supposed to do to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. To give to him what he said he wants and to do it in faith. And then verse nine says this, "You are this holy nation, this royal priesthood, a people who've been owned by God. You've received mercy." And let me tell you why. That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light. What this means is his chosen, holy, blood bought, mercy given kingdom of priests. We are in the business of proclaiming excellent things about the excellent one.

We say these things, we pray these things, we sing these things, we share these things and we take these excellent truths about the excellent one to the ends of the earth. And so let's finish with one last application. Let's take the gospel here, there, and everywhere. Take it here, take it to one another. When we're done, you should say something to one another. You know what? That was true. This is my favorite part of it. And talk about it. We should do that. We take the gospel to you. We take it to our children. We take it to our students. We take it to our life groups and we talk about these things. But we also take it out and this is why. I just want you to think about all the people in the world who know there is a God because they look up and they see within nature, but they do not know how to be acceptable to him. And so they try ritual, and they try sacrifice, and they try all kinds of rights and vows and disciplines, but it's all in vain.

And the reason it's all in vain is because verse five says this, the only kind of sacrifices that are acceptable to God come through Jesus Christ. You build your life upon that cornerstone, or you bring nothing to God. He accepts it only through Jesus, the mediator between God and man, everything hangs on Jesus. If we do not come to Jesus, there is no life. There's no spiritual house. There's no spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him. Friends, he is the cornerstone, and therefore we need not be ashamed. So let me pray and we'll sing.

Father in heaven, we love you. We thank you for your grace in our life, how you've created us and then recreated us. And you've endowed us with such amazing, remarkable identities that propel us towards this amazing privilege to live all of our life focused on the reference point of the resurrection of Christ. I pray, Father, that you would give us grace. I pray for those who are considering trusting Christ, that you would lead them

to Christ now. Help them to believe in Christ now. And, God, I pray now that as we sing, we sing about you, that you would be glorified and magnified as we think about life resting on the cornerstone of eternity. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.



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