

Sermon Brief

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March 13, 2022

Text: 1 Peter 2:4-10

Title: “A Chosen People”

Subject: The church is a chosen and precious people to God.

Complement: The church is to serve and proclaim God.

Textual Idea: The Church, chosen and precious to God, is called to serve and proclaim Him.

Sermon Idea: Relief comes in knowing who we are, chosen and precious, and remembering what our purpose is, to proclaim victory in Christ.

Interrogative: Where are you looking for relief?

Key Points:

1. Built Up: The church, those who trust God, are chosen and precious to Him.
2. Tripped Up: Those who reject God face eternal judgment.
3. Called Up: The church’s purpose is to serve and proclaim Christ.

What do I want people to know? I want people to know that the church is precious to God and chosen by Him to make Him known in the world. We do this by serving and proclaiming Him together. Also, they need to know that those who reject Christ will face eternal judgment.

What do I want people to do? I want people to (1) seek counseling if they need it, (2) be actively involved in church, and (3) proclaim Christ.

What need am I addressing? I am addressing the need to live lives that honor God.

“A Chosen People”

1 Peter 2:4-10

March 13, 2022

Let me start us with a quiz this morning. Anyone know what is significant about **(LCD) this date? March 11, 2020**...this was the day that the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 was a pandemic. That was the beginning of what has been a really rough two years. It touched off some serious stress across the world. And that stress is not abating. Just this week, in light of the second anniversary of Covid and the war in Ukraine, the American Psychological Association released a report called, “Stress in America.” **(LCD) Look at these percentages.** The number of people stressed about inflation – 87%; supply chain issues – 81%; global uncertainty – 81%; retaliation by Russia – 80%; the Ukraine war – 80%. Lynn Bufka, **(LCD) a clinical psychologist with the APA said this, ““We don't usually see 80 percent of people telling us that a particular stressor is stressful for that many individuals.”** And there are five things over 80% right now. Plus, it's hard to find help. I was in a meeting of pastors yesterday and a counselor shared how requests for mental health counseling have gone up ten-fold in the last two years – but counselors have no openings!

On top of that, our relationships are suffering, **(LCD) 58% of those surveyed** reported a relationship strain or end of a relationship based on different responses to the Covid pandemic. True for any of you? And before we fall into self-pity, think about the stress that **(LCD) this guy** is feeling this morning! God help us! On March 11, 2020, we had no idea how brutal the last two years were going to be...but God did. The Mighty and Sovereign One knew all this long ago. Nothing has caught Him by surprise. The only way forward out of all this darkness is to look to Him who is our Light, our Refuge. Where are you looking for relief?

We're in a sermon series on the book of 1 Peter which I've entitled, **(LCD) Alien Living in a Chaotic World.** The people Peter wrote to were also undergoing severe stress. Economically, they were losing their jobs because of their Christian convictions. Politically, they were considered traitors for not worshipping Emperor Caesar. Religiously, they were accused of being responsible for anything bad that happened in their cities because they refused to worship local gods. They needed relief and they weren't sure that Christ was the answer anymore. So Peter began the letter by reminding them of **(LCD) who they are in Christ. They are chosen by the Father and empowered by the Spirit to be obedient servants of the Lord Jesus in this world.** That's who they are. That's their identity.

In our passage this morning, Peter comes back to this point about our identity: we are a chosen people, and remembering that can bring us some relief. Let's take a look. 1 Peter 2:4, *“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” 7 Now to you*

who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

You might remember that last week, Peter urged us all to **(LCD) crave pure spiritual milk** so that we could grow up in our faith now what we know that the Lord is good. That primarily means drinking deeply of the Word of God. That is precisely what Peter does in our passage as he quotes multiple verses from the Old Testament. Peter practices what he preaches – he’s deep in the Word of God. That’s probably the first thing to do when we’re stressed – seek God’s truth which sets us free.

Next, Peter switches imagery, verse 4, *“As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him.”* Peter calls Jesus **(LCD) the “living Stone.”** He is solid and unchanging, dependable in a chaotic world. That’s why we can find peace in Him. Peter is exhorting these weary travelers to “come to him,” the living Stone. Where do you go for relief? Food? Fun? Work? Peter says, “come to Him – the solid one, the living Stone.” Now this is an oxymoron, right?! A stone can’t be living. But Christ is. Food, fun and work may seem to give life, but they’re really dead. Only the Living One can truly satisfy. Come to Him to find life. The verb used here is used in many other passages like this one, **(LCD) “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”** Instead of flipping on your phone, drop to your knees and enter the throne room of the one who sits over all this chaos!

Unfortunately, many not only ignore Jesus, but reject Him. The word for “rejected” meant to carefully examine something and then reject it. Like workers on a conveyor belt picking and choosing what to accept and reject. Jesus presented Himself to humanity and we responded by nailing Him to a cross. We rejected Him – but the resurrection of Christ was the Father’s way of showing that He had examined Jesus and had chosen Him! This one, the resurrected one who transcends all earthly powers and troubles, all earthly pandemics and dictators, the resurrected one – THIS one is chosen by God and precious, incredibly valuable and treasured, by Him. Amen!

The word for chosen, “eklektos,” is the same one from the greeting of the letter about us, God’s people. We, like Jesus, are chosen by God and precious to Him, which is what Peter says next, verse 5, *“you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* Now it’s important that we recognize that the “you” here, and throughout this passage, is in the plural. Don’t read “you” and think of you yourself. Read “you” and think of us, the people of God, the church. **(LCD) We are built into a spiritual house,** together. Just as Jesus is the chosen and precious living Stone, so we are the chosen and

precious living stones who together make up the church. Every stone is different, but each is important. Together, we are the spiritual house of God where He resides on earth. Wow! In Judaism, God was presumed to dwell on earth in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple; but now He resides in us, the church.

Paul said the same thing in Ephesians, **(LCD) “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”** The church is foundational. It’s where the Living God dwells, where His life and truth are found. Look at what Paul says to Timothy about it, **(LCD) “If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”** The church is the pillar and foundation of the truth! That’s a high calling! It is essential and powerful!

Knowing this, Bill Hybels, the former pastor of Willow Creek Church, used to say, **(LCD) “There is nothing like the church when it’s working right. The church is the hope of the world.”** And biblically, as we’ve seen, He is right. But notice Hybels is the former pastor. That’s because he had to publicly resign in disgrace after several high profile leadership and sexual abuses that he committed came to light. There is nothing like the church when it’s working right...but there’s fewer things more hurtful when it’s working wrong. And there is so much on the line because of what the church is: the hope of the world since we carry the very presence of the Living God in us.

Many people have been hurt by the church in a variety of ways. We would do well to listen to these stories and see where we might form a more beneficial union. Where there are abuses, they need to be rooted out and dealt with. But I’d warn us to still tread lightly even if and when we’re pointing out the church’s shortcomings. After all, it is the bride of Christ and I know that I don’t like people dissing my bride! Where there is wrong, it needs to be rooted out; but let’s restore gently – be gentle with the Bride of Christ.

Also, we need to realize that we need each other if we’re to fulfill our God-given destiny to be the pillar and foundation of the truth. Each one of us matters and is necessary. The pandemic made fellowshiping difficult, and we’ve been largely isolated from each other. This has increased our stress as the survey showed. We need each other. We need to be the church together. Each of us needs to find a way to connect to the church whether on Sunday or in Life Groups or in some intentional community. By the way, **Dave is hosting (LCD) a “Taste of Life Group”** after church. Think about joining in if you aren’t connected to one right now.

Back to our passage, Peter says that we are *“a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* Peter is referencing the Jewish Temple here in which priests ordained by God would offer religious sacrifices for the people. That’s all changed in Christ. Now, we’re all priests, every one of us! As we saw

earlier, each one of us has access to the throne of grace through faith in Jesus Christ. You don't need me as the pastor to pray for you. We can pray for each other with power in Jesus' name. We can serve one another with power in Jesus' name. We can worship together with power in Jesus' name. We are a holy priesthood, and these are our spiritual sacrifices as the writer of Hebrews says, **(LCD) "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."** Worship and service; let's richly offer these to God together!

So hope in stressful times is meant to be found in the church community, but who exactly makes up these living stones? Verse 6, *"For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."* 7 *Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"* 8 and, *"A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."* Peter gives us three Old Testament quotations. The first one is from Isaiah 28 and is a prophecy against the corrupt Jewish leaders. God promises to raise up a leader, a chosen and precious cornerstone, who will vindicate His people, so they never suffer shame. To those who believe, this stone, who Peter says is Jesus, is precious. Actually, other versions translate it as, "the ones who believe are honored." That fits well with "not being put to shame." In other words, the ones who trust in Jesus will be honored and vindicated in the end. A good word for those going through present humiliation.

On the other hand, to those who don't believe, they stumble and fall over that same cornerstone, Jesus. **(LCD) Here is a picture of a cornerstone** from the southern wall of the Jerusalem Temple. The cornerstone has to be perfectly aligned at all angles, which then sets the alignment of all the other stones. If we align to that stone, then everything fits into place perfectly. But for those who refuse to align with Jesus, reject Him, He becomes a stone of stumbling. The word translated "fall" or "offense" is **(LCD) "skandalon"** from which we derive the word "scandalous." It referred to the trigger in a trap. It's what causes you to fall.

There is no middle ground with Jesus. You're either with Him or against Him; and it is NOT good to be against Him. Verse 8 goes on to say, *"They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for."* The message is the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ's life, death and resurrection. Listen carefully, those who reject the gospel are trapped in sin and death. Eternal judgment awaits those who stand before God with their sin unpaid for. By trusting in Christ, your sins are forgiven, and you become a child of God. Trust in Jesus! Run to Him! He is your only salvation! Don't stumble over Him! Trust in Him!

Peter says that those who reject Him were *"destined for it."* Ouch! This is very controversial and there are different opinions about what Peter is saying here. Is he saying that God preordained people to hell regardless of what they ever did? I don't have time to get into it, but personally I don't think so, that's just my opinion. With that said, God's eternal purposes are mysterious, and we don't fully understand how predestination

and free will work together, but we know they're both taught in Scripture. I like how one commentator summarized it, (LCD) **"It must be recognized that though human disobedience is within God's plan, it does not become less blameworthy. It is important to recognize also that human disobedience is not necessarily final or irretrievable. Paul says, 'God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.' (Rom. 11:32)"** There is a path to life and its faith in Jesus. Trust in Him! Run to Him! He is the only hope for the world.

Those who reject Jesus will suffer judgment, but those who receive Him are honored as the ones who get to proclaim this good news of salvation. Verse 9, *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."* Peter references four things said of Israel in the Old Testament but now applies them to us, the church. Israel was chosen by God to be His special possession, a people set apart for God in the world, representing Him. They failed because they rejected Jesus. But now, through the church, God is making Himself known again. And that is our purpose: to *"declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."* What a privilege that is and it is best done together like we did (LCD) **last summer when we gave away free gas and pizza** in our town. The whole point was to show the love of God through as a unified group of Jesus lovers. What a joy! We got to proclaim Christ through deed and word. We'll be doing it again this summer too!

To these stressed out people, Peter concludes, *"Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."* Remember, the people Peter was writing to were stressed out and ready to punt. But Peter reminds them of who they are: the people who had no belonging, but now do in Christ as His church; those who were under the wrath of God, but who have now received God's mercy, the forgiveness of their sin, through faith in Christ. Remember who you are and what you're called to when all seems lost, and life seems to be unbearable. I think there are at least (LCD) **four suggestions for us in this passage: Find relief by staying deep in God's Word. Find relief by trusting in God. Find relief by active involvement in Christian community. Find relief by remembering your eternal purpose.**

As I said at the beginning, on March 11, 2020, we had no idea how brutal the last two years were going to be...but God did. The Mighty and Sovereign One knew all this long ago. None of this has caught Him by surprise. The only way forward out of all this darkness is to look to Him who is our Light, our Refuge. Be careful where you look...your life depends on it. I'm sorry to say that this past week, one of our Converge Northeast pastors, Chuck Bonadies of Ridgefield, took his own life. He was 47 and left three kids and a wife. No one saw it coming. I don't know what led Chuck to this place, but he obviously was struggling in some way. Listen, it's okay to admit you need help. I've been to counseling. There's no shame in getting help. Talk to one of us on staff or an elder and we'd love to help you. But this I know for sure – Jesus is the answer as Paul said, (LCD) **"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."**