

The Church and it's Chosen Marks

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Preacher: Rev. Dave Little

- [0 : 0 0] Well, I love participating in the baptism services, and it doesn't matter whether it's at this building or another building, whether it's sprinkling or full immersion, whether it's inside and nice and cozy or outside where it's kind of freezy coldy.
- It is beautiful. It is beautiful to see the newly baptized welcomed into the church. And it's also beautiful to see the church welcome the newly baptized.
- And on this Thanksgiving Sunday, which is actually quite beautiful, our passage, I don't know if you caught it as Sarah read it, that it has a lot to do with what just happened here.
- So we're actually going to look at this tremendous passage from 1 Peter, chapter 2. And we're basically going to look at seven kind of marks or kind of identifiers of the church and things that identify us as God's people, particularly our identity in Christ.
- And basically, we're going to take those seven identifiers and condense it into one happy little sentence. And then we're going to kind of look at how we live that out. So we're going to look at kind of at, I think in a beautiful way, how we as the church welcome these newly baptized, actually who we are welcoming and who we are that they're coming into.
- [1 : 2 3] Who is the church? So let's begin in 1 Peter, chapter 2. And if you look at the Bibles, it would be very helpful. Take your Bibles out, open them up, because we're going to be looking at this passage in 1 Peter quite extensively.
- So page 1015 and 1014, if you have that open, it's really handy. Okay, we're going to start in verse 2. Here are the seven kind of identifiers or marks of the church.
- Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation if you have indeed tasted that the Lord is good.
- Now this is the first identifier. I don't know if you caught it. We as Christians are born again. We said it over and over again in the service that we're these new creations.
- We have, we're born again. We see this regeneration happening. Let's look, open up your, one chapter earlier to 1 Peter chapter 1 and listen to what Peter says about being born again.
- [2 : 2 9] It's kind of building up to this place. In verse 3 it says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 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.
- To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you. Fantastic. We are born again because of the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus on the cross.
- And we have given you birth. And a few verses later, in verse 23, read this. Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God.
- We are born again. This newborn infant picture that we have in chapter 2 is us as Christians born again. So what exactly is this new birth?
- Well, in a really quick nutshell, it's basically life without Jesus, we are dead. We're dead in our trespasses. We're dead in our relationship with God.

[3 : 30] But life with faith in Jesus, we have faith in Jesus because what he's done on the cross. We have our relationship with God that has become alive.

We've gone from death to life. It's through faith in Jesus and what he has done. So basically, we have this new life, this new birth in the gospel.

We have life from the death, resurrection, as Jesus has been raised from the dead, so we have the living word living in us. And Peter, if you notice in these verses, quotes from Psalm 34.

It says, the verse from Psalm 34 is, taste and see that the Lord is good. But Peter does this subtle shift. It is that you have tasted, if you have tasted that the Lord is good.

And he's saying a whole bunch of really good things here. Basically, he's saying what Jesus has done on the cross. Jesus is the Lord and what he has done on the cross is good. And you have tasted it, you have experienced it.

[4 : 30] So that first identifier, that first identifier is that we are born again, new birth. The second identifier comes in verse 5. Look with me here.

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.

Now this is an amazing identifier of us. We are living stones. And not just sort of any stones. We're the living stones that are building the house of God, the very temple of God.

This congregation right here, the ones that worshipped in the morning, the ones that have worshipped all over the world who believe in Jesus, even in Australia. All of us make up the house of God.

We are living stones. Now, through what Peter does masterfully here, is he's using the Old Testament. He takes the Old Testament. And he's basically taking the Old Testament, the whole of the Old Testament, and laying its weight upon Jesus.

[5 : 32] He's kind of piling this weight upon Jesus. And that's what we see here. Now listen to verse 4. How can we be these living stones? How can we be this temple of God?

Verse 4. As you came to him, 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.

It is through Jesus, the precious living stone. And verse 6. It stands in Scripture. Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

Now, as Jesus is putting the weight on Jesus, the weight of the Old Testament on Jesus, we're seeing that in Isaiah, it sounds like in Isaiah, this picture of the people of God scattered and in exile, and in desperate need, they're in ruin.

And the promise is that there is a new stone to be founded, a new place of worship, a new place of the presence of God. And that, Peter is saying, is Jesus.

[6 : 43] It's absolutely stunning. That Jesus is not only this chosen, this Messiah, but he's also the source of redemption. And it's an eternal redemption.

You and I are being built as an eternal temple to God. So, if I ask the question, if I asked out there to Vancouver, Vancouver, what is your cornerstone?

What are you built on? Well, maybe you'd hear success. Maybe you'd hear fitness and flexibility. Maybe you'd hear academia. Maybe you'd hear the arts.

Maybe you'd hear general hipsterness. All those things are very good. But they will fail. Because they do not have the eternal quality of Jesus in building his temple.

I can guarantee you that in a couple of months, I'm going to look at my sweater and go, what was I doing wearing that Grammy sweater? You know, there is even fashion. All these things that we stake our lives on and we look to will fail except Jesus.

[7 : 46] Now, the next few identifiers are called 3, 4, 5, and 6 are found in verse 9. Let me be with me at verse 9. These are amazing.

They all kind of run together in this very covenantal language. Do you know what I mean by when I say covenantal? It's this promise language. And this language is kind of the promises of God to his people.

And the promises of God are always perfect. Because as God promises, he promises with his character's holiness and his goodness and his power. He can always follow through on his promises.

Whereas we do not. We fail. Just as Israel failed. But this is showing us that in Jesus, in Jesus and only through Jesus, those promises that God makes with us, Jesus takes those promises that we are supposed to give and he takes them upon himself.

We'll see that in just a second. Look at verse 9 with me. This is what we are called through Jesus. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.

[8 : 55] And it's because of Jesus who is the chosen, the precious, the valuable treasure of God. I'm thinking back to Jesus' own baptism.

Just like we saw baptisms today. And what did you hear God say? This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. This is the perfect son of God. We too, through faith, and you hear it over again in this passage, faith in him can be a chosen people.

This language here is a chosen race or a chosen family. And it's kind of the family of God sort of descended through Abraham. We now have spiritual DNA because of our Lord and Savior.

Because God is father to Jesus and Jesus is the son. We are now adopted. We are now adopted as a chosen family. A chosen family. That's a great identifier.

And we can too be a royal priesthood because of what Jesus has done. Not only are we the place of worship, which we looked at as these living stones, right? We're these living stones. We're actually a holy priesthood in verse 5 and a royal priesthood.

[10 : 02] We're set apart by God to be not only worshiping him, just offering spiritual sacrifices, but we're also called to minister to one another.

That's the role of the priesthood. We all have that role. Not just the people standing up to the front. We all have this role of ministering to one another. That's what kind of people were set apart to be as ministers.

And this only makes sense if Jesus is the great high priest and if Jesus is the king. So that's the picture that we're getting here from Peter.

And as Christians, we are also a holy nation in verse 9. We are now the new Israel. We are under the new covenant through Jesus.

We have become a new nation. A people set apart for God and his purposes. Just as Israel was set apart because God chose them. He chose them to bless them and to bless them that they may be a blessing.

[11 : 02] And we'll get back to that in a second. So now it says we are God's people for his own possession. This is beautiful coming as a language from Exodus.

This is absolutely stunning. It's a picture of Jesus has redeemed us. He has redeemed us from our sin and our rebellion. That he would be our God and we would be his people.

Now what Peter does is he has this slight shift. In the Exodus language, it says they shall be my people and I shall be their God. There's this sort of future gleaning in the language.

But this is saying right now in Christ, you are. You are God's covenant people because of what Jesus has done. And the final identifier that we will look at from our passage is found in verse 11.

If you look at that with me. It says, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles. Peter's calling these sojourners and exiles. He's calling us those sojourners and exiles. And I think that highlights verse 9 as well.

[12 : 06] This is still that covenantal Old Testament kind of language. It's saying we're not of this world. We're kind of resting here. We don't really belong.

We're kind of not in the place that we're supposed to be. Our identity is not Vancouver. It's not Canada. It's not the U.S. It's not Australia or China or any of these places.

Our primary citizenship is heaven. But not only spiritually. I like that Peter is very realistic as well. He's writing this to the dispersed.

Just like in Peter's day. We too. We too are these sojourners and exiles. We have this relationship with folks from every nation.

All over this world. Whether it's our dear friends in India who are struggling right now after this great storm. Whether it's folks in Pakistan. Whether it's folks around the corner.

[13 : 05] We have this relationship with each other. We're in a sense these international nationals. We're this holy nation. We'll get back to that in a second.

So. We have these seven identifiers. Of arts of the church. Born again in Christ. Living stones. Founded on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ.

We're a chosen race. We're God's family. A royal priesthood to minister God's grace in the kingdom of God. A holy nation. This new Israel. Right? We're a people that belong to him in covenant.

And we have a citizenship in heaven rather than on earth. And I'd like to summarize this in one fairly simple and familiar sentence. We are one holy Catholic and apostolic church.

We're united. We're these living stones. We're this holy nation. We're together. We're holy set apart for God for his purposes. To be blessed and to bless.

[14 : 04] We're Catholic. We're international. Just like that. Dispersed. We're all over the world. And we're this apostolic church. We're founded upon the cornerstone of Jesus. And the teachings of the apostles.

In the word of God. So. How can we respond to being the one holy Catholic and apostolic church? Well. Here's the first way we can respond.

It's a Christian heart of worship. It's a Christian heart of worship. I don't know if you noticed in verse 2. There's this longing.

There's this longing for the pure spiritual milk. That we may grow up into salvation. There's this tasting that the Lord is good.

Let me just do a little shout out to the new moms. There's a picture of this infant. This little one. And it's a picture of this desperate need for food.

[15 : 03] Desperate need to be fed. And to be taken care of. It's this longing for and needing. And when they don't get it. We know about it. Don't we? Right? This is the picture that we're getting.

We're getting this picture of a longing for the pure word of God. We're longing for not only to sort of have an experience of it. But it's also for our mind.

For us to think and rule it over. And for this undefiled truth to come to us. This is a whole self. This is a whole self kind of longing that we see here.

And as we do this kind of our hearts and our minds. It fills us up. Doesn't it? It feeds us. And as we listen to the word of God.

And we're filled with the spirit of God. We're moved to love and thanksgiving. And that's so appropriate on a day like today. If we are this church. We are moved to thanksgiving to God.

[16 : 00] For giving us new life. And so we respond in worship. Yes, praising and singing like we did tonight. But there's more to it. We'll get to that in a minute.

But I do want to notice here with you. That the Apostle Peter is very clear. That we need to put away the things in verse 1. That are shallow and hollow in the church. That keep us from true worship of Jesus.

And he says words like hypocrisy. These evil intentions and envy and nasty language. This ruins the oneness. The unity of the church. And it ruins our worship.

I'm reminded of Colossians chapter 3. Where it says. And whatever you do. Whether in word or deed. Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Giving thanks to God the Father.

Through him. Our worship is not holistically. Heartful worship. The second. And very important response. Is that in this. We are one holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

[17 : 00] We have a Christ-led closeness. I want you to notice. How we are given this illustration of the living stones. Alive with Christ as the foundation.

This holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices. And I want you to notice. It is only through life in Christ. That we are given life. And I want you to see. That these aren't just any ordinary stones.

They are not sort of stones. Kind of placed in a little. Kind of. In any haphazard way. It's not some random. Kind of stonehenge. Kind of standing on their own stones. That's not who we are. There's a structure.

We're built close together. We're built for a purpose. Of worshiping God. And drawing close to one another. And loving and supporting one another. We're this. It's a picture of the unity.

Of the church of God. Let me give you a sort of silly illustration. On Fridays we have Bible study in youth. Sort of in this whole building. We kind of fill it up. It's great. And for the last number of weeks.

[17 : 57] With grades 7 through 10. We've been doing this youth alpha series. Which is fantastic. We eat some pizza. And then we watch a video. And then we have some discussion.

And then we watch some video. And then we have some discussion. And then we watch a video. And then have some discussion. Which is great. It's absolutely fantastic. But if you can imagine. Grade 7 boys. Kind of sitting there. For any length of time.

They kind of get antsy. And usually. I'm smart enough to go. Okay guys. Let's go run around a bit. And then we can pray together. So not so smart on Fridays. So basically I said. All right guys.

We've got to go somewhere after this. So I need us. Let's just gather and pray first. You know. We've been sitting here for a long time. Let's just gather and pray. So sit down. Sit down. Okay guys. Let's pray.

What do you pray for us? And I said. I have no idea how this happened. But I had this basically dog pile on me. And basically I had about 10 great seven boys. Kind of just all pile on. Let's pray. I'm like. All right. From this position.

[18 : 51] What's your prayer request? How about you? And then of course. And of course. One of my co-leaders. Who is a big rugby guy. I was like. Hey. I think I'll pile up too. So you've got a little son. And I'm sort of crushed on the bottom of this.

With this sort of group of kids. All. And I'm like. I guess. We can pray now. That didn't quite work out. That was unexpected. But I want to tell you. That actually gives me a picture. Of what the living stones.

The closeness. Of what God is talking about. There's this beautiful thing. As we gather. To learn about Jesus. To grow in our faith in Jesus Christ. To pray together. To be amongst each other.

This picture. These great civic guys. Will pile it up. On top of me. I think it's a picture. Of the church. These living stones. Built on each other. And.

It's maybe not the most. Priscible example. Because like. You know. Say. If someone's. In your Bible study. You know. Leading the Bible study. Say. You know. Jordan is leading. The God's Bible study. It would be kind of funny.

[19 : 46] If all the men. In his. Men's Bible study. Or all the ecclesia folks. In his Bible study. Just piled on Jordan. Hey. We're the living stones. Jordan. You know. That would be awesome. And when Aaron comes back. Maybe just piling him. And I thought. Well church. It's like. Hey. We're the living stones here.

And I really think it'd be funny. If you did that to Alistair. Okay. I mean. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. The picture. I want us to have. The picture. I want us to have. Is this closeness. This depth. Of love.

And care for one another. Sort of this. This vulnerability. Just being as close. And tight. And loving. With one another. And so. What I want to tell you. Just even just as a practical thing.

If you're not part of a small group Bible study. I encourage you. Become part of a small group Bible study. Be these living. Stones together. Being grown up. And into. Becoming. Growing.

And growing. In your knowledge. And faith of Jesus. Into salvation. Knowing what you are saved for. And. If you are part of a Bible study. Be those living stones. Show up. Be part of it.

[20 : 41] Contribute. Do everything you can. To be together. And close. To your Christian brothers and sisters. So thirdly and finally. Thirdly and finally. We are called to Christ.

Led. Conduct. This heart of worship. This Christ. Centered. Closeness. And this. Christ. Led. Conduct.

We look in verse seven. Notice that the stone that the builders rejected. The stone that the builders rejected. Has become the cornerstone. It says. And a stone of stumbling. A rock of offense. They stumble.

Because they disobeyed the word. That they were destined to do. If you and I. Are Christians. If we believe. In Jesus. That he is the rock. And foundation.

He is the cornerstone of our life. We too. Will see stumbling. Because of our Christian faith. Maybe that was you. Maybe you stumbled. Because of the cross. You're like. I don't know if I can believe in Jesus.

[21 : 34] I don't know if it was Jesus. Maybe you've experienced. Folks around you. Saying. You know what. I can't. I can't hang out with you. Because you're a Christian. Because what you believe.

Because that Jesus. Is too much. And maybe like in verse 12. There's kind of a promise. That there will be those. Who will speak evil against. This kind of twist words. And say.

Ah. Christians are hateful. They're this. They're that. Maybe you've experienced that. Peter promises. That there will be suffering. If you're a Christian. But our conduct. Brothers and sisters. Our conduct.

Is like what verses 9 through 12 say. And I'm going to read the whole thing. 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.

[22 : 30] Beloved. I urge you as sojourners. And exiles. To abstain from the passions of the flesh. Which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles. Honorable. So that when they speak against you.

As evil doers. They may see your good deeds. And glorify God. In the day of visitation. So it kind of all. Kind of tapers down. To this day of visitation. And I don't think this is. The second coming of Jesus.

It could be. But I don't think it is. I actually think this is. When God draws close. When God draws close. When he visits. When he comes close to people. And I think this is particularly.

Poignant. And listen to what it says in verse 9. As we proclaim the excellencies of him. Who called us. Out of darkness into his marvelous light. People are going to hear the word of God.

And this idea of proclaim. This idea of proclaim. Is an inside out word. As we are filled. With the life of worship. As we are the living stones.

[23 : 27] Filled with who Jesus is. And what he has done. Proclaiming that Jesus is good. And what he has done. On the cross is good. As that is filling us up. That is what is going to come out. That is what his proclamation word is.

It is. That coming out. And it is not just for you as individuals. Saying you must do evangelism. That is for us. As the community of faith. That is for us all together. To bring the Lord Jesus.

To people. To proclaim him. And what he has done. Is good. That is for folks who walk into these doors. That we proclaim. That Jesus is good. We share with them.

Our lives in faith. That is that proclamation. As we love one another. And do that. But it is also. It is also not only proclamation. Notice in verse 12.

It says. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles. Honorable or good. So that when they speak against you. As good doers. They may see your good deeds. And glorify God. On the day of visitation. I think there is a turn here.

[24 : 25] There is a turn here. As people are stumbling over Jesus. As people are rejecting Jesus. As you and I proclaim him. And live as Christians. If God is love.

We need to be loved. If God is patient. We need to be patient. If God is truth. We need to speak truth. And as we do this. As we live this. As a Christian community.

Look what starts to happen. People glorify God. On the day of visitation. I think this is a picture. Of transformation. It is a transformation. Through. Us as a church.

As the one holy. Catholic. And apostolic church. It is. What happens. As we share. Who Jesus is. As we live. Out. As these living stones. Amongst the folks. As this nation.

That is scattered. What starts to happen. I think. What starts to happen. Is people. Who are in darkness. Come to his marvelous light. I believe. That people. Who do not know.

[25 : 20] God as his people. Become his people. I think. That people. Who have not received his mercy. Begin to receive his mercy. And that is the picture. Of worshiping. And glorifying God.

What is that picture of? I think that is the picture. Of the living stones. I think that is the picture. Of people. Coming and becoming. Part of. His one holy. Catholic. And apostolic church.

As we love. Others. So. Let me just finish. Off of this. We are in this together. This is not simply.

Individual. Effort. We are in this together. As the one holy. Catholic. And apostolic church. We have a heart. Of worship. Together. We grow close. Together.

We live the Christian life. Together. Amen.

[26 : 14] Amen. Amen.