

I Peter 2:9-10 "A People with a Purpose"

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

As we begin our sermon this morning, I'd like to invite the kids to come up here and sit on the stairs with me for a couple of minutes. I want to talk with you.

Look, you can sit with Miss Angela too. It's going to be fun. All right. Just come on up here.

See if you can get where you can see me. There's some seats down here in front of the steps. I want to tell you all how glad we are that you all are in here worshiping God with us every week.

Isn't it fun to be in here and get to celebrate how much God loves us? That's awesome, isn't it? You get to sing with us and pray with us and get to be a part of the baptism.

[1 : 05] We're just really glad that you all are in here with us. Sometimes, at this part of the service, Pastor Will talks for a long time, doesn't he? Does anybody think sometimes Pastor Will talks too long?

That's not very nice. Put your hands down. Okay. It's true. It's true. Sometimes, it's a little bit too long.

But some of y'all haven't usually been in here when we're having the sermon, when we're studying God's Word together. And this summer may be the first time that you're staying in here with us.

And we want you to know how important that is because we love God's Word. Because God tells us in it how much He loves us and tells us what it means for us to be His people, right?

And so, we want to listen to it together. And so, Miss Angela has been thinking with lots of other friends really hard about how we can help y'all be a part of that. And so, we have these new bags for y'all.

[2 : 02] Did some of y'all get one of these bags on the way in? These are worship bags. If you didn't, we have a whole bucket of them right there on the front. And you can get one when you go back to your seat, okay?

But there's lots of stuff in here. It's not stuff to distract you from the preaching. It's stuff to help you. Sometimes, is there any adults that it helps your hands to be doing something while you listen?

Or you like to color or draw a picture? Have your parents ever colored on their bulletin? Yes. That's okay, isn't it? And so, we've got some crafts and some crayons and lots of fun things.

I don't even know what you would do with something like this. Pastor Will's not very crafty or creative. But y'all could probably make really cool things with this. There's also something in here that I want to tell you about.

It's called the Sermon Word Challenge. You see this little piece of paper? It has six words on it this week. It says mercy, moon, Jesus, belonging.

[3 : 03] That's a big word. Exodus and grace. And you can get this out of your bag. And while Mr. Will is preaching this morning, you can listen for these words.

And when you hear them, just mark in the circle right there next to it. Some of them you have to listen really closely because you might only hear them one time. And you don't want to miss them, okay? But some of them, your circle might get really full because I might say them a lot of times.

Do I sometimes say some of these words a lot? Jesus a lot, I know. I know, that one might get a lot of marks. I hope it does. So, this is for you. And you can take it and maybe even get a treat in your Connect class afterwards.

Wouldn't that be awesome? So, we do get prizes if we do it right. You do get a prize. Yeah, just bring your card up with you and see your small group leader. Yeah, and then Miss Angela, what do we do with these bags at the end of the service?

Do not take them home. They don't go home. If you guys, when you get finished with the service, if you'll put everything back in your bag, and you can take it and put it right back in the silver bins that are outside, then we can refill them and then they will be here for you next Sunday.

[4 : 18] Does that sound good? Does that sound good? I want to tell you all one more thing before you go back and sit down and listen. We're going to, God's Word is so important and we want you to learn to listen to God's Word and to understand God's Word.

And so, we have a new slide that we're going to use every Sunday when we're reading the Bible. And today, our passage is from 1 Peter. Do you see that? Do you see that? The book of 1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 9 and 10.

And if you don't have a Bible with you, you can get one out of the pews that are out there. There are red Bibles in there. And that's the page to turn to if you don't know where 1 Peter is. Somebody can help you find it, okay?

And so, when I read it, you'll be able to follow along with us. And then you can keep it open there if you want to be able to look during the sermon, okay? It'll help your parents, too.

Some of them may read that on their phone or they may read it out of their Bible or a Bible from the pew. But we want to be looking at God's Word not just when we're together in the worship service, but all week.

[5 : 21] So, we want to be having God's Word in our hands and learning how to read it. And that's important for you and your parents and for me. So, can you all do that with me this morning?

All right. Grab a bag if you don't have one and you can go back to your seats and we're going to listen to God's Word. Thanks, Pastor Will. Adults, if you need a bag to help you for the next 30 minutes, please feel free to come forward.

Nobody will embarrass you. I might call your name. That's okay. I am really excited about this new sermon series, One Another.

A very creative title, I know, since we'll be looking at some of the about 60 places in the New Testament where that phrase is used to help us learn what relating to each other in gospel community looks like.

You can think of some of the one another's already, I'm sure. Love one another. That's in there a lot. That's next week. Confess your sins to one another. Forgive one another.

[6 : 37] Carry one another's burdens. Spur one another on to love and good deeds. If we get really excited, we may even talk about greet one another with a holy kiss, which is in there more than once.

We're going to spend this summer asking the Holy Spirit to teach us and honestly more than teach us to shape us and mold us and change us into what God has designed His church to be.

It is His design. That's why His Word talks so much about how we relate to one another. The church is to be this unique community where the good news of our Savior and our connection to Him binds us to each other in this unique way.

God answering our loneliness, the loneliness of this world with this unique community and these life-giving relationships that we all need.

it's going to be encouraging and it's going to be convicting because we don't naturally and normally live these ways. All of us struggle with it.

[7 : 47] But if you want to be part of a church, part of a community that's increasingly learning to relate to one another in these ways, then come on. Let's be a part of this together.

Pray with me and dive in with me. Be a part of this community. Now having said all of that, embarrassingly, I want to start this Sunday by looking at a passage that doesn't have any one another in it at all.

That's terrible, isn't it? But here's why. There's something that's so important that I want us to start here before we dive into all of these one another passages.

When you spend time focusing on how we relate to one another, the temptation there is to think that how we relate to each other as God's people is the reason we exist.

It's the goal of life. It's the essence of our mission. And it's just not. God does not design the church to be a holy huddle, so to speak, focused only on one another.

[9 : 00] So before we talk about how we relate to each other, I want us to listen to God's Word remind us who we are as His people and why we are here, what our mission is.

And then at the end of this morning, we're going to reflect briefly on how one anothering is a vital part of that mission. Not a distraction, but a vital part of it.

And yes, one anothering will be used repeatedly as a verb throughout this summer, so just, you know, get used to it. Grab a Bible of some form, if you will. Turn toward the back to 1 Peter.

We're reading just two verses this morning and then we'll pray together. Peter's writing to Jew and Gentile Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, and He reminds them of their glorious identity and mission.

1 Peter chapter 2 at verse 9. This is God's Holy Word. 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.

[10:20] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Mercy, kids, you get that? Mercy? Yeah, got it. Let's pray together. Holy Spirit, we do need You. We ask for Your help. Challenge our hearts, convict us, show us Jesus, show us the beauty of relationships for Your glory.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. If you walked into a building on Redstone Arsenal and you saw a bunch of these pieces lying around on the ground, you might not think very much of them, right? Some nuts and bolts and screws and wires and sheets of metal, perhaps, and they seem like pretty insignificant. They really couldn't do anything very important. You might just walk on by.

[11:28] However, when they and some other things get connected together in the right ways, these random bits of metal and plastic and technology may become a rocket.

A rocket that accomplishes a really great mission like putting a man on the moon, right? That's a picture of that rocket.

Things that didn't seem significant but are now put together and become something that really accomplishes something great and glorious. It's a picture of the proverbial reality that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

You've heard that before, probably. Individual things collected into a group may become something entirely different and accomplish a greater mission than they could separately.

That's part of the picture that Peter is painting for us this morning in this passage. He's using all these collective nouns, words that talk about groups of people, a race, a priesthood, a nation, a people that are brought together to become something new with a new and significant purpose.

[12:46] He's talking about Christians as a group. There are a lot of places in the Bible that talk about God's personal love for individuals. That's true and it's important but this is actually talking about God's love for his people as a group.

We'll focus on the collective mission this morning but the mission is fueled by the collective identity. Who is this new people?

Verse 10 says it's God's people. That's really the bottom line. That's what unites them into one group.

Verse 9 has several things it says about them. They're God's because he chose them first. You are a chosen race. brothers and sisters we love because God first loved us.

That's why we love him. Because he first loved us. We're his because he made us and because he sent his son for us. He picked you.

[13:56] Even knowing all your failures and flaws like Pastor Peter was talking about earlier. He picked you to be on his team. In fact to be in his family. Because of his gracious heart.

Isn't that amazing? Praise the Lord, right? He loves you like that. This passage in first Peter mirrors what God tells his people Israel all the way back in Exodus chapter 19.

Before telling them in the next chapter how to live as his people in what we call the Ten Commandments. God tells them what he's done to make them his people.

Exodus chapter 19 at verse 4. I think it's the next slide. There it is. You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians.

How I bore you on eagles wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore if you'll indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples.

[14:59] This is what I've done for you. I've loved you and I've come and I've brought you to myself. I chose you. Not because you were great or amazing or impressive or in charge.

You weren't. But because I loved you and brought you to myself. And now God's applying this to Jews and Gentiles.

Chosen race is not some ethnic superiority. That's an evil twisting of this. May it never be. He's saying you're a chosen race connected spiritually because God has chosen you and brought you together.

We're also a royal priesthood. Friends of God. Those who can come near into God's presence. That's who the priests are.

No one comes into the king's presence on their own but a royal priesthood. Those that can walk into serve the king. And they even represent him to others. And represent others to him.

[16:06] Right? All the way back in Exodus 19 again. All the earth is mine, God says. And you, Israel, shall be to me a kingdom of priests.

What's God saying? I own the whole earth. I want every nation to know me. And so you, Israel, are going to be priests the ones who know Yahweh, who have a relationship with him and then share of him with all the nations around you so that the whole earth knows who he is.

All of us then are priests who know God, who have God dwelling in us and therefore bring his presence to all around us.

Especially, Peter says, as we're gathered together, offering spiritual sacrifices to God as priests. And then we're a holy nation.

The exact same words used in Exodus 19. But what makes a people or a place holy? There's really only one thing.

[17:20] God's presence. we're set apart for him as a group different from others around you, called out to be marked by the presence of the living God.

Do you see how in all of these things Peter's describing what makes the group a group is God? He chooses us. He is the king whom we represent as priests.

He is the one present with us that makes us holy. What unites those rocket parts is the identity as a rocket. Right?

That's what makes them rocket parts. What unites Christians is their identity belonging to God.

Once, we were not a people.

You know what that feels like? not to belong anywhere, not to be a part of any group. Have you felt that before? It's not a good feeling, is it?

[18:27] Alone, insignificant, left out, ignored. Once you were not a people, you were bits of metal, plastic scattered about, but now you are God's people.

You belong to your heavenly father. Once you had not received mercy, you were hopeless, undeserving, discarded, worthless.

But now you have received mercy. Just like God told his people through the prophet Hosea, that's what makes you significant.

That's what makes you his. What is it that makes God's people God's people? He is. He graciously, mercifully gives us an identity together, calls us his own, loves us as his children.

He sends his son to make us his. Southwood, I know you know this. This is 101, I get it. But do you realize the significance of that for us?

[19:42] Do you understand what it means that our identity comes from belonging to God? Can you stop and think of the implications of that for us as a church? If who you are and your identity comes from belonging to God, we're a people, Peter says, for his own possession.

We should be a possessed people in the best possible way. We are his. What a privilege. We're his. Which means our purpose is what?

God. If that's our identity as people belonging to God for his own possession, then what's our purpose? It's got to be about him, doesn't it?

Peter says it in verse 9. We're a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him.

not yourself. It's not about you. We're to proclaim his excellencies. That's our new purpose. Now, maybe not new in the sense that it's what God originally created us for, isn't it?

[21:00] But we've been living for ourselves for a long time, haven't we? I'm pretty used to it. But this is why God calls people to himself because what's best for them is not actually living for themselves.

And he calls us to himself. Even with Old Testament Israel, this is what God says to them, his chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. Chosen for him to declare his praise. God then sends his son not primarily to make us happy but to make us his.

Let's be very clear about this because we get confused. Jesus didn't go to the cross so you and I could have a more comfortable life with nice neighbors and good church friends.

God's God's friends. Our mission is not merely to make each other feel good and enjoy life with as little discomfort and loneliness as possible. Jesus came so that everyone in all nations would know the glory of the one true and living God no matter what it cost him.

[22 : 24] God sent him. He was a sent savior for that purpose and so we are here so that everyone in all nations would know the glory of the one true and living God no matter what it costs us including our comfort and our nice neighborhoods and our good friends.

We are a sent church as he is a sent savior. It's not complicated because we are God's. We are to live for God's glory.

God's glory. It's that simple but it's hard for us isn't it? It's hard for us to live like that. It's even hard when we come to church.

You think you maybe spend an hour a week you know doing that but Jack Miller in his classic book *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*, yes you should read it, says this, many church members do not seem to come to church on Sunday with strong intent to meet with Christ and be transformed in motivation and values by his glory.

So honesty requires us to begin where we are to confess forthrightly that we have sinned and fallen short of the divine glory. Then he says the great American church tragedy is the local church with an abundance of resources and spiritual gifts held back by unbelieving apathy and blinded by the strange notion that the work of missionary outreach is the domain of a few highly trained leaders.

[24 : 02] You don't have to be a pastor or a formal missionary to have your purpose be proclaiming the excellencies of God. We're all priests.

That's our job. Together that's our job as a church. church. We need to start by saying Father forgive us for our apathy to your glory.

Being God's means we live for his glory and we declare his grace. It's the second part of verse 9 that we would proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

What's the story we have to tell and share? It's God's story of his rescuing the undeserving. We have experienced God's grace that we might express God's grace.

That many others as undeserving as we are may hear and see and trust that God brings them from darkness to light just as he does us.

[25 : 20] We are defined by receiving mercy. We need his help. That's who we are. We became a people by receiving mercy so it must be that thy mercy my God is the theme of my song.

The joy of my heart and the boast of my tongue. Thy free grace alone must be what moves my heart and my tongue to proclaim his excellencies.

Our purpose is not to have God's grace stop with us and say how great and wonderful it is. But to have it flow through us to others. We are not here for ourselves.

We are not even here merely for each other as important as that is. We are here also for those who are not here yet. Edmund Clowney in his book *The Church* writes mission is not an optional activity for Christ's disciples.

The gospel itself is the story of the seeking savior who knows the father's love. He goes out looking for people right? We have read about it in Luke. So if mission is lost the gospel is lost.

[26 : 37] That's the story. The story of a sent savior. We must be about what Jesus was about.

Having the love of God that we know that is in us overflow to those around us. You've heard me say before if that's not our heart for those around us in Huntsville and beyond we ought to close the doors.

We should. And send the money somewhere else. To someone who will have that be their purpose. We are God's people to follow Jesus in declaring his grace in word and deed.

Speaking unbelievable hope to the hopeless. That's the message of the gospel right? Showing undeserved kindness to the least of these.

That's what we've received. Undeserved kindness. And we're to show that. So that one relationship at a time. All may see how excellent and glorious and gracious our God is.

[27 : 49] God's glory and grace here and everywhere must be the driving passion of our lives and our church. God's glory.

That's great. Wonderful. Exciting. Now I'm frustrated. Why, Pastor? Why are we going to waste the next ten weeks one anothering?

Isn't that going to distract us from our mission? Let's get going. There's a world out there. There's a mission to accomplish. And when we focus on relationships with one another, aren't we going to lose sight of that mission? I love that question.

Thanks for asking. The best questions to answer. The ones you ask yourself. Let me tell you. Let's go back to the rocket mission to the moon for a second.

Imagine you heard that for a few weeks, everyone on the launch team was focused on the fins there at the bottom of the rocket. rocket. They had to get them figured out.

[28 : 55] They turned their attention towards that because they wanted them to be aerodynamic so they'd go just right. They needed to make sure that the temperature control was there for when they go through the Earth's atmosphere.

I guess some of you all know way more than I do. Don't critique me. They wanted it to be just right so it would smooth attachment to the rocket body, right? And they had to, if you heard that was going on, would you say they've lost focus?

No, you would say that's a vital part of the mission. I'm so glad that they're paying attention to those because if they're going to get to the moon, those fins are going to have to work right.

The same is true for gospel community. Not on my authority. On the authority of God's word. This same book that tells us the purpose of the people possessed by God is to proclaim God's excellencies says we must live in humility with one another.

We must love one another earnestly and so forth. There's a lot of them. It's not either love the world or love the people in your church, love one another. No.

[30 : 02] It's both and. Okay, why? Why is the people vital for the purpose? Why do we need one another for God's mission?

Why invest time and energy in relationships with brothers and sisters that aren't easy? And with people who don't have anything in common with me except Jesus.

And it's so frustrating. Well, there are many reasons we'll see through the summer. But to give us a start, it's because when you want another someone you don't have anything in common with except Jesus, it demonstrates the excellencies of Jesus, doesn't it?

That the power of his love is the only explanation for this relationship. I love the way Dr. Clowney frames this for us, but it's really convicting.

American evangelicals have a tradition, we like traditions, of individualism individualism that sees the church as a voluntary club for the converted. And this is his warning.

[31 : 17] Until we have a deep biblical sense of the corporate identity of the new people of God, we will not be able to present the gospel of peace on the front lines of our culture wars.

The true drawing power of the church transcends the cultural enclaves of contemporary society to dissolve the hatreds of a fallen world in the love of Christ.

And there's a lot to chew on there, but the relationships we are supposed to share, but often don't, are the ones the world is longing for.

Unity and peace among those normally divided and in conflict. Let me try to say it in a more pedestrian way than the beautiful professorial language church. When a young black Republican, a middle-aged Hispanic libertarian, and an elderly white Democrat give themselves to a shared mission and pour their lives into each other, into actually caring for and listening to and understanding and loving one another, it testifies to the excellencies of the king who unites them, doesn't it?

It says that there's somebody more compellingly worthy than anything else that they're about. And it says that their mission is more compelling and valuable than any other single political or racial or generational issue that they care about.

[32 : 56] That there's something else that's more important. And Jesus is that. This gospel community that we're to nurture and develop is what we're inviting a lonely and broken and divided world into.

Ask yourself, who would want to be a part of any group that's consistently hypocritical, holier than thou, neglectful, abusive, stubborn, and fake.

You want to be in that group? Often the church, we are guilty of all those things. We must start with our own repentance and pray for God to bring revival that would transform us.

We're praying for revival. We need to pray it starts in our hearts and then transforms our community around us. We need one another.

We need one another for encouragement and help because the mission is hard and the opposition is real. We need one another. We need one another because God says it's actually in relationship with each other that we see the glory of his love most fully.

[34 : 14] We get this view of his love in all its dimensions as we point each other to the glory and grace of Jesus in our lives.

We must be a people with a purpose. We are focusing on one another this summer not to lose sight of the glory of God and the declaration of his grace but rather to propel us more effectively and more powerfully on that mission with a big view of our Savior.

Amen. Let's pray. God we ask for your help. We confess that we are not the people that you would have us to be and yet you love us.

And yet you promise to make us that. There's hope for us not because we do this today perfectly but because our Savior is perfect because he loves us because he will see this mission accomplished and what a delight that he includes us in it.

Thank you Father. Give us joy and your mercy to us that makes us yours. Help our hearts delight in being your people and to live like that day by day.

[35 : 48] We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. For more information visit us online at southwood.org ■arly for videos on YouTube through the route.

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