**YOU ARE A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD**

1 Peter 2:4-10

Key Verse 2:9

*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*

Introduction: Each and every one of us in our church is very important in this world. When we fully understand our identity in Jesus, we can live an extraordinary life. In verses 1 and 2, Peter called scattered Christians who were persecuted as exiles in this world. However, here he calls them a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s special possession. This reminds us of who we are as a community as we come to Jesus by faith. Through today’s passage, we may fully realize God’s amazing blessings placed in us and wholeheartedly respond to him with great thanks!

1. Read verses 4-5. What happened to Jesus, the living Stone? (4) What happens to believers when they come to Jesus the living Stone (4-5a) What purpose does God have for them? (5b)

***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.*

1. Jesus the living Stone was rejected by humans, but chosen by God.
	1. First, Jesus was rejected by humans. According to the apostle John, *“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.* ***11*** *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him* (John 1:10-11). Jesus was rejected by a world that didn’t recognize Him. He was rejected by the Jews who did not receive him. While on earth, Jesus had predicted his rejection, saying *“… the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again”* (Mark 8:31). The Jewish elders, chief priests and teachers of the law tried Jesus and handed him over to the Romans, and the Romans handed him over to be crucified. In this way, both Jews and Gentiles--the entire world rejected Jesus.
	2. Second, Jesus was chosen by God. Despite being rejected by humans, Jesus was chosen by God and is precious to Him.
2. When believers come to Jesus the living Stone, they also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.
	1. First, when believers come to Jesus, the living Stone, they are like living stones. Here Jesus is the living Stone and believers are like living stones. Jesus is the living Stone. He is the One and Only, the original and the blueprint for all others to follow. Here, Stone is capitalized to denote a name given to God. There are many places in the Bible where God’s name appears as Stone or Rock. The name Stone or Rock is used to characterize God’s strength as a foundation or refuge. He is the living Stone because he has life in him. The life in him is spiritual, eternal and everlasting. God raised Jesus from the dead, and he is the source and giver of life from God. On the other hand, believers are like living stones. They must come to Jesus the living Stone to have life and to be like Jesus. Through coming to Jesus, believers grow in the image of God and become strong. Simon Peter was given the name Peter, which means small stone. Jesus is the living Stone--the Rock and Peter is the small stone. Through his name, perhaps he could remember to come to Jesus in order to grow as a strong leader for the church.
	2. Second, when believers come to Jesus they are being built into a spiritual house. Again, believers are like a lot of small living stones, each having life from God and carrying the image of God in Jesus Christ. These small living stones all come together in unity to build a spiritual house--Jesus’ church. The church is more than a building, but a spiritual house made up of all believers, growing together in God’s image.
3. God's purpose for believers is to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. As believers come together to build the church, God’s purpose is for Christ to dwell in and through them by the Holy Spirit, not only individually, but also collectively. They are called to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices; such as praying for others or serving them sacrificially with God’s words and through Christ’s character. In this way, a holy priesthood reveals Jesus Christ to the world for His ongoing work of salvation. Spiritual sacrifices are for God’s salvation work, which is pleasing to God, because it represents God’s heart and desire for all people to be saved.
4. Read verses 6-8. What does Scripture say about Jesus, the living Stone? (6) About the one who trusts in him? What will happen to those who do not believe? (7-8) Why do they stumble?

***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.*

1. Scripture says that the living Stone (Jesus Christ) is a chosen and precious cornerstone. This is taken from Isaiah 28:16, “*So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic.”* Jesus is God’s chosen and precious cornerstone. A cornerstone is the first stone set in constructing the foundation of a building. All other stones of the foundation are set in reference to this one stone, thus determining the position, strength and integrity of the entire structure. In this way, the cornerstone is the foundation stone for the foundation on which the entire building stands. Jesus is the cornerstone of the church. He was the first stone set for its foundation and all other stones are set in reference to Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, the cornerstone, the foundation and structure of the church cannot stand, but will fall.
2. The one who trusts in Jesus, the cornerstone will never be put to shame. Believers are called to trust in Jesus, the cornerstone and build the foundation of their life and church upon the foundation Christ set in place. The words “... will never be put to shame” means that whatever is built on Jesus will stand. It will not fall or fail and so bring shame upon the builder.
3. To those who believe, this stone is precious. *But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” and, “a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”* These verses are taken from Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14 respectively, “*The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”* and *“a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”* Those who do not believe are those that rejected Jesus. But, God rejected their rejection. God raised Jesus as the cornerstone despite their rejection. As a result, Jesus the cornerstone, whom they rejected became a stone that causes them to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. What they build cannot stand, because they build it on a foundation of sand. In this end, they will all be ashamed for rejecting Jesus the cornerstone.
4. Read verses 9-10. What did Peter call the believers? (9) What did he say about the purpose of this calling? In what respect were they once not a people? (10) How did they become the people of God?

***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.*

1. Jesus called the believers a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and holy nation, God’s special possession. These are the titles mentioned in the Old Testament (Exodus 19:5, 6) for the Israelites. Now, Peter applies them to the New Testament believers who come to Jesus Christ. We are a chosen people not by the world and its standard (criteria) but by the grace of God. We are a royal priesthood. Through the precious blood of Christ, we can come to God without fear. In the name of Jesus, we can dwell in God’s amazing presence. What a blessing! We all join in Christ’s royal priesthood. Empowered by his Spirit, we represent God’s kingdom. As a royal priesthood, we worship God together and pray for the world. Every believer participates in the royal priesthood where they are. When you go to school or work, you represent God’s holiness and mediate his blessing to people. Praise the Lord for making us a royal priesthood! We then are a holy nation. As we come to Jesus, we become a holy nation because we are cleansed by Jesus’ blood when we believe in him. Now our citizenship is in heaven and the church, a gathering of heavenly citizens is a kind of a colony of heaven on earth. Our lifestyle is not ruled by the world, but by the holiness of Jesus. When we live a life of holiness empowered by the Spirit, we can live as counter cultural and influential Christians. The world worships idols, such as worldly success, self-glory, and physical pleasure. But God wants our church to live as a holy nation, choosing holiness over worldly pleasure and ambition. We are God’s special possession. We are called “God’s special possession.” The church is God’s own treasured people. God placed special value in us. Once, we were slaves to sin. But now we belong to God because we have been purchased and redeemed with the precious blood of Christ(V18). So no doubt we are God’s most special possession.
2. The purpose of this calling was to declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light. Again the purpose of our high privileges is not to become proud, but to thankfully and humbly proclaim the praise of God who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. The world is still in spiritual darkness due to sin. What is the only solution to defeat darkness? It is the light. The light of Jesus can penetrate the darkness of sin that plagues so many people. We must see through what is the very plaque that is sin and death. It is the revelation of Jesus that dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin. Jesus’ power can break any chains of sinful darkness.
3. They were once not a people, because they had no true purpose for their lives. Without God, their lives were empty and meaningless. They could only live for and work for perishable things, only to perish themselves.
4. They became the people of God through receiving mercy from God. While living on earth, there are many things that compete to claim our identity. God wants us to deeply know who we are in this ungodly generation. We have the tendency to base our identity on our achievements or titles. “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.” Our identity and status are solely based on God’s mercy! It is the compassionate love of God that defines our identity every day.

Conclusion: We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession. How can we be confident about this amazing identity? We must daily come to Jesus who is the unshakable evidence of God’s mercy! As we constantly come to Jesus, we’ll be confident about our identity as a royal priesthood in this generation. He alone is worthy of worship. **One word: but now you are the people of God!**