

South Bay Community Church
Sermon Reflections
Do You Know Who You Are?
12 March 2023
Rev. Dianne Matthews

Scripture Text: 1st Peter 2:9-10

Sermon Preamble

This message will encourage us as the people of God. As Christians, we face a hostile society making it difficult to pursue holiness in our circumstances. Peter wrote 1st Peter to Christian believers who were scattered throughout the world, experiencing suffering and trials. As we live faithfully in a worldly and sometimes hostile society, we sometimes face forms of slander. Sometimes, we are even deliberately excluded from many conversations and social activities. Repeated blows to the head can give us amnesia, a temporary loss of memory with questions about where we are and who we are. In the same way, struggles, difficulties, and hardships can result in spiritual amnesia causing us to forget who we really are, as the people chosen by God. This message will explore five questions for us. (1) Who were you? (2) Who are you? (3) What did you receive? (4) What are you called to be? (5) Why? The scripture for this message is: “⁹ But you are A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *GOD*’S OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellency of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.” (1st Peter 2:9-10).

In the past, we were hostile to God, walking in darkness

To know who you are today, you must first realize who you were in the past. “...called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1st Peter 2: 9b). We were hostile to God in the past; we walked in darkness, not in the light provided by God, without hope. Hostility resided in our minds regarding our knowledge of God and also in our relationships with the people of God. We exhibited ignorance regarding the Will of God.

As stated in verse 10, “for you once were not a people.” In other words, we were not saved, and we were not the people of God. We walked in darkness without hope for eternal life, not fit to live eternally. Before our salvation, that is the condition that we all walked in, ignorant of the things of God.

Followers of Christ are chosen, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and people for God’s own possession

Who we are is in 1st Peter 2:9. “You are a chosen people...” Because God loves us, we are chosen by God. God picks you out, chooses you, and redeems you by the blood of Christ. God’s grace grants favor to you. You are chosen because you are a child of God, not based on your achievements or on your own personal self-worth. God chooses you to place you in the exalted position of walking in fellowship with God. We are sometimes rejected by humans, but we are chosen by God.

“You are...a royal priesthood.” Royalty means privileged. God the All Mighty Father has a kingdom of priests. In the Kingdom, we come boldly into God’s presence, pray for ourselves and intercede for others. Formerly, we were hostile and unbelieving, but now we present Jesus to the world as a personal witness for God. We are seeking always to reconcile people back to God.

“You are ...a holy nation.” We are the called out ones. We stand within the nation of believers. As followers of Christ, we have eternal life. We belong exclusively to God. God has the “pink slip” or the “deed” to our life. We are citizens of heaven; heaven is our home. The Bible says that the world we are living in now is not our home; we are just passing through it. As holy, we are set apart and sanctified for God. We are holy, not unholy; we are clean, not unclean. As holy, we must maintain a separate position among unbelievers. Holiness does not mean isolation from the world. We maintain contact with the world of

unbelievers, but we are not contaminated by them. They need your witness and your influence in their life; that is why you are not isolated. An illustration of this is how a scientist handles poison. They may handle the poison, but they do not internalize the poison by drinking it.

Jesus is our model. Jesus is holy, pure, and undefiled. Yet Jesus walked among a world of sinners and unholy people, because Jesus came for the purpose of seeking and saving the lost. Jesus was not contaminated with people's sins. Holiness is being separated in your mindset. In other words, you do not think like an unbeliever, because you have been transformed by the renewing of your mind, as described in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

Again, do you currently know who you are? This is a question for fellow Christian believers who may be suffering from spiritual amnesia.

Christian followers of Christ, as God's own possession, are peculiar people

God wants you to know that as "God's own possession," you are a peculiar people. You are God's own possession because you have been born twice. First, you were born of the flesh on your birthday. Second, you were born again when you accept Jesus Christ. You are the same person on the outside, but a new person on the inside. That is what makes you peculiar.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; the new has come" (2nd Corinthians 5:17). Because you believe Jesus is the Son of God, you are peculiar to the unbelieving world. It is peculiar to the unbelieving world that you believe Jesus came from heaven, died for your sins, and rose from the grave so that you may be saved and are justified before God. You believe Jesus paid the cost for all of your sins, past, present, and the ones you will make in the future; that is really peculiar to unbelievers.

We have placed our trust fully in Jesus to take us to heaven. We believe that it is by faith alone in Jesus Christ, not by being good enough. How can you know if you are good enough anyway?

God tells you peculiar believers to pray for your enemies. God tells you to bless and not curse the folks who spitefully use you and those that say evil against you. God directs us as God's people, to speak blessings for them in return for being mistreated, talked about, and being used by them. It is peculiar and unusual to an unbeliever because they do not bless people who mistreat them. Instead, their rule is an "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

Believing followers of Christ are peculiar people because we have been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, God's only Son. He is our scapegoat for our sins. It was our sins that Jesus took the blame for, and we were set free. When you confess your sins and do not try to hide them, God will forgive you of your sins and clean you up from all unrighteous acts (1st John 1:9). As you believe that, you are peculiar.

What have you received as a believer in Christ?

Believers in Christ have received mercy from God

What we receive as a believer in Christ is in 1st Peter 2:10: "You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." You have received mercy; in other words, you have received forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ. You are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. You have salvation and eternal life. Your name is written in the Book of Life, and it cannot be revoked. You have been able to discern between truth and error. You have God's promises, God's protection, God's provision, and God's peace. You have these resources.

Since you have been chosen, the question is, "What has God called you to do now that you have salvation? Do you know what you are here to do?"

God wants us to tell others the good news

Proclaim to others the good news about salvation. We should speak out, tell, and witness the "can do" power of God. We should tell people, God can do anything; there is absolutely nothing that God cannot do.

There is no life that God cannot reach. God can change any person and make their life different. We are to proclaim the love of God to the entire world. Remember John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world (the world is anybody and everybody) that God gave His only Son, so that whosoever believes shall receive eternal life. God wants us to tell them that their life can be changed.

God also directs us to live a sanctified life. We are set apart in our character and in our integrity. We are living in enemy territory: we are living in a fallen world because the devil is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).

We are also to be set apart in our thinking and in our mindset. Do not be compromised with the things of the world. God wants us to live by biblical convictions, not our personal preferences. We should be living based on what we believe, not based on our human preferences. In other words, keep your behavior excellent before unbelievers in order to bring glory to God the Father.

Why? Our purpose is to bring glorify to God.

As we keep our behavior excellent before believers and unbelievers, we bring glory to God. We bring glory to God because people are watching us. People hear what we say, then they watch what we do. Sometimes, what we do does not match what we say. You never know when your family, friends, and other people are watching.

They hear what we say. They watch you because you say you are saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Spirit, and love Jesus Christ. They are pondering your statements. They watch who you are, and they ask, "Is that how Jesus looks? Is that what Jesus does?" Are you really a witness for Jesus as you say? As believing followers of Christ, we have to understand that people are always watching us.

As believing followers of Christ, we are empowered to testify to the power of God

God empowers us. We have been called out of darkness. We have tasted the goodness, kindness, and mercy of God our Father. We have been shown mercy and compassion. God has helped us over and over. We now are a new creature, a creation in Jesus Christ. We have a new direction in our life. We have a renewed mind. We have God's Holy Spirit living within us to lead us to God and direct us. We have been chosen in Him, adopted in Him, accepted in Him, elected in Him, elevated in Him, anointed in Him, and appointed in Him. Therefore, we are empowered to testify to the power of God. God inhabits the praises of God's people.

God lives in our praises

If this message stirs your memory, it should remind you who you really are whenever you face persecution, like the 1st century Christians faced when Peter and Paul lived. Whatever you are struggling with, remember who you are. You have the resources God has provided.

Invitation to Christ

If anyone reading or hearing this message has not been saved, you are invited to choose salvation as a deliberate act of your will, not of your emotions. Salvation is based on biblical facts regarding Jesus. "Jesus answered...No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). If you do not have Jesus in your life, this is an invitation to get right with God through the Son, Jesus Christ. "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

We all need salvation in Jesus Christ: "...all have sinned and fallen short" (Romans 3:23). The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord." (Romans 6:23).

While we were still sinners, Christ died for each of us. It is an invitation to come to the table. The table is set. Everything is already paid for. All you have to do is come to Jesus Christ.

Please contact South Bay Community Church through our website, www.sobcc.org, or call the church at (510) 490-9500 so that we can discuss with you this invitation to Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDING FOR USE IN FAMILY GROUP

Sermon Preamble

-As a follower and believer in Jesus Christ, what sufferings and trials have you had?

-As you experience sufferings and trials, what spiritual practice has been helpful in remembering your exalted position where God has placed you?

In the past, we were hostile to God, walking in darkness

-What do you remember about you walking in darkness before you accepted the gift of salvation from God?

Followers of Christ are chosen, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and people for God's own possession

-As a follower and believer in Jesus Christ, which characteristic (chosen, royal priesthood, holy nation, and God's own possession) is most meaningful in your life journey? What characteristic, if any, do you find most difficult to live into? Why?

Christian followers of Christ, as God's own possession, are peculiar people

When have you been aware that others thought of you as peculiar?

Believers in Christ have received mercy from God

As you receive mercy from the grace of God, what resources has God provided to you for your mission in life's journey?

God wants us to tell others the good news

As people are watching us, why is it important that our actions in what we do match what we say in telling others the good news of Jesus Christ?

Why? Our purpose is to bring glorify to God.

What actions in your life bring glory to God? What actions will you resolve to take that bring glory to God?

God lives in our praises

In what ways do you praise God?

Invitation to Christ

If you have not received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, what can you decide to do to be saved? If you are already saved, in what ways can share the good news with others in what you say and do?