

Sermon Notes – Nimrod Tica, Evangel Baptist Church, May 7, 2017

To the Elect Exiles

1 Peter 2:9

- Some people go through a period of identity crisis in different stages of life, including senior citizens!
- By addressing the church as “elect exiles,” Peter was reminding the believers in the *diaspora* of the church’s dual identity. Our identity is secured in Christ.

“For the early Christian movement, living as an alien people scattered in territories once beyond the borders of the traditional homeland posed the perennial problem encountered by Diaspora Israel and all displaced, dispossessed, and disenfranchised peoples: the maintenance of a distinctive communal identity, social cohesion, and commitment to group values, traditions, beliefs, and norms in the face of constant pressures urging assimilation and conformity to the dominant values, standards, and allegiances of the broader society” (John H. Elliott, “1 Peter,” *Anchor Bible Commentary*, vol. 37b [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 314).

- By quoting from the Old Testament (Exodus 19:5-6 cf. Deut 7:6-7; Isa 43:20-21; Hos 2:23) Peter is teaching that the church has become the new Israel, the showcase of God’s grace and glory in the New Testament era; the church has become the new vessel that would carry the Gospel message to the world. Peter gives us four aspects of the church’s identity in Christ:

I. A Chosen Race

- We become a part of the chosen race by God’s grace through faith and for God’s glory.
- We find the concept of election or being chosen in so many passages in the New Testament (Ex. Eph 1:4-6, Col. 3:12, I Thes. 1:4).
- Election is a dominant theme in 1 Peter (1:1; 2:4, 6, 9; 5:13).
- Jesus Christ as the living stone was “rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious” (2:4). He is the founder, the foundation, and the cornerstone/ the chief stone of the church.
- Peter also establishes how the church’s being chosen in Christ is also tied to suffering and election (2:4-10). This is quite significant for the believers who did not have their own national identity in society. They were outcasts, rejected by society but they were chosen by God.
- As God’s chosen race, their hope was not in this world but on “the grace that will be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:3). Their wealth was not based on the temporary and limited comforts this world offers but on “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading kept in heaven for them” (1:4).
- This is the hope, the riches, and the ultimate retirement plan that we have in Christ as the church, God’s chosen people.

II. A Royal Priesthood

- This is our privilege as God’s children. Because we are God’s children, we are royalty, “fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16, 17).

- Being part of the family of God means that we the church are a royal priesthood. Christ as our High Priest has made one sacrifice for sin for all time (Hebrews 10:12), and thus, there is no need to make additional sacrifices for sin (Hebrews 10:26).
- 1 Peter 2:4-5 speaks of four related aspects of the priesthood of all believers:
 1. Believers are privileged to come to God (“as you come to him” [2:4; Heb 4:14-16]).
 2. God builds his church (“you also, like living stones, are being built” [2:5; cf. Matt 16:15-18]) – indicates change for the purpose of growth. And for many of us, change is difficult because it takes us out of our comfort zone.
 3. The goal of this process of being built up as a “spiritual house” is “to be a holy priesthood.” We are God’s “spiritual house,” His temple (2:5 cf. I Cor 6:19-20).
 4. We have been chosen by God “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (cf. Rom 12:1, 2)

III. A Holy Nation

- We are holy, set apart for a purpose. This holiness should be manifested in our conduct. Though some people might think that holiness is a private matter, it is very much related to public life. Ch. 1:15-16 (cf. 2:12, 17) reminds us, “but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.”
- Our hope is in the coming of Christ (1:13-17) – we are called to live according to that reality.

IV. A People for His Own Possession

- This aspect of the church’s identity calls us back to Hosea 2:23, a prophecy towards a rebellious people—“and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on Lo-ruhama (No Mercy) and I will say to Lo-ammi (Not My People), ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”
- Hosea was a prophet who prophesied just before the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 722BC. God commanded Hosea to take a “promiscuous woman” (*NIV*) to be his wife as an example of God’s love relationship with Israel and Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. Though Israel constantly turns her back from God, God still pursues her because of His unconditional love.
- A Lesson from *The Velveteen Rabbit* (Margery Williams Bianco, 1922). Some Observations:
 1. Humans are not “God’s toys;” we have been created in God’s image.
 2. Life on earth is not an illusion, bringing us to what’s real. The “here and now” is as real as the “there and thereafter.”
 3. God, our Owner, loves us and cares for us not because of anything that we have done but because of His grace and mercy.
 4. Our identity does not ultimately rest in what we can do but in who we are in God’s eyes because of Christ.

The purpose of the church’s identity: “that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (cf. Isa 43:20-21).