

Sermon: Chosen by God

Text: [1 Peter 2:4-12 ESV](#)

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Introduction: Campaigning for this year's mid-term elections has already begun. Even though we are two+ years off, there is positioning for who might run for President. Over the next few months the rhetoric is going to get ugly on both sides. I remember an old bumper sticker that was pretty funny if you were a Republican: "If Clinton is the answer - it must have been a dumb question."

As significant as national elections may be to the world, all the questions, about our government and its future, pale in importance to the spiritual decisions we make every day. The choices of whom we will follow spiritually are critical to our destiny (v.8).

Within our brotherhood there is usually a pretty lively debate (in some circles) as to what people like me ought to call ourselves as preachers. You hear titles like pastor, evangelist, minister, equipping minister, brother, father - and the list is certainly growing as we speak. I personally prefer "your holiness or Right-Reverend, or just Gary or "Wackdog."

Maybe the idea of calling each other "priest" could catch on. It is a biblical designation for Christ followers (Christians), and is supported by our text this morning. The only needed distinction would be that Jesus is the High Priest for all of us. [1 Peter 2:4-12 ESV](#) 4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 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. 6 For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"[a] 8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 9 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 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. 11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Footnotes: [a] [1 Peter 2:7](#) Greek the head of the corner

This is a review of who was listening last week during the sermon: How many priests do we have here this morning? What a headline for the local newspapers: priests come to worship at Weston Church of Christ! So everyone, who is a follower of Jesus Christ, is a priest. I also hope you understand the implications of that vocation (calling). I want to focus in on the familiar **verse 9**. Look at the parallelism in the front of this verse that are titles/offices describing us.

I Peter 2:9 ESV 9 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.

But what are our duties since:

I. God Has Chosen Us Out of Darkness (the world).

This means God has chosen us to be different from the world. God has chosen us to be priests and serve His Son, Jesus, the High Priest. Priests are no longer those from some elite clan or those lucky enough to be born into the right family, but all those who have responded to the grace of God.

We were changed when we were saved and brought out of the world, and we dare no longer behave as we once did.

I Corinthians 6:9-11 ESV 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous[a] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,[b] 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Footnotes:

[a] 1 Corinthians 6:9 Or wrongdoers

[b] 1 Corinthians 6:9 The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

And now because of Jesus, all who have been washed by Jesus' blood are priests. Our purpose is clear. It is: that you may proclaim the excellencies (**mighty and glorious deeds**) of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

A. For the purpose of service

We'll talk of vocalizing praise toward God in a moment, but certainly "proclaiming" our praise to God must be more than lip-service.

Mark 7:6 ESV 6 And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;

Psalm 34:12-14 ESV 12 What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

There are many varied ministries within the Church and not all are centered around words. And those ministries are just as valuable to God as what a teacher or I might do.

Now - don't take this as whining, but in some churches there is too much pressure on just the minister “to do things.” Our Restoration Movement has historically been known for their debates with the Roman Catholic Church. We have insisted, since Martin Luther, on the “priesthood of *all* believers,” i.e., no hierarchy of clergy needed. Even though some of our theology is significantly different, we are more like them in practice than any of us would want to admit.

In our churches, many times, you will see only certain people pray. When we did this kind of thing in the past - only men would pass the sacred offering plates and communion ware. Even today, many times there is little place for women in ministry even though Scripture never prohibits much of what we keep for “men only.” I sometimes wish Paul in **Romans 16** would have been more specific about the duties of Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junia and Julia - and how it was they assisted the Apostle Paul in ministry.

God Has Chosen Us Out of Darkness (the world)...

B. For the purpose of speaking.

You've heard this, I believe: “It is not what you say that counts; it is what you do,” or “I'd rather see a sermon than hear one.” Jesus often spoke in parables about following through in action on spoken promises. Speaking is important because faith comes by hearing the Gospel, but our speaking must be connected to service and ministry. Yet, we will have missed the point, if all we do is “do things” and never “say things.”

I find among most churches such an awful silence. People do not speak (confess) their faith. Someone from some other religious group comes and knocks on your door. You're standing at the door and there in front of you is someone witnessing from some other religious group. You've been in church all your life, and they're just piling up Scripture all around you, up to your ears. And all you can think of is “Jesus wept.” Now what do I say? I need some Scripture; I need some Scripture. Some have been in church 40, 50, 60 years and have nothing to say to these front-porch evangelists.

You know one reason we don't have anything to say?

It is difficult to find Sunday school in churches today. It used to be, many times when you would go into our churches, there was one Sunday School class, and it was a lecture-style. Somebody stood up in front and lectured for thirty minutes, took an offering, sang "Bless Be the Tie that Binds," and then we would go out to the sanctuary to hear another monologue.

Sometimes there might be another class where people can have an open discussion about the Bible. And you'll hear someone say: "I don't want to go into one of those classes, too touchy-feely, I just like to hear brother so-and-so talk." When you cut through all that, don't we want to say: "This is what I believe." This is where I stand!

We make a lot of excuses like: "Well, it's not what you say that counts, it's what you do." Well, what have you been doing? Well, nothing, but it's not what you say that counts. And deep down we realize that "saying it" is the hardest part of all. (churches used to have a mid-week calling program)

Valentine's Day is almost here. There are a lot of men who will buy flowers and candy (or a new vacuum cleaner, if they have a death wish) rather than simply say, "I love you." "Well, Ben, why don't you just say you love me?" Oh, be quiet and just eat your candy!" What's so difficult about it? I'll tell you what's difficult - the most difficult deed you will ever perform is to *say something* extremely important.

II. God Has Chosen Us to Declare His Praises.

A. In good times

Our lives as well as our assemblies ought to be filled with praise. Our services ought to be, whenever possible, upbeat, celebrative, encouraging - and we can do that without being untrue to our tradition. Being ready and willing to praise our Lord is not at odds with what God has in mind for His people.

A time of testimony and sharing how God works in our lives is certainly appropriate. We ought to want to share about all the blessings we've been given. That is often easier in small groups like Sunday School and Wednesday night gatherings.

It is our task/privilege to share the Good News as difficult as that may be for some of us. As priests, though, we have a clear responsibility and stewardship for the Word of God.

C. S. Lewis, from his *Reflections on the Psalms*, shares with us: “It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with.”

The Psalms are good at expressing what we sometimes struggle to say:

Psalm 9:14 ESV ¹⁴ that I may recount all your praises, that in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in your salvation.

Psalm 71:15 ESV ¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.

Psalm 73:28 ESV ²⁸ But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

Psalm 79:13 ESV ¹³ But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.

Psalm 107:22 ESV ²² And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!

Psalm 119:13, 26 ESV ¹³ With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. ²⁶ When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes!

And the Psalter ends with: **Psalm 150:6 ESV** ⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

God’s purpose in redeeming us is not simply for our enjoyment, but that we may praise Him forever.

God Has Chosen Us to Declare His Praises...

B. In bad times

Illus. Jack from Midland singing “I believe in God”

Illus. The Hall Family in Eden, NC Margaret has lost three children (Pete, Kim, Scott) and then her husband, Ken. She’s not a great singer at 90+, but she still will tell you about her savior and Friend, Jesus.

The people who have made the biggest impression on me have been those who in tremendous pain and loss could still voice their faith in God, and maintain a joyful faith in spite of everything.

III. God Has Chosen Us to Respond to His Mercy.

A. To abstain from sinful desires (we're at war down here).

Christians living in an unbelieving, secular society must try to avoid sinful desires and maintain lives that are a good example for others to follow. This is so unbelievers can be saved and have God glorified. There is no reason why this strategy would not work in every church - if it were implemented (Grudem, *I Peter*, p. 117).

Paul's advice to the Romans (the Church) was: [Romans 12:21 ESV](#) ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Peter starts with the assumption that the first and most immediate conflict is with the believer. That is, between the natural impulses toward survival and acceptance and the believer's new life that has been focused on God.

Paul told us of his struggles between the flesh and the Spirit. He does not do what he knows he should do and does things he knows he should not do ([Romans 7:21ff](#)). Sound familiar? But thanks be to God for His being rich in mercy and his readiness to forgive as we get wounded in the battle.

One way to respond to God's mercy is:

B. To be good

This is primarily not for selfish reasons, i.e., just so I can be saved, but also so others might be attracted to Jesus as well.

It is Jesus who makes all the difference in our living. Living hope, living stones can only be produced by a LIVING GOD. Water, bread and wine take on a new significance in the hands of our Living God.

Even disobedience and death are no match for a living God. He is able to forgive and resurrect us to new life. He is able to do much more than we can both ask or imagine.

As God's priests we dare not live our lives in some monastic order, tucked away from the world, taking vows of silence. We need to be both seen and heard to display a credible witness for the Truth.

Conclusion: There has been a change in God's localized presence from the O.T. It was thought once that God dwelt in a tent (tabernacle), and then in a temple fashioned by hands, BUT NOW God lives in a spiritual house made up of living stones, built on the Cornerstone, Jesus Christ. He lives in us today - if we are Christians.

There has been a change in the priesthood from the OT until now. No longer does the priesthood consist of a special order or gender of people. It now consists of everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. We are to be holy as He is holy! What a great and wonderful privilege it is to serve our Lord.

Since God has made such a remarkable organizational and relational change, the Church ought to reflect it! Let's make sure as we all serve as priests for a holy God that we exclude no one from areas that have been opened by our Lord. - no separate courts for women and Gentiles.

Lastly, sacrifices no longer are formalized, but they are gifts directed by the Holy Spirit in response to the mercy we have been extended through Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Romans 12:1-2 ESV

A Living Sacrifice

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers (and sisters) [a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.[b] 2 Do not be conformed to this world (age),[c] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.[d]

Footnotes:

[a] Romans 12:1 Or brothers and sisters

[b] Romans 12:1 Or **your rational service**

[c] Romans 12:2 Greek age

[d] Romans 12:2 Or what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God