

Our Identity and Mission

1 Peter 2:9-12

Leader Discussion guide

Sermon Summary:

In this passage, we see God describe aspects of the believer's identity and our mission. There are five statements about our identity in Christ. We are a chosen race, recipients of mercy, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and God's special position. In light of our identity we are called to speak about God's excellence and display God's character.

Illustrations Used:

- Being a dad shapes Pastor Marks actions.
- Picking teams in childhood sports games.
- Man at FITP receives membership letter never felt like he had belonged to anything in his life.
- Basketball tryout week compared to the first week of practice.
- The church is like an outpost or an embassy.
- Temple in OT. People were shut out because of sin and uncleanness. People went in.
- Every human has the feeling in their heart that they are on the outside and long to get inside. Garden of Eden door closed.
- Priceless possession: Picture Album.
- On Yelp you learn about restaurant from those who experienced it.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What did chosen race mean in the Old Testament? What does Peter mean by it? (See Galatians 3:28). Peter applies "chosen race" to the church. How is this true? What does it mean? How does race relate to identity?
2. If we are a chosen race, does that mean that we were special and that is why we were chosen? Why is being reminded that we are recipients of mercy important for life?
 - a. Application: Does anyone remember the state of their life before God?
3. God chose us and we are recipients of his mercy. Does this mean that we are perfect and have been completely changed? What does it mean that God is making us into a Holy Nation?
4. What is identity? What are things that people can put their identity in? Leader, pick one answer that is given and ask: "If someone puts their identity in _____ (work), how will this shape his/her life? Brainstorm this. Statement: Identity significantly shapes the way we live, what we do, and what we think and believe.

Application Questions:

1. If a person understood the five aspects of the identity of a Christian from this passage, what would that look like in real life? Go through each one and build on one another the strengths of each aspect of identity.
2. When Mark was talking about, "We are a Royal Priesthood," he said that every human being has the feeling in their heart that they are on the outside and long to get in. He

said that this feeling started when the Garden of Eden door was closed. What are the two parts of overcoming this gnawing sense that we are outsiders?

- a. Do you remember feeling like this before you became a Christian?
 - b. Do you ever feel like this now?
 - c. How can we overcome these outsider feelings? Which one of the two parts of overcoming the sense of being an outsider do you need?
 - d. How do we realize our identity in Christ?
 - e. What kind of joy, freedom, and confidence does the Christian who walks in their identity have?
3. If you are a Christian and you understand your identity in Christ, how should you live? Mark talked about two basic ways we live, 1.) we speak about God's excellence and we 2.) display God's character. What do each of these mean?
- a. How can you grow in each of these?

Extended Outline:

As a pastor, my main calling is to study and teach the Bible. As I try to do this, I often feel a tension between two themes: a tension between urging and encouraging. The only way that I/we can find the right balance is as my words are shaped and controlled by God's word. What we find in the sentences and paragraphs of Scripture is that God's urging to live a certain way so often flows out of his encouragement about who we are in Christ. Our mission, our calling, flows out of our identity.

Illus: We see this in daily life. Being "Dad" shapes my actions in many ways.

In this passage we see God describe aspects of the believer's identity, and our mission. 5 statements about our identity in Christ. Then look at what that means for how we live.

Our Identity: (as believers)

1. We are a Chosen Race – 2:9a.

- a. Used in OT to describe the nation of Israel. Israel was all of one ancestry (descended from Abraham/Jacob), one blood, they were one physical race. They would have looked similar, talked the same language, and had the same cultural background. God chose them.
- b. Now Peter uses that same term, "race," and applies it to the church.
 - i. But the church is made up of people with different skin colors, ancestries, ethnicities, languages, and cultural backgrounds.
- c. **Galatians 3:28** "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are **all one** in Christ Jesus."
 - i. So if you are a Christian – the core of your identity is that you have been chosen by God.

2. We are Recipients of Mercy – Read verse 10.

- a. It is tempting, when talking about being CHOSEN to get prideful.
 - i. **Illus:** Like we got picked first!
 - ii. **Illus:** See **Israel. See Deut. 7:6-8a:**
- b. **App:** We need to remember that God did not choose us because of our great worthiness. He chose us because of His great love.
 - i. V 9b – God "called you out of **darkness** into his marvelous light."
 - ii. V10 – Once we were not a people

- c. **Illus:** Man receiving membership letter wept. never felt like he had belonged to anything in his life.
 - i. **App:** If you are a Christian, you belong. A part of God's people.
 - ii. **App:** If you haven't, you can receive mercy.

3. We are a Holy Nation

- a. **Illus:** Freshman year in basketball. Tryouts. It was exciting to be chosen. I came back for practice the next day and he had us running lines. The coach had a plan. It was that we would be different.
- b. **App:** God's plan is not just that His church would be forgiven, but that we would be holy! That we would be distinct.
 - i. **Illus:** The early church formed a moral, ethical, and relational counterculture – holy nation.
- c. **Illus:** The church is to be like an outpost, or an embassy of the kingdom of God in the midst of the world, displaying the character of the king.
 - i. **App:** We will live differently. In at least 3 ways: 1:22 – our love. 2:9 – Our lips. V12 – our conduct.

4. We are a Royal Priesthood

- a. Priests are the people who get in.
 - i. **Illus:** Temple in the OT – Because of sin and uncleanness people were shut out. The priests were those who God allowed to go into the inner chambers – into His presence.
 - ii. **Peter says:** “Church, you are a royal priesthood. You are in.”
- b. **Illus:** Every human being has the feeling in their heart that they are on the outside, and long to get inside. At a young age this manifests itself in wanting to get into the cool group at school, or the artsy group, or athletic, or smart group. As we age it changes—maybe a desire to obtain a certain level of excellence and recognition in your profession, or to be on the inside of some social circle, or to get invited to the right party, or go to right church or be in the right group at church.
 - i. At the heart of this common human feeling, is the closed door of the Garden of Eden. The truth that we have been shut out by God because of our sin.
- c. **App:** The only thing that will solve this gnawing sense that we are outsiders is to become a Christian, **and** to realize our identity in Christ. That Jesus is the Great High Priest. He is in, and if we trust in Him, he makes us priests and we are invited in. We have access into the very presence of God. We are invited in to the only party that matters.

5. We are God's Special Possession.

- a. This shows up twice, v9: “a people for his own possession.” V10a – “Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.”
- b. He prizes and values His church. That we are His treasured possession.
- c. **Illus:** Think of some priceless possession you own. Picture albums.
- d. That is how God looks at you. See Zechariah 2:8 – ... he who touches you touches the apple of my eye.”
- e. **App:** Christian, God is not looking at you with disgust or indifference. No, you are His valued possession.

Transition: So this is our identity. Verse 9a. It is a God saturated identity. We are chosen **by God**, we have received **mercy from God**, and we are set apart and **holy to God**, we are royal priests with **access into God's presence**, and we are **God's treasured** possession—Church! That is our identity! Christian, that is your identity!

App: There are many other voices trying to define our identity for us: an identity built on all kinds of things, other than God.

Richard Baxter: "If you see not yourselves, and all things, as living, and moving, and having being in God, you see nothing, whatever you think you see."

So, how now should we live? The basic answer is, we should live to glorify God. We belong to God, we have received mercy from God, and we live to display God to all those around us. We are to do this in two basic ways:

1. **Speak about God's excellence.**

- a. V9b – this is who you are, "So that you may proclaim..."
- b. Why us?
 - i. We have experienced his Excellency.
 - ii. **Illus:** On Yelp you can learn about a restaurant from those who have experienced it.
 - iii. **App:** We have experienced God.
- c. V9b - We were in darkness, God called us, brought us into light, made us a part of his people, gave us mercy, gave us access to God.
- d. Our identity as God's saved people is essential to our mission of speaking.
 - i. We are speaking not as marketers, but as testifiers. Not as scholars, but as storytellers, telling the story of God's excellence, from firsthand experience.
 - ii. V10 – So talk about it.

2. **Displaying God's character.**

- a. V11 – We live as sojourners and exiles.
 - i. V12 – We live among the Gentiles – non-believers.
 - ii. Because of our identity, we will not, we should not share the wider culture's ethics and values.
- b. Instead, we are to reflect God's character.
 - i. This will mean abstaining from the passions of the flesh - v11
 - ii. This will mean honorable conduct, filled with good works – v12.
- c. So why would people speak evil against this?
 - i. Read 1 Peter 4:3-4 – They are surprised, they malign.

Conclusion: Our goal is **not** to fit in. Our goal is **not** to stand out as weird. Our goal is to be who we are. To let our God, and our relationship with Him define us – so much so that it shapes the words of our mouth, and the way of our life. As that happens, we will be different. And God will be glorified.