

Sermon: The Identity of God's People (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Introduction

Perhaps as close as we will come to a "farewell" sermon. What say? Review Paul's farewell sermon to elders in Ephesus? Other farewell sermons in Bible—Jacob/Israel, Moses, Joshua, David....

What do you think of when you think of treasure? What do you treasure?

We have secular ideas of treasures. We treasure things less than people. In this we show our materialism, we show our culture and its influence in our lives. We do not know how to lay up treasures in heaven—we think physical about spiritual realities.

I have been trying to say for over eight years in this church that Jesus is the treasure, Col. 2, Mt 13—parable of buried treasure, pearl of great price.

What we treasure we cherish, protect, set aside, often use sparingly...

We will not get the search and rescue mission right until we understand the treasure. The treasure is something we seek. When we find it, then we see that the real purpose of God is that we are the treasure, that others are the treasure, that the world is his treasure, and that he wants help in finding those who will be his.

God treasures his people. OT concept, reflected in NT.

God is jealous, possessive, he wants a people for his own possession, uniquely his, belonging to none other. We have missed the reason why. We have thought God was being mean. He is protecting us, he sets us apart, he won't subject us to dangerous conditions on purpose. Illus: old vehicles in Michigan—put away for winter. Consider how this idea runs as a thread through 1 Peter. He restores us, makes us like new. He shields us. The polishing which is for a positive purpose may seem harsh. He repairs, strengthens. These concepts are focused in the text of 1 Peter 2:9-10. This is God's description of his treasure.

First, the church is God's idea. God is the one who gives us value. We are God's plan and God's possession—God's treasured people. God chose you—specifically fashioned you, lost you, and after finding you again, put you in the church. God chose us first. We are not the initiators; we did not choose God. The church is God's people—those over whom God reigns as king. We are God's creation, we are God's idea; we were created by God, built by God, according to his specifications. We are constructed into one holy nation. Somewhere in this concept is God's plan for restoring broken horizontal relationships as well as the broken vertical relationship. This is the source of genuine unity.

Second, the church is called to holiness. We are a holy people. God set apart a people to himself, a holy nation, belonging to him. Holiness is so all-inclusive as to be almost beyond comprehension. Holiness from God's point of view is a description of his protection, shielding, preserving, beautifying. Holiness is restoring and repairing. Holiness affects every part of life. Holiness is not some grand mystery—holiness sets us apart for God's purposes and God's plan. Thus holiness determines the actions of my life. You are not more holy because you are here,

but you are here because you recognize God's desire for holiness in your life. Set apartness changes priorities and enables purity. We are dedicated for a special purpose, unadulterated, pure in the sense of not having impurities. This awareness of God's purpose guards us and keeps us away from those things outside God's purpose for us. Holiness begins in the work of God, we have talked not enough about sanctification as a Biblical concept, sanctification that continues as we walk with Christ. Holiness is our response to God's work, our submission, our discipleship, our willingness to follow.

Third, the church is God's royal priesthood. This reflects the promise of Exodus 19:5-6. That we are a priesthood means we can approach God directly through Christ. That we are a priesthood also means we are priests to others. We have gotten the first point much better than the second. We are God's priests to the world. You are a priest to your neighbor, coworker, brother or sister in Christ, or at least we as a church as called to that identity. The church thus becomes God's presence in the world, and accepts the responsibility to intercede for the world before God's throne. We are to be God's presence, we are to intercede on behalf of the world. God has other treasures than us. God's human creation is potentially his treasure—they are to be searched for and rescued. Being a royal priesthood means being God's presence in the world—representing him, showing others his presence, his nature. Being a royal priesthood means interceding on behalf of the world. Our prayers can no longer be only for self and our little circle. Our prayers and intercessions must be for our world—for the hurts and pains, the lostness, the godlessness. This is our world—the without hope, without Christ, without God, alienated, estranged world.

Conclusion

I have three final statements/sentences, and then we will stand and sing the invitation song. You may wish to respond and reaffirm your identity in Christ. You may wish to make changes and find strength in God and this spiritual family. You may wish to join this spiritual family on the pilgrimage and journey we share. You may wish to affirm that you will let God do with the treasure of your life whatever he wishes—beginning your walk with him with the polishing and perfecting, sanctification and cleansing of baptism. You can any of those things, or respond to God as you have need when we sing. Now three final statements.\

- Yes, the church exists in the world as aliens and strangers, but that truth reflects the real tragedy which is that the world is alien and stranger to God.
- A simple text: a chosen people treasured by God, a holy nation, a royal priesthood. So that....you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
- May God bless you as you make that declaration daily.