

Chosen By God, Royal Priest, Precious Possession?

April 09, 2017

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Contemplative Prayer – Psalm 118

(Here is a passage to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in pray)

Leader reads through the passage, one paragraph at a time. After each paragraph is read, pause, and let participants spend a moment in prayer, based on the content of each line.

At the end of the Psalm, the leader can close the prayer time by praying by name for each person in the group: “God, may the truth of this Psalm and the prayers of your people come to fruition in _____’s life.”

Icebreaker

Tell a story about the most recent time someone showed you a kindness – when in the past couple of weeks has someone done something unexpectedly good for you?

Text for Discussion: I Peter 2:4-10

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Early Christians stood out in the Roman world. They didn’t worship the gods or offer sacrifices; they didn’t have temples or priests. They were seen as subversive, anti-religion, and dangerous. Becoming a Christian was therefore costly and demanding. Peter’s vision of what it means to be God’s people would have deeply resonated with them, but for us to do the same, we must first embrace our need of a savior. The cross allows us to talk about our guilt and sin while remembering our Father’s divine mercy and grace. The high calling God asks of us and the hard truths the Bible tells us about ourselves are *always* preceded by His irresistible grace. It is this awareness of God’s forgiving and merciful posture that allows us to confess joyfully and live for Him – to be dangerously different from our culture just as early Christians were.

We are a Chosen Race. This may sound odd, even arrogant, but it echoes Old Testament language used to describe Israel. Like them, we must realize the difference between being a *chosen* people... and a *choice* people. It’s a humbling distinction. God doesn’t love us because we’ve earned it through effort or moral superiority. The Father’s love for His broken children is entirely of grace. He loves us because He loves us because He loves us!

But if Jesus is supposed to make a difference in Christians’ lives, why are so many non-Christians better people than a lot of Christians we know? This question can cause us to doubt our faith, when in reality it exposes the deep-seeded belief that God loves good people – that if we turn away from sin, God will love us. But that is not the Gospel. Grace *always* comes first. That is why Christianity offers hope to everyone. The light of God’s grace shines through our brokenness precisely because we admit how much we need it. Our job is not to display our excellence but to proclaim God’s own.

We are a Royal Priesthood. Part of what set early Christians apart was that priests and temples were unnecessary because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. No intermediary is necessary. As royal priests, we have direct access to the Lord of the universe. It also means there is holy dignity in our daily lives; we are doing God’s work, no matter what we are doing.

We are God’s People; we have received mercy. Peter, like the book of Hosea, says some hard truths about us. Despite being God’s people, we continually turn away from Him, breaking His heart. But in Jesus’ death, God has paid the high price necessary to redeem His beloved children. When we comprehend the magnitude of God’s saving grace, it changes us. With Christ as the foundation of our identity, the Gospel can melt our hardened hearts. If God starts with grace – before we deserved it and before we even knew we needed it – then we too can lead with love and grace toward our friends, family, and co-workers, even while they struggle against us.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How has God's mercy impacted your identity?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) Read the entire passage for the week out loud. What do you see as the connection between the "Jesus as cornerstone" idea and the idea of Jesus' followers being "a chosen people"?
- 2) Read vs. 9 again. Name the 5 characteristics of our new identity represented in this verse. Break up into groups of 2-3, have each group pick one characteristic, and name the "top 10" (or top 5) results of their characteristic in the lives of believers (have fun with this one as a top 10 list!).
- 3) **Guiding Question: How has God's mercy impacted your identity?**
- 4) Read the crucifixion account (John 19:16-30). At the end, read I Peter 2:10. How do you respond to Jesus' sacrifice and what it has done for you? How can you personalize it this week?
- 5) Application question: Go around the circle, and have every person name at least one way God has shown mercy to them in the past week.
- 6) Application exercise: Do an exercise to lean into God's mercy in the coming week. Each evening as your head hits the pillow, text yourself one way you saw God's mercy given to you that day. Get a "text buddy" and send the text to one (or two) other person(s) throughout the week.

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Thank God for how he is at work on behalf of the person on your right, based on their answer to question #5 above.
- Pray that for that person, that God would give them "eyes to see" his mercy in the week ahead.