

## “The Power of a Better Story”

### 1 Peter 2:9-12

Jason Gaston, Exec Pastor of Next Gen & Mobilization

**Good morning Biltmore Church, it’s such a joy to be with you today.** Before we jump into our text today, I do have a few housekeeping items to make sure we all have on our radars:

1. **NEXT STEPS:** Here last week, or missed last week...next step in your walk with Jesus or your connectivity to this community of believers
  - a. Connect Group
  - b. Serving - Reach Team
  - c. Baptism
  - d. Starting Point - find out more about us....**
2. **NEW SERIES** next week. “Ask Me ANything” going to be fantastic, PB will be back and ready to roll,.
3. **NEW SERVICE TIMES:** don’t forget, services start next week, for this service (9:15am) at what time???? 9AM!!

#### **Introduction:**

- In the summer of 1962, a cluster of neighborhood kids in a quaint Southern California town gather at their beloved field for a game of baseball.....(Sandlot Story)

**You see, we’re a people formed by story.** They shape us, letting us know that there is something behind our experience, something better than our circumstances, or even something truer than the lies we are telling ourselves.

**When we come to the book of 1 Peter,** the people of God were in need of a reminder, a reminder of a better and truer story.

When we step into the story of 1 Peter, what we find is a people struggling/suffering. The followers of Jesus that are getting this letter are scattered all over Asia Minor, which is an area that was controlled by Roman rule. That’s an important thing to remember in a few minutes when we talk about some of the challenges Peter gives the church.

*They’re struggling with their purpose and identity.*

In the early 2000’s a study was conducted, gathering a broad range of data from 132 countries attempting to find hard statistical data, and not just psychological data, around the concept of ‘mid-life crisis.’ When you statistically control for things like education and employment status, happiness, he finds, is always a "U-shaped" curve over people’s lifetimes. That is, it starts high in youth, then trends down and hits bottom in middle age, and picks back up in old age. This is true in all the countries he analyzes, including 95 developing nations. He finds that people are, on average, most unhappy at age 48 in developing nations and age 47 in developed ones.

- **According to the US Dept of Health<sup>1</sup>, suicide rates for middle aged adults, both male and female, have been steadily climbing for the last 3 decades. A better story. There’s a climb in the days ahead.**

1

[https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report\\_3370/ShortReport-3370.html](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report_3370/ShortReport-3370.html)

In 2019, The Atlantic Released an fantastic article titled “Workism is Making Americans Miserable.” In it, he traces the generational trends of predictions and projections of Americans and the workplace. His overall finding?

- “The modern labor force has evolved to serve the needs of consumers and capitalists, not to satisfy tens of millions of people seeking transcendence at the office.”
- **Our jobs will never satisfy. We need a better story.**

In 2018, Kevin Durant, professional athlete in the NBA had experienced an uptick in ejections from games during the middle part of his season. This was coming on the heels of winning the NBA title the previous year. He’s quoted as saying

“It’s just my emotions and passion for the game,” ...“After winning that championship (last season), I learned that much hadn’t changed. I thought it would fill a certain [void]. It didn’t.”<sup>2</sup>

- **Our chase for success will never fully satisfy. We need a better, a bigger story.**

We’re all in need of a better story. And so did God’s people in 1 Peter. Let’s read.

**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**

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<https://www.nbcsports.com/nba/news/kevin-durant-i-thought-championship-would-fill-void-but-it-didnt>

**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.”**

**REMINDER 1: WE ARE A GOSPEL PEOPLE**

**REMINDER 2: WE HAVE A GOSPEL MISSION**

**We Are a Gospel People:**

You ever heard the phrase “Look back to look ahead?” It’s why we have history classes in our schools, and why we have the Old Testament in our bibles. It gives us a full picture. A clear picture.

My wife and I just went and saw WICKED last week....

- Wicked messed me up. I’ll never look at the Wicked Witch the same. They way they retold that story was insane.
- Looking back gave me a clearer picture of what was ahead.

Peter does the same here....

**Looking back: Who You Were - (v10)**

**10 Once you were not a people.....once you had not received mercy,**

I love this verse, not because it simply reminds me of who I used to be, but because it's a direct quote from the Old Testament, drawing out a picture of the gospel grace and mercy towards us. Its' from HOSEA and his account with Gomer.

“Go take a prostitute and make her your wife. I will bring her from her place, into my land, and ‘make her my people. For once she was not my people, but now she is my people.”<sup>3</sup>

We were the prostitute, and God is the faithful husband.

- He called us when we were pursuing other affections, joys. We were unclean and dirty. Chasing after our own desires. Dead in our sin, as ephesians 2 would say.
- This is a reminder for us, looking back, that naturally you and I are not perfect saints, with all of our mess together. ***We are spiritual harlots*** with our own desires and longings.
- And it wasn't our ability to clean ourselves up to make us right before God. HE HAS SET HIS EYES ON US, IN OUR PLACE, WHERE WE ARE AND SAID “YOU MINE.”

**We were once not a people.....but now....listen to who we are**

**Looking Ahead: Who You are Now - (v.9) He hits several identifiers, but I want to hone in on 3.**

**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.**

**A chosen race : This is language that God had given distinctly to the people of Israel in the Old Testament.**

- You see it in Deut. 6, that the people of Israel were God's chosen people to make the glory of God known wherever they went.
- But now, you have a church made up of Jews, Greeks, Barbarians all hearing this same language towards them.
- That's because the gospel creates new people. Collectively. A new unit. A new race.
- And I've said it before and I'll say it again and again and again...this gospel people, this chosen race....it is DISTINCTLY BEAUTIFUL.
- Colorblind...good intentions...wrong in nature. God's not colorblind. He created the world through his beautiful tapestry. And that's what makes this chosen race, these new people, that much more glorious.
- every culture and race on the planet, has distinctions about them. Things that they say ‘this is us.’
  - Try taking a southern man, into a cafe and ordering a sweet tea out in Utah. And they say “we don't have sweet tea, but I do have

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/call-me-husband-not-baal>

SPLENDA. "Excuse me...what? I thought this was a classy joint."

The gospel unites beyond our cultures and preferences. It calls us....all of us in Christ, from various backgrounds and cultures....races and socioeconomic statuses....to himself.

### **Royal Priesthood:**

- Royal = Kingdom language
- Priesthood = Someone who stands in the gap between the people and God.

In the Old Testament, A King was never a Priest. One guy tried to that and he died.<sup>4</sup>

- But Jesus tore down the wall of hostility, and was our first KING AND PRIEST. He reconciles and reigns.
- And now, we're called a 'royal priesthood.' Meaning...we are the status of Kings and posture of priests.

He has redeemed you, set his eyes on you, and called you to himself. He's given you rule and reign on this earth, and we are to use it to serve PEOPLE and not ourselves.

As Tim Keller notes, Priests represent God before the people (we'll see that in a second) and they represent people before God.

- OT Priest - sacrifice into the Holy of Holies
- Jesus GH Priest - sacrifice once and for all to bring you to God

- You are Priests - because of Jesus, you have access!

**A People for his own possession** I love this. Go back to the language of Hosea. No matter how dirty, filthy, disgusting you feel...you are more loved than you'll ever know. There's nothing that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Nothing. Nothing.

Have you ever felt like "you've messed up too much to have God's love and approval back?" Of course you have, but this text is Exhibit A on why that could never be true. We are his people, for himself.

### **WE HAVE A GOSPEL MISSION.**

***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.***

***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.***

Okay, a lot to unpack in a short amount of time, but i'm gonna try my best:

**Exiles and Sojourners:** The word exile in greek literally means 'close but different.' Geographically near, but distinctively different.

<sup>4</sup> <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-peter-2/>

- This is important, because these are Greek men and women living among Greek men and women. Roman men and women living in Roman provinces. Their families live across the street. They are near geographically, but when Jesus calls you out, he makes you distinctly different.

*He says earlier in the passage, that he is our cornerstone, and we as living stones are being built up on him. MEANING, he sets our foundation. And he builds us, as a people, one himself. Interdependent on one another and also on the foundation that is Christ. **And that house, the house of living stones being built up, is to be GOD'S DEMONSTRATION COMMUNITY to the world around us.***

***The church is God's Demonstration Community.***

Let me be very clear, here.... Our role as followers of Jesus is not simply to make local school campuses more beautiful, renovate homes, or take care of the homeless. It's to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus. **To proclaim literally means to tell.**

*The word gospel is translated as 'an announcement.' You can't truly have a gospel message with just acts of service.*

- But when you go back to the book of Acts, or even in the gospels, what you see is that many of the proclamations of the kingdom were often accompanied by signs of the kingdom.
- Even Jesus' miracles (signs) were accompanied by proclamation about the kingdom. They go hand in hand.

In the NT, the people of God stood out through their words and deeds. Sure, there were some miracles going on. But you also saw things like "Tabitha making coats for her community" in Acts 9, Stephen caring for the Widows in such a way the Jewish priests took notice (Acts 6)<sup>5</sup>.

**Why is this important to the church in 1 Peter? Because one of the reasons they were being persecuted was for the way they lived counter culturally **"to live such lives among the pagans/Gentiles"....****

Well, early church history would show us that the followers of Jesus didn't go to the bloodthirsty gladiator games. They were empowering women in ways that society thought was despicable. They cared deeply for the poor. They did not support abortion and infanticide (meaning, if the baby wasn't the gender you wanted...they would dispose of it freely.) They were against sex outside of the marriage bed, they believed and lived out that the marriage was between one man and one woman. They believed that Jesus was the only way. <sup>6</sup>

One side: LIBERALS! They care for the poor, they detest war, they empower women.

Other: RIGHT WINGERS! They cared for the unborn, sanctity of marriage, monotheistic (only one way.)

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<sup>5</sup> Gaining by Losing, JD Greear

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful for the influence of Dr. Timothy Keller for this section on "God's Demonstration Community" on how they penetrated Roman Culture that both demonstrated and declared the gospel,.

Which was right? (pause....?) EXACTLY! The gospel creates a new people, not a cultural norm. And this new people demonstrate this coming Kingdom in how they declare and demonstrate the gospel to the cities they find themselves in in ways that the people cannot explain.

Even the Roman Emperor Julian took notice of the way the Christians were taking care of the poor and **said that his people should be more like them**. And he despised them.

### **Letter to Diognetus:**

*"Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life....And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives.*

Why do I tell you this? The same reason Peter told the church he was writing to. **To remember your calling. Your mission.**

In [Jeremiah 29:7](#) the Jews in exile in Babylon were exhorted to settle, marry and 'seek the welfare of the city' to which the Lord had carried them. They were to do this for 70 years and

after that their homegoing to the Promised Land was guaranteed ([Je. 29:4–14](#)).

Likewise, [1 Peter 1:1](#) sees the Christians far removed from their ultimate homeland, exiles with a mission. The question now beckons: **How now shall we then live?**

In the books of Acts, many have noted that out of the 40 miracles conducted, 39 of them happened OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. Seeking the good of the city. God's Demonstration Community.

### **That means:**

- The way you mother your children matters as a demonstration of the gospel to them and the world
- Are you a coach? Virtuosity. Do the common thing in an uncommon way. Don't berate the kids/tear them down, and leave them there. Be a builder, be different.
- Are you a builder? Don't take shortcuts. Do great work. Make Jesus known.
- Work in finance?
- Are you a teacher? Grace, Mercy, Patience....
- Professional sports?
- Are you retired? How you leverage this season matters!
- Own a small business? Do great work, let other people copy it

DEMONSTRATE THE GOSPEL in such a way that our city takes notice. **OUR CITY IS NOT THE ENEMY...She's our target.**

- The gospel mission is not simply for the work of the pastor, it's the work of God's people as they gather and as they scatter, everywhere they go.
- And God has redeemed you, brought you to himself, built your life on him and interconnected with others in this body, to make the gospel known through word and deed in our city.

**Jesus is our better story. He has redeemed us and sent us. May we be that kind of people. PRAY!!!**

## **BULLPEN:**

Sources:

- Christopher J.H. Wright "Mission of God"
- Francis Schaeffer How Shall We Now Live
- JD Greear "Gaining by Losing, Chapter 7"
- Timothy Keller "Center Church"
- [Paul David Tripp](#),