

Title: People Proclaiming Praises  
Date: November 1, 2020  
Subject: Missions  
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:9 - 12

One of my favorite sandwiches, that I haven't made in a while, begins with two hearty pieces of bread. Slather on some peanut butter and jelly. Top that off with some kind of meat -- maybe roast beef, salami, ham, turkey or a couple kinds. Pepper jack cheese. Dill pickle slices. Lettuce. A little spicy mustard on the other slice of bread. Potato chips, not on the side, but on top. Did I forget anything? Put the mustardy bread on top and squish it together. Yum. Nothing like a Dagwood sandwich. Normally, it's what inside the bread that counts.

This morning we're going to have the middle of a missions sandwich, not at all implying that what I'm going to say is the best part of the sandwich. Last week S&W powerfully and honestly shared how international workers sometimes get it right and sometimes blow it as well as the ministry of helping women who've been abused, trafficked or are pregnant. They provided specific ways to pray for international workers and ourselves.

Next weekend is our Missions Festival. It's a highlight of the year as international workers help us focus on people around the world who need to hear about Jesus Christ as their Savior. This year Steve and Elizabeth Williams will describe what they've experienced in France and Senegal, what God is doing, to challenge us to renew our participation in missions and reach those in our context as well.

That's why I say we're in the middle of the missions sandwich, hoping to add to the total.

Read 1 Peter 2:9.

The three images originally applied to the Jewish nation. Moses informed them they were called out of Egypt and were chosen to be God's people, his treasured possession, a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6). The imagery is infused with new meanings since Christ applies them to a new group -- those who've placed their trust in him. What kind of people are we? Here's what the Lord says.

1. We're a chosen people. This is a contrast to the people in the previous verses who rejected Jesus Christ. They tripped and stumbled over him when they were presented with the opportunity to come to faith in him. They rejected what he offered. They were destined for being separate from God.

That's not the case for those chosen by God. We're among those from the first century AD, the Middle Ages, the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Russia, Senegal, Brazil and Campbellsport who've been chosen by God to be his people. Being chosen is emphasized as the fourth image in the verse, *a people belonging to God*, also translated as *God's possession* repeats the idea. There's actually a third stress as v. 10 amplifies the idea. READ v. 10. He knew before the creation of the world who would respond to the message of Jesus Christ and put their faith in him, who would become his people. We need to personalize this. Long before God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed life into his nostrils, he looked down through the sands of time to see you and me, and chose us.

Hosea is the story of one of God's spokesmen who was given an unusual assignment -- take an adulterous wife. She may have been involved in adultery before their marriage. She certainly was afterwards. Her marital unfaithfulness was to be a wake-up call to the nation of Israel who were being unfaithful to God.

Another tool in God's arsenal involved Hosea's kids as object lessons by giving them *interesting* names, and by interesting I mean ones no child should have to be saddled with. The first was Jezreel because God would exact punishment for the massacre at Jezreel by King Jehu and put an end to the kingdom of Israel. The second child was Lo Ruhamah as God said he'd no longer show love to Israel that he should forgive them. The third child was Lo Ammi meaning "*you are not my people, and I am not your God.*"

Poor kid. "Hey *not my people*, time for supper. *Not my people*, you need to clean your room. I know it's a dirt floor. Clean it anyway. *Not my people*, go help your father."

Hosea was to keep on keeping on loving his sinful wife as a picture of God's love to the people of Israel. He was ready to welcome them back and one day he could say to them "My people, my loved one."

The book of Romans identifies another people group, Gentiles, who were regarded as "not God's people." But under the new covenant brought by Christ, now they're called God's loved one and his people, sons of the living God (Romans 9:25, 26). The end result is that we're no longer not "not my people."

2. We're a royal priesthood. This picture was used in v. 5 with a different adjective - *holy*. The role of priests is to be God's representative to people and people's representative to God. The Bible makes it clear the priests aren't limited to a certain class of believers. Rather, all who know Jesus Christ as Savior are priests. They offer spiritual sacrifices to God and reflect who God is. They represent God to people and people to God.

It's a royal priesthood which could mean they belong to a person who is royal or they themselves are royal. I think it's the first. The priest belongs to God who is the Royal. A position of favor has been bestowed by him upon them.

3. We're a holy nation. We developed this word picture during the study of the church in Ephesians. The barrier wall between Jew and Gentile has been destroyed by Christ's death on the cross. He brought two people groups which includes all cultures and ethnicities together as one new man to be fellow citizens of God's Kingdom. No one is a foreigner or alien. People who were once outside of God's people now have become God's people. People who had not received mercy, have now received mercy through Christ.

What's the purpose of being these kinds of people? Proclaim the praises of the Lord so people from the entire world, no matter their ethnicity or heritage, can be his chosen people.

The Lord's intent has always been that those who are his would be the means of communicating who he is and what he wants to do for people. The Jews were to proclaim his praise from the mountain tops and to the distant islands (Isaiah 42:11, 12; 43:21). That theme is frequent in the songbook of the Old Testament but what I just mentioned is from Isaiah. In that same book the Lord reveals descriptions of The Servant of the Lord who is none other than Jesus: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and to bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may

bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). This verse is often referred to as the Great Commission of the Old Testament.

It might sound familiar in the context of Christmas (Luke 2:21 – 32). Jesus was brought to the temple when he was eight days old. An old man named Simeon saw the Christ child. He took the Savior in his arms and praised God. “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” He didn't include the part about the ends of the earth, but the apostle Paul does when he references the Isaiah passage (Acts 13:47).

This week, as I started my third reading through the New Testament this year, I began with the book of Matthew, which is stating the obvious because Matthew is the first book. I found it very intriguing that after Jesus delivers the principles and program of the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7), the first person he meets is a high-ranking military commander who is a Roman, a Gentile (Matthew 8:5 – 13). If you were to look at the interaction, you'd find Matthew 8 begins with Jesus meeting a man with leprosy (Matthew 8:2 – 4), but that incident is best placed chronologically before the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus was in his adopted home of Capernaum when he met the army leader. The Gentile centurion asks the Lord to heal his paralyzed servant who is suffering terribly. Jesus says he'll go to the man's house, but the centurion says he doesn't need to go. “You can just say the word and it will be done.” Here's how Jesus responded: *When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the East and the West, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 8:10 – 11).

The man saw the light in Christ and came into the light. Back in 1 Peter, the text reminds us that those who know Christ as Savior have been called out of darkness and into his wonderful light. Jesus, the light, shed his light on us so that we could come to the light.

But that's not the end of the line. Jesus doing something for us wasn't the fulfillment of God's plan. He also wants to do something through us. That's the purpose of being a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people belonging to God. V. 9. It's very clear that these things happen that we might declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness and into his wonderful light.

We're to be light as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14 – 16).

The verses in Peter that follow what we read talk about being aliens and strangers in a world that's filled with desires and corruptions that are warring against our soul and pressuring us to yield. READ v. 12.

Sounds like Peter spent some time with Jesus because they say the same thing. People are watching and observing us like a hawk scanning the field for it's next meal. Through our lives, our good deeds, we have

an opportunity to shine our light so people can see Jesus Christ and they can give praise to God. Our good deeds include using our voices to communicate what we know and our story of how Jesus has given us forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We declare the praises of God by our actions and our words.

We've been benevolently granted the privileged position of being the ones of being the communicators for God. The Lord could have done it himself. He could have activated the angelic messaging system to rearrange the stars to personalize the good news by spelling it out in each and every language. He could have done lots of stuff, but he decided to use those who've been changed to become the messengers of what the Lord can do.

It's to become a massive story telling project or a holy version of the telephone game except the intent isn't to say the message as fast as possible to see how mixed up it can be by the time it gets to the last person. We declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light so others can declare the praised of him who brought them out of darkness into his wonderful light and son on.

Pastor and author A. W. Tozer put it this way, "What God anticipated when he wrought the plan of salvation, was to make worshippers out of rebels."

John Piper expands, and though he speaks of missions, what he says applies to all areas of evangelism. "If you say that you love the glory of God, the test of your authenticity is whether you love the spread of that glory among all the peoples of the world. Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. God's passion is to be known and honored and worshipped among all the peoples. To worship him is to share that passion for his supremacy among the nations. In heaven there will be no missions; only worship. Gathered around the throne will be worshippers from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 7:7) Thus the goal of missions will have been accomplished. But until that is the case, true worshippers who have tasted the goodness of the Lord will not be content until they have invited the nations to join them in the feast...Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man" (A Holy Ambition, pp. 148, 149).

J. Campbell White was the main leader of the Laymen's Missionary Movement in the early 1900s. The group was formed among Christian businessmen who wanted to get behind what God was doing in the Student Volunteer Movement. White said, "Most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives. Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers accept the adoption of Christ's purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans. The men who are putting everything into Christ's undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards" (J. Campbell White, "The Layman's Missionary Movement," in Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, 225).

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