

THE CHURCH AND ME - TOGETHER FOR A PURPOSE

FIRST PETER 2:5-10

SATURDAY P.M. / 19 SEPTEMBER 2009

TWIN ROCKS FRIENDS CAMP

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www.2ndstreet.org

.PPT 1 ...

This evening we're in our second session of exploring what it means to "become the church and the people God is calling us to become" from **FIRST PETER 2**. This morning I shared with you about George Fox ... who lived in England in the mid-1600s and was the founder of the Friends denomination. And I shared a saying that's been attributed to Fox when talking about "the church" ... **the church is the people, not the steeple.**

And whether our church building has a steeple or not, we need to pay attention to Fox's words, because what Fox was trying to get across, and what Peter is teaching us is that it's **God's heart** that the church **not be a place**, but that ...

.PPT 2 ...

The church must be a living organism made up of walking, talking, breathing, fully-alive people who are making it their daily choice to invite Jesus to teach them how to think, how to speak and how to live ... and who are inviting others to join them in their quest.

.PPT 3 ...

The church is the people, not the steeple. - George Fox
We're the church gathered in authentic worship
We're the church scattered out in authentic ministry

On Sunday mornings and other times throughout the week we're literally **together - we're the church gathered**. And we come together as **the church gathered in authentic worship** so that we might be **grounded** and **guarded** in worship, in the WORD of God, in prayer, and by experiencing the presence and voice of God together.

And why do we do this? So that during the other 160-something hours in the week when we're not **the church gathered in authentic worship** that we'll be equipped to be **the church scattered out in authentic ministry** ... the church out engaging the world, living out our faith in ways **radical** and **strong**, and **simple** and **quiet**.

The church gathered together in authentic worship and **the church scattered out into the world in authentic ministry**. This holy rhythm is how the influence of God and the presence of Jesus Christ **in us** and **through us**, has the power to change the world. This God-cadence of **gathered-and-scattered**, of **worship-and-ministry** is how the Kingdom of God grows and becomes **more than just a good idea**.

.PPT 4-5 ... FIRST PETER 2:5-8 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

⁶ For *this* is contained in Scripture: “Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.”

⁷ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, “The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone,”

⁸ and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

The “**living stones**” and the “**spiritual house**” Peter is talking about here is you and me as the people who make up the church of Jesus Christ. And our “**choice stone**,” the “**cornerstone**” is Jesus Christ.

Jesus quotes PSALM 118:22 in MATTHEW 21, MARK 12 and LUKE 20 - pointing us to the fact He is the Messiah and that even though He'd be *rejected* by lots of people, He'd been *chosen* by God the Father to become salvation for the world ... and that because He submitted to His Father's will, many people would *choose* to believe in Him and become His followers. So He was *rejected*, even though He was *chosen*. Do you see it?

.PPT 6 ... PSALM 118:22 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

⁸ and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

ILLUSTRATION ... Remember being *chosen* or *not chosen* for Flag Football in Middle School, or for Red Rover in Elementary School? Sure the last kid was *eventually chosen*, but he or she wasn't chosen right out of the gate. *Rejected*, but *ultimately chosen*. It's what we were afraid of on the playground when we were kids, *and* it's what we're afraid of when we're adults on the playground of our life and our vocation. And it's a good description of Jesus Christ.

.PPT 7 ... THE DOME OF THE ROCK ...



The Temple was first built by King Solomon in Jerusalem (about 500 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem) and it was where the Muslim Mosque commonly called *The Dome of the Rock* is right now.

You've probably seen pictures of *The Dome of the Rock* ... it's the Mosque whose gold-covered dome is always seen in photos of Jerusalem. And the hill that it sits on, in *The Old Testament* times was called Mt. Moriah and is where King Solomon built the Jewish Temple in around 1,000 BC. Here's a short timeline of this Temple ...

.PPT 8 ... A TIMELINE OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE ...

| | |
|----------|--|
| 1,000 BC | King Solomon (the son of King David) builds the Temple. |
| 585 BC | Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar destroys the Temple. |
| 515 BC | The Temple is <i>rebuilt</i> by the Jews - headed up by Zerubbabel and Ezra. |
| 70 AD | The Temple is destroyed by Roman Emperor Titus. His death came suddenly and unexpected, on 13 September 81 A.D. at his family home at Aquae Cutiliae. Some say his younger brother Domitian killed him with poisoned fish. |

Mt. Moriah was the mountain Abraham and Isaac climbed up to make the sacrifice in **GENESIS 22**. Mt. Moriah itself used to be much taller and wider than it is now, especially on it's North side. Before all the stones for Solomon's Temple were quarried out of it, Mount Moriah had a large ridge that ran North ... out from where the *Dome of the Rock* is now, and at *the end of that ridge* is the place believed to be *Golgotha*, or Mt. Calvary, the hill where Jesus and the two thieves died on their crosses.

And so that the people in the *Tabernacle* (which was like the *portable Temple* that was used before Solomon built the Temple) didn't have to hear all the cutting of the stones, they were all quarried and shaped down inside the mountain. Then they were labeled and numbered as to where they would fit, and which stones they would be set *beside*, *under* and *above* another. And when all this was done, each stone was brought up to the surface with pulleys, platforms, and ropes, and set into place. But there was no sound of construction heard. Not a sound.

.PPT 9 ... FIRST KINGS 6:7 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

⁷ The house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built.

It was even said by some Rabbis that “**not even a trowel could be heard on the Temple Mount**” as the Temple was being built. This wasn't because they had “silent trowels.” Ask anybody who has ever worked with cement or masonry and they'll tell you that there's no such a thing as “silent trowels”. Not then. And not now. But no mortar was used because the stones fit together so perfectly.

ILLUSTRATION ... There's a story about what Peter's teaching us here that's not in Scripture, but it's part of what's called “*The canon of Rabbinical teaching*” ... or the “*oral tradition*” of stories that are still

being taught by Rabbis all over the world. And here's how the story goes ...

As the Temple was being built, the *oral tradition* of the Rabbis said there was *one stone* that came up to the surface that wasn't marked in any way. Somehow it didn't get labeled as to where it was supposed to fit. And so when the stone-setters up on top of the mountain received this stone they were puzzled about what to do with it. And when they didn't come up with an answer to their conundrum, they took this unmarked stone and rolled it off the edge of the hill, down into the Kidron Valley.

And there it sat. The Kidron is the little valley that runs out to the East of the old city of Jerusalem ... it's the dip you go down into ... East of the Temple Mount before you can go up to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane.

It took Solomon and his builders seven years to complete the Temple ... and seven is the Hebrew number of "perfection" or "completion". And during those seven years, the brush in the Kidron Valley grew up ... and that *unmarked stone* was all but forgotten.

But finally Solomon's Temple was *NEARLY FINISHED*. And yet it *WASN'T FINISHED*; because the *keystone* that was needed, the *last stone* that was to be set at the base of the Temple's front gate, the *Cornerstone* that would eventually have engraved on it *the starting date of the building of the Temple* and *the completion date of the Temple* was missing. It was nowhere to be found.

Now, for the *cornerstone* to be missing at this stage in the game was a huge deal. The folks down-below in the quarry scratched their heads and said, "But we sent that stone up to you years ago. What did you do with it?" And the folks up top said, "Look, we don't know what *you think you sent up*, but it didn't show up." And then somebody said ... "Hey, remember that *unmarked stone* that was sent up years ago? The one we rolled off down into the Kidron Valley? Could *that stone* have been it?"

And so they hurried down into the Kidron Valley, and they cut back some bushes and there it was, *the stone that had been rejected*. And they hauled it back up the mountain and took it to the place where it was designed to fit, and guess what? It was a "perfect" fit! And as the *Cornerstone* was set into place, it became the stone that all the other stones fit under, fit into, and *found their completion in*.

The architect down in the quarry *chose* the *Cornerstone*. It was the builders up on top that *rejected* it. When Jesus Christ came to earth, He was chosen as the *Cornerstone* by the Architect, God the Father ... and yet the *Religious Leaders* of Jesus' time rejected Him. Do you see it?

And so when David write about *THIS CORNERSTONE* in PSALM 118:22 ... and when Isaiah writes about *THIS CORNERSTONE* in ISAIAH 28:16 ... and when Peter writes about *THIS CORNERSTONE* here in FIRST PETER 2:4-8 ... they're all speaking about Jesus Christ. David and Isaiah were looking *into the future* and prophesying about Jesus Christ, The Messiah, our Emmanuel, "*God with us.*"

And here in FIRST PETER 2, the Apostle Peter was looking *back into history* and reminding us that Jesus is our *Cornerstone*, the One David and Isaiah had promised.

How many of you know that the Architect is always right? And that it's the builders who make mistakes.

All of us have to wrestle with the Truth of God's plans. We can reject Jesus Christ and roll Him off to the side of our lives, out of sight ... out of mind. Or we can choose to build our lives on Him, on Who He is, and on what He teaches. The choice is ours. And it's not so much about us deciding about who Jesus *was* and *is*, but it's about us deciding what we're going to do with *the reality of Who Jesus Christ is*.

It's God's plan that you and me, the "living stones" Peter talks about here ... that we find our **MEANING**, our **PURPOSE**, our **DIRECTION**, in only one place ... in Jesus Christ, our **Chief Cornerstone**. And I see a couple important applications for us here ...

.PPT 10 ...

FIRST, the transformational work God does in our lives is first and foremost an inner work.

God is working on our minds and hearts ... because He knows that their transformation will be at the root of our *words and our actions* being transformed.

We tend to put a lot of emphasis on how our *outer lives* look, how they reflect or don't reflect the character of Jesus Christ and the will of God. But our primary focus needs to be on what God is doing *inside of us* ... because that's what will have a real and lasting impact *on our outer lives basically* and not the other way around.

.PPT 11 ...

SECOND, this life is basically a quarry ... which explains why so much of the time we feel like we're being chipped and chiseled away at.

"Why did I get stuck next to *this blockhead*?" we ask. Or "Why are *they* part of my family, or part of this church?" You wanna know why? Because as *living stones* we constantly rub against one another, knocking the rough edges off each other in the process. And the beauty of this design is that God has put each us right next to the very *living stones*, right next to the *very people* He knows will smooth us down the best ... so that He can build us up into a Temple for His glory.

And the challenge is that you and I are always trying to get away from the *knuckleheads* we're rubbing against and who are always rubbing against us. But God's refining process in our lives almost always involves *friction, chiseling* and *change* ... and because of this reality we have to remember that ...

- God puts us into fixers to fix us (turn to one another and say this)
- Because God wants to make our lives *less of a mess* He often puts us on the front burner and turn up the heat ... and because of this reality ...
- We've got to learn to trust God, believing that because He knows us better than we know ourselves, we can trust His plans for us ...

- God has *an eternal perspective on our lives* ... He sees our beginning from our end. And it's this perspective that He wants to breathe *into us*, and see birthed and lived *out of us*.

So when I try to *fix the fixes* God puts me in, I can always be sure that He'll be faithful to put me into another fix, to fix the fix He wanted to fix in the first place, but that I spent so much effort trying to get out!

But when I try to get away from "him" or "her" ... or when I try to "get out of this situation or that situation" ... or when I try to fix things my own way, **I'LL NEVER REALLY GET FIXED**. But oh, how God loves to hear His children say to Him ...

"Okay God, You win. I'm not going to try to fix this, or wiggle out of this. I'm going to embrace where You have me because I know that You're doing a number on me and a work in me. Even though I don't know all the reasons why, I know that You're shaping me for Your plans and purposes here on earth, and to be with You for eternity."

An gang, living this kind of a life, with this kind of a perspective helps us go to a deeper level of *honesty, confession, holiness, obedience* and *partnership* with God ... to a level we can get to no other way.

.PPT 12 ...

When I applied to be the lead pastor-teacher at 2nd Street in 2006, the pastoral search committee asked me a lot of questions in the process ... one of them was **What's your understanding of the church?** Here's part off what I wrote back to them ...

Jesus Christ is the head of the church - He is its Chief Shepherd. This can't be talked about enough. This is the main reason the pastor and other church leaders must creatively and consistently talk about Jesus Christ, teach about Jesus Christ and point people to Jesus Christ. I mean, the whole Bible points to Jesus Christ, proclaims Jesus Christ and calls us to Jesus Christ - so we shouldn't be shy about talking about Him as the head of the church.

The Jews rejected Jesus ... He was *a rock of offense, a stumbling stone* because they just couldn't grasp the concept of a *suffering, dying Messiah*. And so they said **"Jesus isn't the Messiah"** and they crucified Him. And that's why, to this day, Jews all over the world are still waiting for the Messiah to show up on earth.

Just as Jesus was *rejected* and *crucified* ... and then He turned out to be the *Cornerstone* ... so too, you and I need to make sure we're not rejecting the very One Who is the *only One* we can build our lives on, the *only One* Who can give us the strength and the balance we need to live the lives we've dreamed we can live.

Peter is telling us that God is in the process of building us *spiritually* into the Church He's designed for us to become ... that we're "living stones" He's fashioning into His House, into His Temple, and into His dwelling place here on earth.

I hear Pastor Peter saying to us here at Adult Fellowship Camp at Twin Rocks Camp, “not only are we *children in the same family*, but we’re also *stones in the same building*.”

“Gregg, why are you making a big deal out of this?” Because so many people today say, “*We don’t need the church. We can commune with God in the woods.*” or, “*The church is filled with hypocrites. Why would I want to be part of that?*”

And to those comments I’d say, “*You’re right ... the church isn’t perfect. Yes, the church is made up of broken people. Living stones usually have a lot of chisel marks on them, and more than likely still need a lot more shaping and forming. And sometimes our life-together is messy ... because ... hey, NEWS FLASH! people can be messy! But Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone of the Church God is building here on earth and because of that, the Church is valuable, and it’s important, and it’s central to God’s plans and to what God is up to.*”

.PPT 13 ...

*We’re the church gathered in authentic worship.
We’re the church scattered out in authentic ministry.*

A few times during the week we’re *the church gathered in authentic worship*. But the rest of the week we’re *the church scattered out in authentic ministry*. And as we’re consistently *the church gathered in authentic worship*, and as we become students of His WORD, and living sacrifices unto God ... it’s then that we’ll become consistent and effective for God as *the church scattered in authentic ministry*.

As 21st-Century Christ-followers, we don’t need *a physical Temple*. God no longer “dwells in *a location*”. Instead, God’s Holy Spirit lives inside of His followers. *We’re His dwelling place*. We’re the building God is putting up in the world to demonstrate *Who He is* and *what He is up to*. And this is what Peter desperately wanted his friends in Asia Minor to understand when he wrote this letter to them in 64 AD ... and I believe this is what God the Father wants us to understand this evening.

ILLUSTRATION ... WES KING ... “JESUS, OF ALL THE PLACES YOU COULD BE, I CAN’T BELIEVE YOU’D CHOOSE TO LIVE INSIDE OF ME ...”

.PPT 14 ... FIRST PETER 2:9-10 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In **vv. 9-10** Peter gives us a description of people who are making it their goal to become *more like Jesus Christ* ... of men and women, boys and girls, young people and not-so-young people who’ve put their belief in God and who then say, “*God, I’m going to obey You. I am going to invite You to teach me a whole new way to be*

human, and a whole new way to live.” Here’s what I see Peter calling us to, and how I see Peter’s words defining us, and what I see Peter’s words mean today ...

.PPT 15 ...

PETER CALLS US ...

A CHOSEN RACE

THIS DEFINES ...

WHO WE ARE

WHAT THIS MEANS TODAY ...

Who and what defines us and is at our center? Jesus wants to be what defines us most completely. He wants to be at the very center of who we are and what we do.

.PPT 16 ...

PETER CALLS US ...

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

THIS DEFINES ...

**HOW WE SERVE
GOD & OTHERS**

WHAT THIS MEANS TODAY ...

Priests served God and people. Jesus said that loving God and loving people are to be the two defining realities of our lives. So what are we giving our lives away to? Are we serving God with divided-hearts or with whole hearts? Are we caring for and serving one another, calling one another to deeper faith? Or are we just serving ourselves?

ILLUSTRATION ... “ME CHURCH” VIDEO ...

.PPT 17 ...

PETER CALLS US ...

A HOLY NATION

THIS DEFINES ...

HOW WE LIVE

WHAT THIS MEANS TODAY ...

Is righteousness a “vague dream” or “the way we choose to think, talk and act?” Is “holiness” a check-off card, a list of do’s and don’ts? Or is holiness the cry of our heart because we long to stay as close to God and His priorities as possible?

.PPT 18 ...

PETER CALLS US ...

**A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S
OWN POSSESSION**

THIS DEFINES ...

**WHO WE
BELONG TO**

WHAT THIS MEANS TODAY ...

God is “jealous” and has a right to want us for His exclusive use. Our understanding of Who we belong to will drive our priorities, and plant our lives in the center of God’s will.

People who seriously invite God to teach them about *who they are*, about *how they serve*, about *how they live*, and about *who they belong to* are the kind of people God can use **to turn the world upside down** (ACTS 17:6).

ILLUSTRATION ... Let me wrap up this evening's teaching by telling you about how Doug Nichols (presently the *Director of Action International Ministries*), made the "*excellencies of God known*" in a tuberculosis sanitarium in India when he was a missionary with *Operation Mobilization*.

Doug contracted tuberculosis, and while he was in the sanitarium for several months, he consistently tried giving away tracts and copies of the GOSPEL OF JOHN. But the people running the sanitarium, and Doug's fellow TB patients wouldn't take them, because even though he was just as sick as everyone else there, they assumed he was also a rich American, so they didn't want to have anything to do with him.

Each night Doug would wake up with a severe coughing spell. One night around 2:00 A.M. while Doug was awake, literally "coughing up his lungs", he noticed an emaciated little old man across the ward trying to get out of bed. When the man couldn't stand up, he began to whimper ... eventually falling back into bed. In the morning the stench in the ward was nearly overpowering, and everyone was angry at the old man for not containing himself. And the nurse who had to clean him up even beat him for making such a mess.

The next night the very same thing happened. Doug woke up coughing - and once again he saw the little old man trying again to get out of bed so he could make his way to the bathroom. And once again unable to stand, the man fell back into his bed and began to softly cry. It was then that Doug got out of bed and went over to him.

The old man cowered with fear ... but even though Doug was horribly weak from his own sickness ... he picked him up and carried him to the bathroom - which was just a hole in the floor - and then brought him back to his bed. And after being laid back down in his bed, the grateful man kissed Doug on the cheek. He was crying once again, but this time it wasn't because he was *alone, stranded* and *abandoned* ... this time it was because he'd been *loved, tended to* and *cared for*.

Because Doug understood that he'd been chosen by Christ, he chose to do what Jesus would have done, which was to love and serve the man across the ward from him. And in that act of love, Doug lived out his belief that he was ... *A CHOSEN RACE* - a man with Jesus at the center of his life. *A ROYAL PRIEST* - a man serving Jesus as he served others. *A HOLY NATION* - a man living into the righteousness of God in ways practical and strong. *A MAN WHO BELONGED TO GOD* - a man whose eyes were opened up to the truth that the little man across the room didn't need to "hear a sermon" ... he needed to "see a sermon."

At 4:00 A.M. another patient woke Doug with a steaming cup of tea and made motions that said he wanted a copy of the GOSPEL OF JOHN. And through that whole day people kept coming to him and asking for his booklets - even though he couldn't speak Hindi.

In other words, one of the best ways to declare “**the excellencies of God**” is to *live them out as the church gathered in authentic worship ... and as the church scattered out in authentic ministry*. When we *live out* the “**excellencies and the goodness of God,**” as we treat people the way God has treated us ... with *patience, mercy and gentleness* ... people will *hear* and *see* more about God than if we just *talked to them about Him*.

In vv. 9-10, Peter is talking about the status of you and I as believers *NOW*. He's not looking ahead at *what we might be* or *what we have the potential to become if we just try hard enough*. In fact Peter didn't just use the *Greek present tense* when he writes the words, “*but you are*” in v. 9, and “**but now you are**” in v. 10. Peter used a tense we don't have in English. He used the *Greek present perfect tense* which means Peter is saying that *his words were true when he wrote them 1,940 years ago, and they will continue being perfectly true on into the future*.

Growing up into Christ takes *time, practice, and determination*. Remember the learning curve involved with a new job, or when you have a new baby, or when you were learning how to drive a car? That's what I'm talking about. Learning to *live, think, act, and speak* as the *spiritual house* God has in mind for us to become takes *time, practice and determination*. But the good news is that over time, God's perspective can become our perspective ... and as we learn to submit to Him, His character and His very life will begin to bubble up from inside of us and start to be lived out of us with *authenticity and consistency*. And when this begins to happen, we start to *live into the truth of who we are in Jesus Christ* ... and we start to *live into the truth of who God has made us to be and called us to be*.

Blessed be the WORD of the LORD.

Tomorrow morning we'll look into FIRST PETER 2:11-20 and talk about whether or not we're *giving God our agendas, our futures, our gifts ... and about what it means to "submit to His authority" and to the structures of authority He's placed in our world, and in our lives*. *I INVITE YOU TO COME PRAYING AND EXPECTING*.