

# Vision 20/20

*“Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes”?”  
(Matthew 21:42 ESV)*

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”  
(Acts 1:8 ESV)*

*“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”  
(Matthew 25:13 ESV)*

## **Proclaiming The Excellencies**

**September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**1 Peter 2:4-12**

**Rev. Paul Carter**

### **Introduction:**

Good morning church! I want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to 1 Peter 2:4-12; that’s on page 1014 in your pew Bibles. As Pastor Jody mentioned this is our second week in our Vision 20/20 series. In our Vision 20/20 document it says:

### **Who Are We?**

A gathered, local, reforming church in the City of Orillia committed to:

#### **1. Delighting in Christ**

We spoke about that last week.

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone! All we are and all we have is because of him! He is the last stone from the old house and we are being built up on him and in him and this week we are going to find out why. We are saved for a reason and we are called for a purpose and as we said last week, we are who he has made us to be – created in Christ Jesus to do good works which he prepared in advance to be our way of life. Who we are leads us to consider what we are called to do and that is the progression that we will be looking at this morning.

Hopefully you have your Bibles open now to 1 Peter 2; we'll begin reading at verse 4. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

<sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

<sup>7</sup> So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"

<sup>8</sup> and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> 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. (1 Peter 2:4–12 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Well, as I mentioned, there is a progression in this text. It begins with WHO WE ARE and it proceeds to WHY WE ARE and that is the progression I intend to follow. We're going to talk about WHO WE ARE and WHY WE ARE so that we can land and spend the bulk of our time talking about HOW TO BE WHO WE ARE. That's the end goal here.

Let's begin then with who we are.

## Who We Are:

We'll be brief here because this is the ground we covered last week. Last week we looked at Isaiah 28:14-29 – a prophecy wherein God says that he intends to GRIND ISRAEL DOWN INTO THE DUST. He built her up – but because of her deep rooted idolatry and rebellion – he declares now that he will break her down. He will affect a SEVERE SCOURGING and a RADICAL PURGING and he will break down the house of Israel to a single stone.

Peter cites Isaiah 28:16 in 1 Peter 2:6:

For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (1 Peter 2:6 ESV)

So he says, who we are goes all the way back to that prophecy. Jesus is the Cornerstone. He is the last stone from the old house. He is THE ONE. He is the FOUNDATION and he is the FUTURE and if we are in him – if we believe on him – then we have a share in that future! We are the LIVING STONES being added to that foundation every day. Not only Jewish stones – but stones from every tribe, tongue and nation on planet earth – this is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes!

Now I mentioned that this prophecy in Isaiah 28 has a parallel in the Book of Hosea and Peter cites that parallel as well. Look at 1 Peter 2:10:

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:10 ESV)

That is an obvious allusion to one of the main metaphors in the Book of Hosea. The Book of Hosea is one of the most painful and jarring books in the entire Bible. It uses the word “whore” in just about every verse – and that takes some getting used. In that book God recruits a young prophet – he's about 19 years old when God calls him. And he tells him to go marry a woman of whoredom. We assume that means that she was a woman with a heart bent on whoredom. Go marry a woman who is a whore at heart – that's what God says. So he does. He marries a gal named Gomer and they have a child together. But then she leaves him – she is a whore at heart. And somehow and for some reason she sells herself into whoredom. She becomes a prostitute for pay. And she has two children while living as a whore. And God tells Hosea to go and buy her

out. So he does. And he takes her home. And he puts her under house arrest – he puts her in detox and he gives these children HORRIFIC and PROPHETIC NAMES.

One is to be called “No mercy”. The other is to be called “Not My People.”

God had him do that so that whenever he introduced those children he would have to tell the story. He would have to say that just like his wife Gomer was a whore at heart so too were the people of Israel. And so too would they come to understand what it meant to live outside of the tender mercies of God. And so too would they come to understand what it meant to be outside his covenant care and protection.

I’m sure that was quite a show stopper every time he dropped his kids off at a birthday party.

“Where is Mrs. Hosea?”, they would ask.

“She’s at home, under house arrest because she is a whore at heart. But her arrest won’t last forever. I will woo her and win her again and she will know me and call me her beloved husband.”

And the children will receive new names – we’re told that in Hosea 2:23:

And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’” (Hosea 2:23 ESV)

That’s the Book of Hosea!

Now you say, “Pastor, that is an awful story, why are you telling it to us?”

Well I’m telling it to you because Peter refers to it in this chapter. 1 Peter 2:10 CITES Hosea 2:23 and APPLIES IT TO THE CHURCH. Peter is saying: Remember when God put mother church under house arrest? He hid her away from the world! He buried her in Babylon! He scattered her in Assyria – but he never gave up on her or her children. He did it to PURGE and PURIFY. He ground her down to a single stone, as it were and now he is ready to build her up again.

That is what you are CHURCH. You are the renovated and expanded covenant community.

## **1. The renovated and expanded covenant community**

That's the first thing we need to see. The purge is over. The scourge is over. The people in darkness have seen a great light! It's a new day! And God is laying NEW STONES on the tested and sure foundation.

Look at verse 10 again:

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:10 ESV)

That's Hosea! And Peter is drawing on that imagery to say that the church is the renovated and expanded people of God.

Thomas R. Schreiner says here:

“The church does not replace Israel, but it does fulfill the promises made to Israel; and all those, Jews and Gentiles, who belong to the true Israel are now part of the new people of God.”<sup>1</sup>

So the church is the renovated and expanded people of God – and that means that all the old categories still apply. So Peter says that we are:

## **2. A spiritual house**

He says that in verse 5. We are the temple of the Lord – not a temple built with physical stones, like the old temple in Jerusalem, but a temple built with spiritual stones. I'm talking about men and women, boys and girls who are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul talked about this in 1 Corinthians 3:16:

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Peter* Thomas Schreiner, *1,2 Peter, Jude* The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 115.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?  
(1 Corinthians 3:16 ESV)

So that's who we are! We are the temple! We are the spiritual house of God.

And we are, Peter says:

### **3. A royal priesthood**

In verse 5 he calls us a "holy priesthood" and then in verse 9 he calls us a royal priesthood – so you can choose your adjective. Either way he is clearly referring here to an important Old Testament passage. Back in Exodus 19:5-6 God said to the covenant people:

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup>and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' (Exodus 19:5–6 ESV)

Now you notice the word IF in the passage above. This was obviously, in some sense, a conditional promise. You can't argue that – because it has the word IF at the very heart of the promise. IF you will indeed obey my voice THEN you shall be my treasured possession, my kingdom of priests and my holy nation.

Well of course the story of the Old Testament is the story of how Israel was never able to meet that condition and so the heart of the Gospel is the Good News that in Christ God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves.

JESUS has fulfilled the condition!

He obeyed God perfectly!

And therefore he is able to be our Great High Priest – and now, to the extent that we are believing in him and being built up in him – we are a royal priesthood. Sons of the King – and Priests of the Lord Most High.

That's what the church is – to the extent that it is built up on Christ. We are a Royal Priesthood unto God – and we are a Holy Nation.

#### 4. A holy nation

Peter says that too in verse 9:

you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession (1 Peter 2:9 ESV)

So we are a royal priesthood and a holy nation – these are obviously overlapping categories.

Wayne Grudem says helpfully here:

“Just as believers are a new spiritual race and a new spiritual priesthood, so they are a new spiritual *nation* which is based now neither on ethnic identity nor geographical boundaries but rather on allegiance to their heavenly King, Jesus Christ, who is truly King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).”<sup>2</sup>

So before we are Canadians or Americans or anything else in here we are Christians. We are the people of God through faith in Jesus Christ. We are a holy nation! A people distinct in our character and singular in our allegiance – that's who we are!

But now Peter turns to the matter of WHY WE ARE. We are who we are for a reason and we can see that reason clearly in the middle of verse 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.” (1 Peter 2:9 ESV)

#### Why We Are:

---

<sup>2</sup>Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 117.

We are who he has made us to be – in order to DO that which he intended us to do. Peter Davids describes it perfectly. He says:

“Christians are to “publish abroad” the mighty works of God, which include both his activity in creation and his miracle of redemption in the life, death, resurrection, and revelation of Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

So why has God renovated and expanded the covenant community? Why are we a spiritual house? Why are we a royal priesthood? Why are we a holy nation?

The answer is simple:

### **1. That we may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us**

The job of the church can be stated in one simple sentence: To proclaim the excellencies of God in Jesus Christ.

That is the job – that is our purpose – that is the WHY of our existence – now how ought we to do it? That’s where I want to spend the remainder of our time this morning. How are we supposed to do that which we were created and saved to do?

The text itself and the words that Peter uses point us in the right direction. We proclaim the excellencies of him who called us first all:

## **How To Be Who We Are:**

### **1. By praising him in here**

Sometimes we forget that our mission actually begins in here. The words that Peter uses in verse 9 are actually borrowed from Isaiah 43:21:

---

<sup>3</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle Of Peter* The New International Commentary On The New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 92-93.



“the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.” (Isaiah 43:21 ESV)

So God MADE US who we are that we may PRAISE HIM for who he is. Edmund Clowney says here:

“Declaring the praises of God is the great work of worship. ... The praises of Israel are full of recounting of the mighty works of God.”<sup>4</sup>

So our first JOB as the renovated and expanded people of God is to declare the praises of the Lord and to recount the work of the Lord on our behalf in the person and work of Jesus Christ – in here!

So Children’s Ministry is mission.

When you tell the kids downstairs about how God created the universe and made human beings male and female – you are doing mission. When you tell them the story of how God labored and worked and waited patiently with his people in the Old Testament you are doing mission. When you tell them about how all of the promises of God land finally and climactically on the person of Jesus Christ you are doing mission.

Children’s ministry is mission.

And worship is mission.

When we remind each other of who God is and who we are and how God has saved us through the person and work of Christ we are doing mission. We are proclaiming the excellencies.

And when we sing “O Great God!” and “Amazing Grace” and “Cornerstone” we are doing mission!

We are proclaiming the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into marvelous light. That’s why you are here! This isn’t PREPARATION FOR MISSION – this is mission.

---

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, ed. John R. W. Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today*. Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 95.

You were made for this.

You were made to worship.

Therefore, your mission – our mission – begins in here.

It begins by PRAISING HIM IN HERE – but then secondly and quite naturally, it also overflows into DECLARING HIM OUT THERE.

## **2. By declaring him out there**

Edmund Clowney again is so helpful here; he talks about how we must worship God in here and he talks about how central that task is to our original identity and purpose as human beings but then he says:

“Yet our praising of the name of God has another result. We declare before the nations the works and the name of the Lord. Our praises to God bear witness to the world. The heart of evangelism is doxological.”<sup>5</sup>

Are you hearing that? What he is saying there is that evangelism is actually just the natural overflow of worship! We come in here to taste and see that the Lord is good! And sure enough – he is good! Everything we learn in here seems so much better than we’re told out there. Out there is chaos and madness and conflict and despair – but in here is beauty, and kindness and mercy and fruitfulness.

We come in here and we discover again that God is good, his ways are right and his Word can be trusted. We learn that. We hear that. We speak that. We sing that – and then we leave here and that message bubbles out of us over the course of the following week.

---

<sup>5</sup> Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, ed. John R. W. Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today*. Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 96.

Again – this is not a new job description. The church does not replace Israel. It is not as though God said: “Plan A isn’t working, let’s try Plan B.”

No.

Plan A just needed a lot of work to get going.

Plan A got obscured a little bit when the people of God got off track.

But this has always been the job description.

Psalm 96:1-4, which Pastor Jody read this morning says:

<sup>1</sup> Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!

<sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

<sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!

<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.  
(Psalm 96:1–4 ESV)

Are you hearing that?

That’s the movement! We come in here and we sing songs to God. We talk about his salvation from day to day.

It begins in here!

But it doesn’t stay in here - it overflows out there!

<sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!

<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.  
(Psalm 96:3–4 ESV)

Our job, brothers and sisters, is to go out there into a world filled with people obsessed with lesser things and to declare that OUR GOD IS BETTER!

Jesus is BETTER!

That's our mission – that's our message! Do you understand that? Our job, brothers and sisters, is not to control the culture – our job is to commend the person and work of Jesus Christ!

He is BETTER than the so called gods of the nations.

He is BETTER than whatever it is your friends and neighbours are living for.

He is BETTER than money, better than ego, better than reputation, better than power – Jesus is BETTER!

His Word is better than the wisdom of the world.

His weakness is better than the strength of the world.

His love is better than the love of the world – everything about him is better.

That's our message – that's our mission. To declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among the peoples.

But one more thing – Peter can't help but remind us of this, having just cited Isaiah 28 and the Prophet Hosea; he must remind us that because we are a royal priesthood, because we are a holy nation, because we are the house and people of God – we must conduct ourselves in a particular way lest we obscure and forfeit our mission.

And so he ends this section of his letter by reminding us that we must proclaim the excellencies of him who called us:

### **3. By living honourable and charitable lives**

Look at verses 11-12 again:

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> 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. (1 Peter 2:11–12 ESV)

You see, we can sing all the best worship songs in here and we can use the very best teaching curriculum downstairs, and we can preach marvelous exegetical sermons up here. And we can preach to our neighbours and our loved ones until we are blue in the face. We can tell them about the 4 Spiritual Laws and the 5 G's Of the Gospel – but if we are slaves to our lusts and if we are greedy and withholding – then all of those graces and all of those Gospel messages – will be for not.

Our lives as believers – our conduct as the people of Christ – will either commend or obscure our message – that's what Peter says. People are going to hear us and then they are going to watch us. And if we are sharing the Gospel while watching pornography – they're not going to listen to us. If we are teaching the Bible while cheating on our spouses – they're not going to listen to us. If we are commending Christ while neglecting the poor – they aren't going to listen to us.

Therefore Peter concludes this section by reminding us to adorn the Gospel with honourable lives and charitable deeds. He got this, obviously from Jesus. Jesus said:

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14–16 ESV)

Brothers and sisters, we are the light of the world. We are a city on a hill. We are a spiritual house, a royal priesthood and a holy nation. We have a message – we have a Gospel – we have a LIGHT TO SHINE that can lead men and women, boys and girls out of the dark and unto God and HOME!

But the people of this world – blinded as they are by the devil – deceived as they are by the waywardness of their own hearts – are looking for any excuse to ignore us. Any excuse to discount us.

Therefore, let them see our good works. Let them observe our distinctive character. Let them wonder over our matchless charity – and let them give glory to our Father who is in heaven.

That is who we are! That is WHY we are and this is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, let's pray together.