



Sermon Growth Guide

October 31, 2021

Belong – Belong

1 Peter 2:4-10

Key Verse: 1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Big Idea: There is no belonging like belonging to Jesus.

Foundations

For 11 weeks we have celebrated that we belong to God. Our series concludes this week by turning to one of the most cherished descriptions of our new identity in Christ: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Chosen. You’re not alone. You’re not unimportant. Your life is not meaningless. By faith in Jesus you have been chosen by God to be grafted into His family. You’re God’s special possession. You are chosen.

Priesthood. In Christ, you belong as a member of the bride of Christ, “a royal priesthood.” Pastor Tim highlights three functions here: 1) We have access to God, 2) We present the world to God, 3) We present God to the world.

Declare. God has brought you in out of the cold. You have the most marvelous news to share with those around you. You are called into a life of declaring the praises of God.

Belonging to Jesus is your most special reality. Pray together as a group that you each better internalize your identity in Christ, that it would lead to an even greater measure of the Kingdom in the here and now, both experientially and missionally.

Understanding God’s Word

Pastor Tim points to four passages that all mention “the cornerstone.” Host a conversation about the significance of these passages: Psalm 118:15–24, Luke 20:17–19, Acts 4:11–12 and 1 Peter 2:4–8.

As a group, spend a few minutes seeing how close you can get to memorizing 1 Peter 2:9–10. Have fun with it!

Applying God’s Word

There is no belonging like belonging to Jesus. As a group, help one another discern how you can even more internalize your union with Christ, your belonging to the Living God.

How does your identity of belonging shape how you move through your days?

Witnessing God’s Word

The great imperative in our passage this week is found in verse 9: “that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Verse 10 clarifies the centrality of your identity being grounded in the very mercy of God. Help one another discern how you can grow in your desire and ability to “declare” the mercy of God in Jesus Christ to those around you.

ALONE IS NO GOOD. JESUS INVITES YOU TO BELONG.

People take more pictures these days than ever before. The average iPhone user takes 185 pictures per month, about six a day, and they keep over 600 pics on their phone! When I was a kid, taking a picture was a pain. You had film to develop, prints to have processed, it took over a week to get your pictures back at Albertsons, and only then would you figure out that the lens was scratched, the object was out of focus, and you can't really take a picture through the window of a bus moving 55 miles per hour down a highway and expect it to capture the moment. I went weeks without taking a picture. Six pictures a day? Is everything that special? There are some days you want to remember, some days you never want to forget. There are moments so precious you would give anything to capture them, retain them, and hold them forever. The most important moment in

my life is one that has no pictures at all. It was the day, the moment, I came to belong to Jesus Christ.

We have been on a journey talking about true belonging—moving out of isolation and into true belonging. We started with the Samaritan Woman at the Well. There were a lot of moments in her life worth remembering. High moments; low moments. But there was no moment in her life like the moment she met Jesus. Then we looked at Peter. There are so many moments in Peter's life that he might have valued, remembered, he wished he had a picture—but there was no day to match that day when Peter met Jesus. So, finally, **Belong**. Not to the church. Not to First Pres. Belong. Not to one another. Not to your family. Not to your friends. Ultimately, in the end, in the final analysis, belong to Jesus. There is no belonging like belonging

to Jesus. The passage we have today reflects that. It is Peter reflecting on that, reflecting on that day, that relationship of belonging to Christ. This is the Gospel. This is the good news. I want to make it as plain as I can for you today, and, at the end, pray with you. Maybe for you today is that day. **Alone**, you will **Risk Being Known**. You will be **Open to God**. Tomorrow you will find yourself **Open to Others** in new ways, but your journey of isolation and loneliness and meaninglessness, that comes to an end today. Today you belong to Jesus.

Peter wasn't even Peter until Jesus called him that. When you come to Christ, you walk away with a new identity. Peter grew up as Simon. Think of that. His parents named him Simon. All his friends, all his family, all his life from a boy, he was Simon. Then along comes Jesus. We read in



Luke 5 some weeks ago about Jesus getting into his boat. He met Jesus that day. When Jesus said, “Come follow me,” he got up, left all his nets and boats, and followed. “I belong to you, Jesus. Body and soul, in life and in death.” John tells us one of the first things Jesus did was give Simon a new name. “You are Peter.” The name means Rock. Later on Jesus said, “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). Now, careful here. The rock is not the man Peter; it is the faith he professed in Jesus. But I want you to remember the rock. I want you to remember the name, Peter. By the time we read this passage, it isn’t 1 Simon, is it? It is 1 Peter. The name Jesus gave for the new life Jesus gave. There is no belonging like belonging to Jesus. But the first Rock is Jesus.

“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame’” (1 Peter 2:46). Jesus is the cornerstone, chosen and precious. Jesus is the stone the builders rejected that became the cornerstone. When you went to build a great structure in those times, the selection of a cornerstone was paramount. For large structures, like a temple, the cornerstone was sometimes the size of an SUV! And it had to be perfect. It had to be solid, cut and formed, squared off and plumb. Everything else was built off that

cornerstone. Lots of stones just didn’t cut it. They got left aside. Rejected. “Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’” (1 Peter 2:7).

Jesus quoted that Psalm too. Before Peter did. It is Psalm 118. In a public debate with the chief priests and lawyers in the Temple, just before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus told a few parables about how God might just surprise them. The insiders might find themselves rejected and the outsiders might find themselves chosen. “God forbid it,” they said. “Jesus looked directly at them and asked, ‘Then what is the meaning of that which is written: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?’” (Luke 20:17). Peter held onto that quote. He quotes it right here, but he also



quotes it in Acts 4 when he was hauled in before the Sanhedrin for preaching Jesus. “Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:11-12). Jesus is the stone. Rejected by those he came to save. Jesus is the precious cornerstone.

But look at this. We are built into his spiritual house. As you come to him, it says, “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). This is what we call the priesthood of all believers. We are a royal priesthood. The Temple, the housing for the presence of God on earth, it is not a building. When David and

then Solomon dreamed to build a temple for God, what did God say? “Will I be housed in a building of stone?” No! But God allowed a place to be built to represent his presence on earth. Now, in Christ, in the New Covenant, the presence of God on earth is his indwelling of all believers, the priesthood of all believers. Our priesthood can be understood in three aspects: (1) Access to God. Because of Christ, his atoning work, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as a believer we have full and direct, personal access to God. There is no mediator, no come-between. We are with God in Jesus Christ. (2) We present the world to God. We carry the world to God as we are able, and present ourselves and our world before God in intercessory prayer and in holy commitment. (3) We present God to the world. The world has not seen God, but the love of God can be

manifested in his people. We convey the good news and healing balms of Christ to a broken world. Priesthood: Worship, Intercession, and Ministry. Three things.

More to the point of our message today, look at those first two words in verse 5: “you also.” Peter says Jesus is the stone the builders rejected. Left aside, Jesus turned out to be the very cornerstone. Peter had the same experience. “I was left out. I was left aside. I used to be called Simon, but Jesus had another name for me. Peter. Rock. And he built me into his spiritual house.” Now, you also. You also. You are not left aside. You are not walked past. You are not insignificant and forgotten by the side of the quarry road. You also, as you come to him, you belong. You are being built into the very house of God. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special



possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10). You are a living stone, built into a living, spiritual house. You belong. For Peter, it changed his life to meet Jesus. Not only did he fit in, in some miraculous way, but he was a place for others to fit in. Not only was he being built into the house, being built into by Jesus, but others could be built next to him, on him, relying on him. No more a misshapen rock, good for nothing but to sit by left aside. A living stone in a spiritual house to the glory of God. There is no belonging like belonging to Jesus.

There are two paths. Two ways. Some receive. Some reject. The stone the builders rejected has

become the cornerstone. Jesus...what do you know of Jesus? Jesus, this great figure; this great teacher; this man of history. Jesus was rejected. They made up stories about him, accused him of false crimes, held a trial in the middle of the night and sent him up to Roman authorities to be crucified. Rejected. Jesus went to death to carry rejection. Jesus died on the cross, not because he deserved to be rejected; but because we did. Our selfish acts are rebellions against the true King. Rebellion deserves exile, if not execution. Jesus took our place. The stone the builders rejected. But then he rose again from the dead. Now the cross, the grave, and the empty tomb, they are the cornerstone. How do you respond? There are two ways. “Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,’

and, ‘A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.’ They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for” (1 Peter 2:7-8). What is Christ to you? For those who believe, he is the precious cornerstone! For those who reject, “get this rock out of here; what is this horrible obstruction; it’s in my way!” What is Jesus to you? My final appeal to you is this: God wants you to belong. No more alone. No more left aside. Belong. Believe in Jesus Christ.

For Peter, it was everything, his whole life made new. The stone that was left aside, now built into the spiritual house. If there is one thing I know, says Peter, it is this: the one who was on the outside can become the very core, the marginalized can be included, the rejected can belong. For the Samaritan Woman it was everything. Her whole life recast. Stories



of shame—those are just bends in the road that led me to Jesus. For Paul, as we read Romans 12, it was everything. Meeting Jesus. Simon became Peter. Saul became Paul. If you knew Saul... There is no belonging like belonging to Jesus. It makes your whole life new.

Pat Hartsock told me his father came to Christ one month before he died. The man had been a helpless narcissist, selfish and egotistical. He told his son to get a scoop of peanut butter and take it out to a stump for the squirrels. Halfway out there, here's Pat staring at a glob of peanut butter on a spoon thinking—there's a change! A heart that thinks of others, even squirrels! There's no belonging like belonging to Jesus. I know a woman who came to Christ a hurting teenager, cutting herself, bulimic, trying to escape the world. She gave her heart to Jesus and her whole demeanor changed. I

met a man who was once a bodyguard of Yasser Arafat, murderous and violent. Now, in Christ, he's an evangelist and peacemaker. I met a prisoner who had been on death row; his life in Jesus' hands had a different plan. A businessman thinking about killing himself on a sales trip finds Jesus in the Bible in the drawer. I've known these. Some of them are you. You also. You also. There is no belonging like belonging to Jesus. Me? I was a lonesome little boy, a child of divorce—my parents love me all the way through, no doubt—but sad and lonely I was met by Jesus. No longer a stone left aside, but chosen and precious, built into the spiritual house. You also. There are many days to remember in your life, but none to compare with the day you came to belong to Jesus.

So, on the basis of all that, as an appeal by the mercies of God, I ask you, will you belong to Jesus? It doesn't

matter what you belong to if you don't belong to Jesus. This may sound dramatic, but I mean it. That heart inside your chest... I was sitting in a memorial service last week and a lyric hit me like a lightning bolt, "and with your final heartbeat, kiss the world goodbye," it said, "then go in peace and laugh on glory's side." With your final heartbeat. I don't say it to be mean. I don't say it to be dramatic. I say it because it is the truth: that heart inside your chest only has a determined number of beats in it. On that day, what? It won't matter what you have belonged to, or who, if you don't belong to Jesus. Won't you pray?

Lord, my only comfort in life and in death, is that I belong to you. I believe in you Jesus, I trust in your forgiveness, I rest in your grace, won for me on that cross. Hold my life. I am yours. In Jesus' name. Amen.

