

Mission Festival Sunday
October 18, 2009
Pastor Paul Horn
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
1 Peter 2:9,10

You are a royal priesthood...
...so that you might declare his praises

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ 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.

Last week I had the privilege to preach at a Lutheran church in Cleveland, Wisconsin. Their mission statement says: Our Mission is to **REFLECT CHRIST** in all that we do, to **GROW in CHRIST**, to **WORSHIP CHRIST**, to **PROCLAIM CHRIST** to the world. That sounds a lot like our mission statement: It is our mission to seek the unchurched, strive for spiritual growth and strengthen one another through the Word of God and His Sacraments. Seek the unchurched... that would mean you are a mission minded congregation. For the most part I think that's true. Every Sunday morning prayers are said on behalf of our missions around the world. We offer a prayer calendar from which we pray for our missions every day of the week. Pastor's monthly reports indicate that someone is calling and visiting our prospects. But who's job is it to seek the unchurched?

Isaiah from our First Lesson this morning he answered the call of the LORD by saying, "Here am I, send me!" (Isaiah 6:1-8) From the Gospel this morning, Philip went and found his friend Nathanael and said, "We have found the Christ! Come and see!" Well, Pastor Horn, based on these passages, it seems to indicate that it's a job for called workers. Isaiah was a prophet, called by God. Philip was a disciple, called by Christ. Peter, from our lesson, was also an apostle, called by Jesus. It's the job of the pastor to seek the unchurched. After all, he went to school for eight years. He's been a pastor for five years. He's been trained to do it. He knows what to say. He can answer the tough questions. Besides, I wouldn't know where to start seeking the unchurched. What would I say? What if they ask me a question I cannot answer?

A couple of weeks ago in Bible class, we were discussing how we would answer a question that is often raised by unchurched people. Someone in the back piped up and said, "Pastor, I think that if they asked that question, I'd give them your card, and tell them, 'Call my pastor!'" This morning, St. Peter invites you to change the way you look at outreach. "Change? We're German Norwegian Lutherans! We don't do change!" But the Holy Spirit does exactly that for us through his Apostle Peter. First, he shows us what we are. vs9 **"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God."**

You're not just teenagers, children or middle age men and women who sit in the chairs of this church on Sunday morning. You're not just soldiers and retirees. You have a high calling. You have a high status as God's people. And just as you would examine the past 15 years of the history of our congregation, you would appreciate how you got to be here today. So also when we examine what we once were, we appreciate how we got to be here as God's chosen people.

vs10 Peter says, **“Once you were not a people.”** Not a people... that means that at one time you were not part of the special group known as the Holy Christian Church and the Communion of Saints. He says, **“Once you had not received mercy.”** Well, then that means you received God’s wrath and destruction instead. But how is that possible? Many of you were baptized Lutheran, confirmed Lutheran, you’ve been Lutheran all your life. It’s hard to imagine... not being God’s people. Let’s put this into perspective, what it means not to be a people...

Do you remember back in grade school on playground at recess? Who were the kids who always got picked first? The ones with big leg, fast, and a strong arm to throw the ball. Who got picked last? Like me, maybe you were the lanky and slow, or the chunky and uncoordinated. Not a special people... Do you remember in grade school or high school those classmates who always got straight A’s, and earned the scholarships to college, and you scraped by with B’s and C’s maybe even a D? Not a people... Do you remember when you were working for many years at your job, and the boss approaches you one day and says, “We’re gonna have to let you go.” Not a high status... Do you remember when you applied for that loan and the bank came back and said, “We’re sorry. We can’t approve you. You don’t make enough money.” Not a people of high status.

Not a high status in life... spiritually you were the same way. You were not born into royalty, but born as a slave to Satan, to your sinful flesh, a slave to death and the grave. You were born not as possession of God, but the spawn of Satan, born not holy, but corrupt, spiritually stillborn, dead in God’s sight. Born this way because of a sinful condition possessed by Adam and Eve, who passed it down to their children, and your parents down to you. This sinful condition so thoroughly corrupted you, it left you with no desire to love God, no desire to know who he is or to do his will. In fact, you once regarded God as your enemy. God demands that to enter the gates to heaven, you must be his people. Living in Radcliff, you know that you need a special pass to go through the gates of Fort Knox. And once you are on that military installation, you need special security clearance to access certain areas. You must be somebody. In the same way, God demands that you must be his people, holy, pure, without a sinful condition, to enter the gates to his kingdom. By nature we are not his people, we do not belong to him.

Once you were not a people. Once you had not received mercy. But Peter says, **“Now you have received mercy.”** *Mercy* in the Greek language that Peter uses here means *to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need*. Oh, we were all in serious need all right. We needed a Savior, who would change our status and make us people of God. Earlier in his letter Peter writes, (1:18-19) **“It was not with silver or gold that you were redeemed, but with precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”** You were redeemed... picture yourself walking through ancient Rome. You’re in the marketplace. You see all the vendors and booths. There you see freshly butchered cow hind quarters and lamb and goat hanging from the rafters of a ceiling. There you see fish caught that morning from the Mediterranean. You see fresh fruits and vegetables grown just outside of the walls of the city. You see the spices and silks imported from India. You can almost smell it, can’t you? Then you come to a crowd of people, surrounding another booth. You see someone standing on a block in the middle of the market. It’s the slave traders’ booth. There you see on that block Pastor Horn, in tattered and torn rags, all dirty, shackled by his hands and feet. The auctioneer asks the crowd, “Who will buy this

slave?” No one wants to buy this slave. He’s tall and skinny, not very strong, not very good looking... But a man pipes up in the crowd and says, “I’ll purchase him. I’ll make hi him my property.” The auctioneer says, “The price is high. For his one, blood must be shed to redeem him. Someone must die.” The man says, “I’ll do it.” And he turns around and picks up his own instrument of death, a tree, and he drags it up Golgotha’s hill. There, the Son of God allows sinful men to pierce his hands and feet to that tree, and raise him up between heaven and earth, and he allows his blood to be spilt onto the ground, and he cries out, “Here’s the payment for Paul Horn. It is finished!” His victory cry rang out not just for me, but for all of you, for all people. It is finished! You have been redeemed from Satan and your sinful flesh. You have been rescued from the grave and hell. The perfect life God demands of all of us is complete. With that ransom payment of his blood, God’s wrath was turned away from you. Yes, once you had not received mercy, but now you have received it.

And it was at your baptism... at that moment, that you became God’s people. Because at that moment God put his name on you, and you became his people. Baptized into his name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you received all that he had done for you. Washed with water and the Word, you became God’s most prized possession; holy, pure, cleansed, a people belonging to God. Peter says, “You are a royal priesthood.” You are royalty because your ransom was paid by the King of kings. Yes, you are royal priests.

You probably do not think of yourself as a priest on a daily basis, do you? What’s the first thing you think of when I say the word *priest*? Maybe a guy who works for the Catholic church and wears a clerical collar. Maybe the men from the Old Testament who slaughtered animals on the altar, and burned incense and prayed for the people and told the people what LORD had said. You are priests.

Peter describes your job here, “...**that you may declare praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**” Literally *proclaim his excellencies*. Shout out to others why your God is so excellent and merciful. You can do this and will do this because you yourselves have experienced this mercy. You yourself have been called out of the darkness of your sinful condition into the wonderful light of his Gospel. You have been assured through your baptism of the complete forgiveness of all your sins. You have been reassured through the Lord’s Supper that this body and blood of Christ has paid your ransom in full.

This is your purpose in life, to declare his praises, to proclaim his excellences, to tell what he has done for you. And yes, it’s nice to share with others how Jesus gave you strength that time when your spouse died, or when mom got cancer, when you lost your job, got divorced, or failed a class in school. But most importantly, it is your purpose to proclaim how wonderful it is that God saved you through his Son Jesus, how excellent it is to know that you are a baptized child of God, and how tremendous it is that you have been given the privilege to go out and share the good news, to seek the unchurched.

It’s not just the pastor’s job. It’s your job, too. You are a priest with me. And our attitude will be that of Isaiah and we will say, “Here and I! Send me!” Our attitude will be that of Philip. We will go out and seek our unchurched friends. And when they ask us a difficult question, we’ll

answer like Philip, "Come and see!" Yes, we will go and seek the unchurched, our unchurched friends, our unchurched coworkers, neighbors, and even unchurched family members.

Last week I had the privilege to preach at St John St Peter Lutheran Church in Cleveland, Wisconsin. This year they are celebrating their 150 year anniversary. They have a rich and tenured history. Faith Lutheran in Radcliff has only been around for 15 years. We're just getting started. At St John St Peter Lutheran you might meet a dairy farmer or Koehler factory worker. I told them that in our congregation they would meet lots of soldiers. We're very different people, yet very much the same. We are the same people, because we've been shown the same mercy. We belong to the same priesthood. We share the same mission, to proclaim Christ to the world, to seek the unchurched. I am privileged to join you in this responsibility. Amen.