

1 Peter 2:9-12
(Isaiah 42:1-9; Matthew 28:16-20)
“What Is the Church?” II

Introduction

We are asking what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ. Churches are not places or buildings, organizations or institutions, but communities of people living together in covenant relationship through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God and the good of the world. The New Testament church was a church-on-mission. Mission for the first Christians began in the family and the neighborhood, in the marketplace and the school: it touched every relationship. They realized that the world around them did not know the Lord, and that people need the Lord.

In the verses we studied last week, Peter wrote that Christ’s church is built with living stones, with people like you and me, and we are called to serve within that spiritual house as priests, offering all that we are and have to our great God and King. In the rest of the letter, we will find Peter unpacking the implications of those words. Behind those words stood an apostolic understanding of the nature and task of the church and of the Christian person, an understanding derived from the Old Testament Scriptures and from our Lord’s teaching. Committing that apostolic understanding to heart and mind should grant us clarity as we study through the rest of this letter: It is a movement in four parts, beginning with the grand purposes of God in human history, and finally entrusting that mission to each of us. God’s deepest purposes become ours when we understand the nature of our salvation and the mission of the church of Jesus Christ.

First, God himself is on a mission. Simply put, God made us and we are in rebellion against him. He is on a mission to reclaim what is his by right. He has called together a covenant community, redeemed us by the victory of his Son over sin and death, and empowered us by his Spirit. *Second*, that covenant community is the church, and he has sent his church back into the world to bear witness to his grace in word and deed, and to make disciples of all nations. *Third*, local congregations like Cedar Springs are to take that mission which God has entrusted to his church into our own particular community using the language, thought forms, music and cultural expressions that will make the gospel of Christ clear, understandable and compelling to those who do not yet know the Lord. And *fourth*, for us to fulfill the mission entrusted to us by our great God and King, every one of us within the congregation must be willing to be equipped to serve faithfully within his or her own personal mission field, beginning with those living closest to us.

In the verses before us, Peter tells us that a church on mission has *something to be*, *something to say* and *something to do*. Look with me at the way he develops each of these aspects of our mission.

Body

1. A church on mission has something to be: God's own people.

A chosen race / A royal priesthood / A holy nation / His own possession

2. A church on mission has something to say: Our God saves!

He called us into the light / He made us his people / He showed us mercy

3. A church on mission has something to do: Live godly lives.

Abstain from passions of the flesh / Act honorably / Live for God's glory

Conclusion

The King is reclaiming his kingdom and he has entrusted the mission to us. A church on mission understands that we are here to pursue God's own mission and that in pursuing that mission we experience the presence and power, even the pleasure that God takes in his people when we devote ourselves to his purposes in creating and redeeming us.

Whoever you are, whatever you have done, if you have been saved by God's grace, then "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." Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

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