

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

October 25, 2020

Called for a Purpose  
*I Peter 2:4-10*  
Pastor Nathan Nymeyer

[music: "Come Thou Fount"]

*Ben Cunningham:*

Good morning! Welcome to Glenwood Community Church. It's great to be with you guys. We have wonderful things to do together in worshipping our risen Christ and looking at His word and spending time loving and getting to know one another, so welcome. Those of you who are joining us online, we're glad you are with us. Welcome to you as well. Lots to look forward to.

A couple things I wanted to make you aware this morning. First, you probably recognize this box. It is Operation Christmas Child time, and so I want to encourage you to participate. This is a great way to show the love of God to people all around the world in a very simple way, filling this box with practical gifts. There are boxes available in the foyer, and we're asking for you to bring those back starting November 1st, next Sunday. So if you have questions about that, Scott and Molly Carlson, they're in the foyer; you can ask them questions or get some specifics, or you can go to the website as always, [glenwoodcc.org/occ](http://glenwoodcc.org/occ).

The second thing is our STM sale. You might have noticed some activity going on over the weekend. It's back; we're going to be selling those items that we did collect. This is a fundraiser, or a way to raise funds for short-term missions here at Glenwood, and so if you'd like to participate in that, this year we're asking you to

sign up, and all the details of how to do that are online at the website at [glenwoodcc.org/stm](http://glenwoodcc.org/stm). So make sure to check that out. Let's go ahead and open our service with a word of prayer. Let's pray together.

Gracious Father. Once we were not a people, but now we are Your people. We were strangers and aliens from You, God, separated from Christ and without hope and without You. But now in Christ You have brought us near, so near to You that we can actually expect to hear Your voice and to learn Your ways. Though we're no longer strangers towards You, we are strangers in this world. Help us, God, to navigate the landscape that we are in. You urge us to pray for governing officials and for all who are in high positions that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. We pray for those currently serving in office and for those who will be entering office in a short time. We pray that righteousness, justice, equity, wisdom, humility, and self-sacrifice would characterize the institutions and officials of our land. And, God, help us to participate in our civic duties as citizens of heaven. We pray for an attitude of charitable reasonableness towards our governing officials. As they face complexities and criticism, guide our consciences in praying for them. Guide us in making wise decisions as we vote for officials in various measures. Keep us from political passivity and idolatry by following a discerning conscience. Even the ballot box is an opportunity to glorify you, Lord. Help us to take that opportunity. You alone are worthy of our ultimate allegiance, and Your kingdom is the only one that will ultimately last. Thank You, God, for how You have nourished us through the book of I Peter. Thank You for Your comprehensive rescue which includes making us holy and loving towards others. I pray that You would guide Nathan this morning as he teaches us; provide what he needs to be faithful to You today. Thank You for this firm foundation of Your Word. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

*Ben Rico:*

Amen. Would you please stand as we sing together as we praise our good God for providing such a firm foundation on which to build His church, to build up His people, a kingdom of priests for Himself. Let us sing and praise the Lord.

[music: "How Firm a Foundation"]

[music: "Cornerstone"]

Amen. Please be seated.

*Pastor Nathan:*

Good morning. Ten years ago today, Emily and I were packing bags. We were getting ready to leave early the next morning for the airport to fly to our new home - Vancouver, Washington. Our oldest, Charlotte, was four weeks old. Emily had not stepped her foot in Vancouver yet; we didn't have any family in the area; we really had no idea what we were doing. But we believed that God was leading us here, and so I accepted the job to come and be the director of high school ministries at Glenwood. We got on that airplane with our infant, and God provided, and He provided with abundance, and that abundance was and is our church family. You welcomed us into your lives and invited us into the work that God was already doing at Glenwood. And these past ten years have been a privilege to partner with you.

Today, I want to share some news with you about how I believe God is leading us again. At the end of this year, I'll be stepping down from my role as executive pastor at Glenwood. About eleven months ago, Emily and I began to pray and ask God for direction about what to do next. I shared that prayer with Paul, and he has prayed with us since. Last month, I let him know that we were coming to some

clarity about stepping down at the end of 2020. As I've shared this news with some of the men on our board, one of the questions they've asked is, "Where's God leading you to?" And I'd like to know! Something that's been strange for us in this whole process is that we aren't sure what's next. We don't have another ministry job lined up. And we're okay with that. While we are definitely open to wherever God would lead us next, one of the things that we have been praying about these last eleven months is staying in Vancouver and staying at Glenwood, which would mean finding something else to do besides pastoral ministry for a season.

We feel a little bit like we did when we moved out here ten years ago. We don't know what we're doing, but we believe that God is leading us, and that, just as He has done before, He will provide with abundance. Emily and I are grateful to God for you, for your partnership - partnership in contributing financially to this ministry, partnership in prayer for us and for our kids, and the partnership of going shoulder to shoulder, side by side, in serving students and adults and serving our community, getting to go to other countries together to share the Gospel and live out His mission. I'm so very thankful for our church board and for our church staff. We have been on a wild ride these past several months, but by God's grace, here we stand. We're together, and God has worked even in this time. Thank you all for your love and partnership.

[applause]

*Pastor Paul:*

Nathan, and Emily--where are you, where are you?

*Pastor Nathan:*

They're the only ones not standing. I don't know what that means.

*Pastor Paul:*

There we are; there's the Nymeyer family! Nathan and Emily, thank you for your high character, for your obedience of faith in your calling, for your gifts that you have given to the God who loves you. Your presence has been a blessing to us as has your friendship and your partnership in ministry. I've had eleven months of emotional runway to hear the news that most of you just heard, and I know what you are probably feeling. So, the wisest course of action for us to take is that we would - as Nathan and Emily have done - that we would seek and trust in the goodness of God and in His direction and leadership for each one of us individually and together as a church community. So, before Nathan preaches this morning, let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, thank You that we can trust You to do that which is right and good in us and through us and for us. Thank You for this body, for the privilege it is to serve with Nathan and the rest of the staff. Thank You for directing Nathan and Emily to us, for giving them wisdom to come here. We ask that in the coming season for them that You give them rest and reveal to them what ways they can best give of themselves in service to You next. In Jesus' name. Amen.

*Pastor Nathan:*

Amen. Please be seated. The Lord is good, and now we get to do something fun. Open your Bibles with me to I Peter 2. Again, that's I Peter 2. Our text this morning is about our identity and purpose as the church. The questions of who we are and what our purpose is are foundational for every follower of Jesus. And the two questions are actually linked together.

I remember when Emily and I were first married living in our first apartment, I wanted to hang something up on the wall. I had a nail, but I didn't have a hammer. So, I went to the kitchen, and I found a nice new serving spoon that we were given for a wedding gift, and I got that nail in the wall. Now, did I smash my fingers because the base of that serving spoon was round and it slid off the nail with almost every hit? Yeah. Did that serving spoon bear the marks of my experiment? Yes. Not long after that, I borrowed a hammer from my father-in-law, which I realized, as I was writing this story down, I have yet to return. Hammers are made to put nails in the wall, and that serving spoon was made to elegantly move food from a serving dish to a plate.

You and I are made by God in Christ for a purpose. We're going to see in our text this morning that who God has made us to be as the church informs and directs our purpose in this world. This message about our true identity and purpose was a message that Peter's audience in Asia minor, two thousand years ago, needed to hear. They were living in a place that did not feel like home. The world around them was hostile to the Gospel, and they were feeling the pressure to conform, pressure to live their lives in ways that did not align with God's purpose for them. They faced the temptation to give into that pressure, to compromise their loyalty to Jesus, perhaps even to walk away. They also faced the temptation to resist that pressure with worldly power. They needed to learn the truth about who they were and what that meant for how they should live in this world. The same is true for us today as we face similar pressures to conform to the sinful systems of this world, and the temptation to fight worldly power with worldly power. k

What does God's word have to say about who we are and how He's called us to live in times like these? Well let's look together. I Peter 2, we'll begin in verses 4 and 5. Peter writes, *"And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 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."* In verse 4, Peter moves to a new metaphor to describe the Christian community. The metaphor that we heard

last week was being born again into a new family. This new birth happens through the Word, the message of the Gospel; it gives us a new family, brothers and sisters that Peter says we're to love fervently and a Father that caused the new birth. He grants us an inheritance in Heaven and calls us, like we saw in the last couple weeks, to obedience and holiness. Just a couple of verses before this in 2:2, Peter using this metaphor of the new birth and new family says, *"like newborn babes, long for pure and nutritious milk."* Well, in verses 4 and 5, Peter does a hard pivot away from that metaphor of a new birth and family to a building project - a new metaphor. He starts it in verse 4, he says, *"And coming to Him as to a living stone--"* and then jump down to verse 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."*

What is this grand building project that Peter's talking about in these verses? Well, Peter says that God is building us into a temple, a place where His presence dwells, a place where His goodness is known. This is how our identity and purpose flow together as followers of Jesus. Christians are being built into a temple for - Peter says - a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. That's what a temple is made for: it's a space where God is represented rightly to the world, a place where His love and His holiness are on display, as Peter's just finished telling us. This is our purpose. Like priests, we are intermediaries between God and a lost world. We show the world what it looks like to be in right relationship with Him and to live lives that are pleasing and acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ.

Peter's introduced us to this metaphor of a stone and what God would one day build, this spiritual temple called the church. And in verse 6 and 7, he goes to the Old Testament to show that this has been God's plan along. Remember back in 1:10-11, he said we live in privileged times because what's happening now is what the prophets longed to know about, they longed to figure out what was going on? Well, in verses 6 and 7, he begins to show us some of these things that the prophets were wondering about in the Old Testament.

Look with me, starting in verse 6. He says, *"For this is contained in Scripture: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed.' This precious value, then, is for you who believe."*

We'll stop there. Do you see how this language of a stone that is choice and precious in the sight of God, in verse 4, that language that Peter started with is actually coming from this Old testament reference? This is from Isaiah 28:16. To the nation of Israel, suffering under the weight of their own sin and failure to keep to the covenant, God promised, through Isaiah, salvation and a new start through this building project. The building begins with this chosen and precious cornerstone. In an ancient building the cornerstone was the most important stone in the whole project. It went in first, and from it every other stone in the project found its right place. In verse 6, Peter says that those who trust in this cornerstone will not be disappointed, or will not be put to shame. The shame and the disappointment that flow out of our human failure and sin-- these are replaced with honor, with the precious value of Jesus Christ when we put our faith in Him.

That's Peter's point in the first part of verse 7. He says, *"This precious value, then, is for you who believe."* When we put our faith in Jesus, we move from a place of shame to a place of honor. We get to share in the incredible value of Jesus Christ, His victory and new creation. No matter what the world says about the Gospel, about you and me being backwards or fools or naive, we know what God thinks. Expect shame from the world, right? Sometimes as we think about this we think, "I'd like a pass." Peter has just reminded us Jesus Christ was rejected. Expect shame from the world. And let that fix your heart even more on the precious value and honor that is ours in Christ. The shame that you and I should actually worry about was nailed to a cross; it is no more for those who build their lives on the precious cornerstone Jesus Christ.

In contrast, to those who put their trust in Jesus Christ, this precious cornerstone, are those who reject him, which is where Peter goes in the second part of verse 7 and verse 8, again using words from the Old Testament as he works out this image of the building project. Verse 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 cornerstone and a stone of stumbling a rock of offence.' For they stumble because they were disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*" Peter quotes here from two more Old Testament passages that use this stone metaphor.

Verse 7 comes from Psalm 118:22. The idea is that people who should have known better did not recognize the chosen and precious stone. The religious leaders of Jesus' day - the builders - made a fatal error. They rejected the stone that would define the whole building project that God was making. Peter actually heard Jesus quote this verse in His earthly ministry not long before He was arrested. In verse 8, Peter goes back to another place in Isaiah, Isaiah 8:14, that talks about this stone. Here you get the idea that one does not simply reject this stone. We will either square our lives to it, or we will stumble over it to our own ruin. Our rock of offence means that it's a rock of temptation to sin, because to reject the stone, to reject Jesus, is to stumble and sin; it is to disobey the Word, the Gospel that saves and transforms us.

The final line of verse 8 - "*And to this doom they were also appointed,*" - takes us back up to verse 6, where Peter says "*Behold, I lay in Zion,*" or "*Behold, I appoint in Zion a choice stone.*" This is the same verb in Greek. Just as God appointed Jesus as the cornerstone of what he is building, so He has appointed judgement, stumbling, on all who reject Him, those who are disobedient to the good news of the Gospel.

The choice that we have made to follow Jesus, changes everything. We've seen in verse 4-8 that He is making us into the dwelling place of God, where, like priests, we represent Him to a lost world and offer sacrifices that are pleasing to Him, lives that reflect His goodness. In these first five verses we find the first truth about our identity. We can see that we are God's temple, and that identity informs our purpose in the world. As God's temple and priests, our purpose is to represent Him and live lives that please Him. This is His intent for us. Just as a hammer is made

for a nail and a spoon for serving, we have been remade in Christ to connect our lost friends and neighbors with their Creator, and to live out the beauty of God's intent for His image-bearers.

This truth about our identity helps us navigate the cultural moment we find ourselves in right now. It helps us navigate rejection by others and how to respond. We represent the God who Himself was rejected. We see His character of holiness. Peter told us that in 1:16, "*Be holy for I am holy.*" We heard the command last week for brotherly love, for fervent love, in 1:22. When the world rejects us and shames us for not following its example in lust and division, for not going along with it in its anger and slander, we must remember who we are and the purpose that we have been given: love and holiness, self-control, unity, kindness, and truth. Just imagine what those spiritual sacrifices would look like in a Facebook feed, in interactions with family and friends, in your attitude and actions at the office or at school. When the world pressures us to conform to its sinful systems, we have the opportunity to show the grace and the beauty of the Gospel. In the world's way of thinking, you use power to get what you want, you fight for the upper hand; and if you can't get it, you walk away; you unfollow that person; you transfer, or you move. Consider the contrast with Jesus Christ, who subjected Himself to the power of sinful humans for our sake. He did not fight worldly power with worldly power. He showed us how holiness and truth work together with love and grace for the good of another, and He calls us to do the same as we represent Him in this world and live lives that please Him.

Verses 4-8 laid out the metaphor of a temple and priesthood to help us understand who we are and our purpose in this world. In verses 9 and 10, Peter's going to shift yet again to another related metaphor to further explain our identity as the church and what that specifically means for our purpose in this world. Look with me at verses 9 and 10. Peter writes, "*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 marvellous light; for you were once not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not*

*received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*" Peter begins verse 9 with a contrast. Instead of stumbling and offence, those who believe are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. The descriptors Peter uses here come right out of the Old Testament. He seems to be thinking of Isaiah 43 and Exodus 18. Turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus 18; we're going to take a look at this one.

In Exodus 19, God has saved his people from Egyptian bondage and is establishing covenant with them in the wilderness. You probably remember that we looked in Exodus 24, this same general context, when we started our series on I Peter. This is when God is establishing them as His people. In Exodus 19, God promises Israel these same things that we see Peter say about the church in our text. Look with me at Exodus 19 starting in verse 1. *"In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel:*

*"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.*"

When God says that the whole nation would be a kingdom of priests, He doesn't mean that every Israelite would serve in the tabernacle and temple. The nation had a subgroup of priests who represented God to the people and the people to God. However, when you consider Israel, the nation as a whole, they served a priestly role among the nations. They were called out by God; they were set apart; they were holy; they represented Him to their neighboring nations; they showed the world what it looked like to be in a right relationship with its Creator. Well, Israel

tried that. We know how the story goes. Here God says, "If indeed you will obey, if indeed you will keep the covenant, this is what I'll do."

The second text that Peter references in I Peter 2:9 is Isaiah 43. Isaiah 43 comes hundreds of years after the Exodus with God's people failing time and again to keep the covenant. Why don't you turn there with me to Isaiah 43, we'll read this one as well. In Isaiah 43, Isaiah looks forward to a day when God would heal Israel's brokenness, when He would bring their shame to an end. Let's start in verse 18 of Isaiah 43. *"Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder the things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field will glorify me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I have given water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert to give drink to my chosen people - or chosen race. The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise."*

This chosen people, or chosen race as the NASB translates it in I Peter, is the church, is what God has done for Israel and for the whole world, in the New Covenant. In verses 4-8, back in our text in I Peter, Peter says that we are a temple and a priesthood that represents God to others and makes spiritual sacrifices. In verse 9, he repeats the part about us being priests, but he takes it a step further. The church is not just a priesthood, but God's chosen people, God's holy nation. And, just like we saw before, that our identity informs our purpose in this world, so we see it here. God set His love on Israel; He saved them bondage in Egypt; through Isaiah He promised hope in the darkness of exile. For what purpose? Well, we heard it in Isaiah 43:21, said, *"My chosen people, the people whom I formed for Myself, will declare my praise."* And we hear it again in I Peter 2:9, when he says, *"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession."* Why? *"So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."* That's the purpose that flows out of our identity as God's people.

When someone does something kind for you, when a coworker covers for you at work, when your spouse is patient and kind when you're grumpy and angry, when a friend intervenes in your life when they tell you the truth about something and helps you get going in the right direction, we rightfully say "Thank you." We rightly praise those people who do kind things to us for others; we brag about them; we thank them. Peter is saying we were in bondage to sin, we were in spiritual darkness, but now we are God's own possession, His people, and representatives in a world that is still where we once were in bondage to sin and in spiritual darkness. Our identity as God's redeemed people leads us to our purpose in this world, which Peter says is to proclaim the excellencies of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

In verse 10, Peter expands on our identity using more language that comes right of the Old Testament. Look at verse 10. He says, *"For you were once not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."* Peter's words here come from Hosea 2:23, and like the prophet Isaiah, Hosea looked ahead to a time when God would pour out His mercy on His broken people, and that time had come through Jesus Christ. Peter's audience, Christians spread across Asia minor, Jews and Gentiles, each one had experienced God's mercy in Jesus Christ. They were chosen by God, each one a part of His holy nation, God's own people.

Following Jesus really does change everything. In Him we have a new identity. In verses 9 and 10, Peter shows us that we recipients of God's incredible mercy. The second truth about our identity is that we are the people of God, and from that identity as redeemed people we find this purpose for our lives, which he says in verses 9 and 10 is to tell others about His mercy. As God's own people, our purpose is to proclaim His excellencies. This is His intent for us. Just as a hammer is made for a nail and a spoon for serving, you and I have been remade in Christ to declare to the world the praises of the One who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

This truth about our identity helps us navigate the cultural moment we find ourselves in right now. It helps us navigate our growing sense of isolation in our culture. Whatever our earthly citizenship, it is second to our heavenly citizenship, as Ben prayed this morning. Our ultimate loyalty is to God. We are a part of His holy nation, the church. And we know that navigating competing loyalties can be difficult. Like many others here, this past week, we got our ballots in the mail. As I studied the choice, read the voter guide, researched online, talked extensively to my wife, and prayed, I felt what I suspect many of us here today felt. Some choices seemed straightforward, and other choices seemed less clear. As you make decisions and cast your ballot, Peter's message for us today is "Remember who you are. You are God's people. You're a part of His holy nation. You're Christians. You're the church." If you've placed your faith in Jesus, that is true about you: you're His own people. And as you make decisions, ask God to give you wisdom for how you can best live out His purpose declaring His excellencies in this world through your vote.

In a prayer group at our men's Bible study, we were talking about the stress that we were feeling about the upcoming election. One of the men in our group prayed that our elected officials would have hearts that are open to the Lord, that they would come to know Him and love Him. When I heard him say that, I was struck by how simple and how right that prayer is. I realized how quickly I can abandon my loyalty to King Jesus and His mission. We can be so focused on political power that we forget that the battle we wage is not against people, but it's for people. We can be so focused on the here and the now that we forget that this country that we love is nothing; it is nothing compared to the glory of Christ and the Kingdom that He is bringing. Christ in His mission to serve must always be first in my heart. We, of all people, can have confidence in this moment. We, of all people, don't have to give into fear, because this country is not our hope. We are God's people; we are His, and He's called us to proclaim what he has done for us, even in a world that is hostile to that message. We are God's temple, His priests, representing Him to our family, to our friends, offering up spiritual sacrifices that please Him, lives that reflect His goodness and His truth.

Today is a reminder about who we are and our purpose in this world to see others not as allies and enemies, but as people who, like us, need God's mercy. They need the forgiveness and transformation we have found in Jesus Christ. Together as God's people, let's proclaim the excellencies of the One who's called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Will you pray with me?

Father, Your mercy is worthy of our eternal praise and thanks. Father, thank You for giving us what we could never earn. Thank You for making us Your people, Your temple. And thank You for entrusting this mission and purpose to us, to make Your goodness known in this broken world, to invite other sinners to the same mercy and power we have found in You. Father, help us fix our gaze on the good future we have through Jesus Christ, and give us strength by Your Spirit to be faithful to Your purposes in the days to come. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Ben Rico:*

Amen. Would you please stand with me as we sing our last song this morning, as we praise our good and gracious and powerful God for giving us such a firm foundation for our faith and laying such a firm foundation in Himself for His church to build His kingdom. Let us praise Him together.

[music: "Build My Life/How Firm a Foundation"]

Amen. We have such a good hope; we have such a living hope in the living Rock, the living Stone, Christ our Savior. Go in peace.