

If you have your Bibles, we're going to finish up this series on *Holiness* today, so head to 1 Peter, chapter 2. When my wife and I first got married, we were living in Abilene, Texas, and I was preaching at this Bible study with a couple thousand college students. I learned early on that I was having some real identity issues in regard to if you asked me who I was, I only knew how to define myself at that time by what I did. I knew I could make decent grades, and I knew I could lead people. That was just kind of always the case, that I was able to rally and build a team and move toward an objective. That was kind of intrinsic.

I was learning how to preach. I think some of that stuff was really awful now looking back at it, but at the time, God was really looking at it. I defined myself consistently by what I *did*, so I couldn't answer the question... *Who are you?* So if somebody asked the question, "Who are you?" that to me was some kind of philosophical trap. You know, "I'm Matt Chandler. I'm six foot five, a white dude. My parents are Steve and Janet. I preach. I'm in school." I would define my life, I would create my identity, not really answering the question *who I am* but rather answering the question by *what I did*.

What I've found is a whole bunch of people are stuck in that same spot I was, where they don't really know who they *are*; they simply know what they *do*. When the question, "Who are you?" is really presented, when life presents it, because a lot of people don't ask that question... It's a rare thing for, over a cup of coffee, hanging out with coworkers, someone to go, "Now who are you...not what you do, but who are you?" In fact, that's kind of a weird dude who we're probably *not* going to have a drink with. All right? "Do you want to have a cup of coffee?" "Not if you're going to ask those weird theoretical questions. No! If you want to talk sports, yes. If you want to do that with me, no."

So we don't talk like that anymore. That's not what our culture does, not how our society is built. Because we struggle with who we are and define who we are by what we *do*, we find our lives are not anchored and they're a bit afloat in a massive ocean of labels. So what ends up happening is our relationships are strained when we don't know who we are, because if we define who we are by what we do, other people who do what we do who may be better than us are a threat to us. So now we have relational tension.

Anyone who would call into question that we are what we do, there's relational tension. Any threat to me not being able to do that at a high level for a long period of time can really send me into despair, send me into depression, create in me a ton of anxiety, because I don't know who I am. I simply know what I do. I try to define who I am by what I do.

Now the issue for almost all of us is that what we do is going to change from season to season to season in life, and there will eventually come a day that what we do now, we can no longer do. So our whole identity is lost. There are some great stats I found as I was getting ready for this week about how many men in particular die within two or three years of their retirement. There are a lot of theories on why that is, but I believe, the one I honed in on, is a man will find his identity in his work.

"I am a businessman." "I am a leader." "I am a salesman." "I am a CEO." "I command men." "I build this." "I construct that." "I do *this*." Their whole understanding of self is wrapped up in what they do, so when they no longer can do that thing or it's time to stop doing that thing, they have no idea who they are. So if you put that in our culture today, you have a 65-, 66-, 67-year-old man or woman who has no idea who they are. Retired, in the house with a woman they maybe know, maybe hardly know, go on a couple of vacations, and then start to fall into despair because they no longer have any identity at all.

So how we're going to round out this study on holiness is we're going to look at who we are. Not what we *do* but who we *are*. We talked at length last week about how devastating what you *do* can be as an identifier. Okay? So we're going to look at who we are in Christ, what our identity is in Christ, and then the overflow of who we are into what we do, regardless of what we do. So that might sound a little goofy, but I promise it will make sense when we get there.

So 1 Peter, chapter 2. We're going to just walk through this phrase by phrase, so don't panic. Me saying that probably has some of you panicking, but I promise, I don't believe this week will go too long. Verse 9: **"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession..."** Now if I were you, I'd underline that, because if you are a Christian, if you are a believer in Christ, this is your identity. This is who you are. So far this has said nothing of what you do but rather who you are, so that you and I, in Christ, are a chosen race.

Now I love that first one as much as I love any of them. We are a chosen race. You have not just individuals but a race of people, and it's a race that's built across cultures and across colors. Are you following me? There's a new chosen race, the church of Jesus Christ, the legitimate Israel of God, the chosen ones of God. Therefore, this race is made up of all tribes, all tongues, and all nations. So really, your identity as a part of the chosen race has nothing to do with your blackness, whiteness, you being Asian or being a Hispanic, but has everything to do with the fact that God (and we've talked about this almost every week) has chosen you.

It's in your chosenness that you become a part of God's holy race. You have a black chosenness and a white chosenness and a Hispanic chosenness and an Asian chosenness. Every type of culture imaginable

becomes this new race. Man, just to speak frankly, we have to get better at reflecting this here at The Village Church and have to get more serious about how we progressively and actively seek to be more a picture of what God is doing among different ethnic groups, bringing them together and reconciling their differences, even their differences in culture, under the banner of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are a chosen race.

Just a couple of weeks ago we came off of the Fourth of July. You had this epic celebration of the United States of America. Listen to me. God has shed his grace on thee. This is an amazing country in regard to liberties and freedoms. It is not without its faults. It is not without its sins. It is not without its problems, but ultimately my race, my allegiance, my heart is grateful for the United States of America but belongs to the kingdom of God. That kingdom of God is made up of those who are not of the same nationality I am. There are those in Iran who are my brothers and sisters. There are those in Iraq who are my brothers and sisters. There are those who are in North Korea who are my brothers and sisters.

There are those in every country on earth who are my brothers and sisters. I belong to a race that is greater than my own. My identity is I am belonging to the race of the chosen people of God. Then he goes on. **"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood..."** So we're royalty. Now again, we covered this when we covered adoption in Galatians. You and I, in Christ, are adopted by God as sons and daughters, coheirs with Christ. That makes us royalty.

Then he doesn't just say *royalty*. He says *priesthood*. So we are a royal priesthood. Not only do I belong to the chosen race, but I am also, you are also, in the royal priesthood, which means we have clear and constant access to God. Everything in our lives...*everything* (work, play, rest)...is done in worship to God, as we are priests of God. We could go to Romans 12 to show this. We could go all over the Bible to show that as a believer in Christ, we are a *royal* priesthood. We are God's chosen race, and we live in the presence of God.

I think really a lot of us have legitimate issues because we don't understand this and we've lost our respect for the presence of God. We don't believe our lives are playing out in front of a holy God who sees all. The Bible is saying, "No, no, no. Your whole life is a life of worship, and if you are not living a life of worship in work, in play, in rest, in your hobbies, in your marriage, in your relationships with your kids, if that's not worship to you, then you're out of character of who you are, because who you are is a priest, a royal priest, in the chosen race of God's people.

My whole life is a life of worship. Your whole life is a life of worship. That doesn't mean singing, but singing is a part of worship. It just doesn't mean you're always singing about your marriage, singing to your kids. These are not the same words. Worship and singing are not the same words. You can worship as you sing.

You can sing worshipfully toward the Lord. But when I say the word *worship*, I'm not talking about singing, but rather talking about the reality of a heart that's been captivated by God. That plays itself out in our relationships. That plays itself out in our workplaces. That plays out... We are a royal priesthood.

Then look where he goes next. "...**a holy nation.**" So again, I think one of the really difficult parts about preaching the Word of God in this day and age is individualism is so rampant that we're very quick to get away from the *us* to the *me*. In all of these components, I love it because it's bigger. You are a chosen race. That's bigger than just you. It's bigger than your blackness, bigger than your whiteness, bigger than your cultural backgrounds. It's bigger than you as an individual and what makes up you as an individual.

Then you are a royal priesthood. It didn't say you are royal *priest*; it says you are a royal *priesthood*. So he is speaking not just to an individual, although it does have individual implications, but rather to a group of people. We are a holy nation. So let me explain this in a way I think might be helpful for us. That means the believers in Jesus Christ who love Jesus Christ and go to Fellowship Church are my countrymen. The believers in Jesus Christ who love Jesus Christ and go right down the street to Crossroads Bible, they are my countrymen.

The believers in Jesus Christ who go to Bent Tree, the believers in Jesus Christ who go to Preston, the believers in Jesus Christ who are right down the road at First Lewisville, at Lakeland, the believers in Jesus Christ all over this Metroplex, all over this state, all over this country, and all over the world are my countrymen. They are my brothers. They are my sisters. They are, by the blood of Christ, my blood. As we covered last week, we are decreed by God as holy, and as all of us fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the primary motivation is we are becoming more and more and more and more like Jesus Christ.

We are a holy nation. It's bigger than you. It's bigger than me. It's bigger than The Village. It's bigger than the Baptists. It's bigger than the charismatics. We are a holy nation. Don't miss the next line. Once again, so you're a person...a people belonging to God. We are God's possession. Man, I think so much of your life would change if you got this. If you understood that you are God's possession, that we are God's possession, that all of us, not only are we a chosen race, not only are we a holy nation, not only are we all these things that we've covered, but we are a possession of God.

So if you look at this biblically and you look at this historically, that means God is protecting us. God is watching over our steps. God is for our joy and for his glory. We are being protected in ways we can't fathom, we don't see. We are being walked through valleys in a way that is gracious and generous and loving, and we can't see. We are his possession. We have found from the Scriptures that God is a jealous God. He is not only just saying, "You are my possession. You are my care. You are my creation," but he is

also saying, "I'm jealous about you. I am jealous for you. I am jealous for the glory of my name be manifested in you." So he is for us.

This is why Romans 8 would go, **"If God is for us, who can be against us?"** If we are his possession, what could ever happen to us? What could ever become of us that God doesn't allow and provide and work out in the end? Referring back to last week, maybe that 50 trillion mark needs to be our perspective instead of today. That's always been so helpful for me to think 50 trillion years versus thinking this year or next year or last year. It's so helpful to go, *What will I be thinking about this 50 trillion years from now?*

We are a chosen race. We are a royal priesthood. We are a holy nation, and we are a people for his own possession. Now that's who we are. If you're a Christian, that's who you are. Have you noticed at this point there has been nothing said of what you do and that what you do does not define who you are, but rather who you are rolls out into what you do? So let's read now at how he says we're going to do something and how we do this actually frees us from doing things.

Let's look at it. 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."** Now what a spectacular job description! Okay, so here's who we are. I am a part of the chosen race that has all different tribes, tongues, languages, colors, cultures. I'm a part of that chosen race. I am royalty. I am a coheir with Christ. I am a priest, and I live in the presence of God and can at any time approach the throne of grace with confidence because of Jesus Christ. I belong to a holy nation, and I am a possession of God. I am a part of the people of his own possession.

My job description, what I've been called to do as this holy nation, a part of this chosen race, as royalty, as a priest, is to (now this is it; this is my job description) declare his excellencies. Then he breaks it down. His excellencies. What part of his excellencies, because that's vast? That he has called us out of darkness and into light. So really, if we start to get high enough up on this whole four weeks and start to really look on it, you have a holy God who has made a way in Jesus Christ to make us holy, his love being the primary motivator toward that holiness, so he considers us his chosen race. He has decreed we are royalty in Jesus Christ. He has given us direct access to him.

We have a relationship with God. He is not some sort of ethereal thing in the sky. It's not a checklist. It's not a, "Do these things so I don't get caught." It is: I have a relationship with God. I am free to pray. I am free to engage. I'm free to walk. I'm free to stumble. I'm free to fail. I am considered by God as part of his own possession. He would consider me his own. God cries out over me. Mine? Me? Now I don't know how that hits you, but I know what I'm guilty of. I know what's in my heart. I know some of my motivations are

tainted. I know these things about me, and yet God sits over my life and decrees, "This one is mine. This guy is mine"?

I mean, do you know how many people are outside these walls right now who have no idea, have no interest, have no desire even to know who God is, have no real yearning to know about him at all? But not you, not me. Here we are, and God has stood over our lives and put the banner of great love flowing out of his mercy, by which (this was last week, right?) he extends to us faith to believe in the grace that we might become his workmanship and walk in the good works he prepared in advance for us to do.

Our job is to just make much of his excellencies, primarily that he has called us out of darkness and into light. So I think then the question is...*How do we go about doing that?* We have to agree before we get into maybe some practicalities here that really the job of "make much of what you love" is not really hard. If you come to me and say, "Here's your job, Matt. Talk about how much you love Lauren. Make a big deal of Lauren." I'm not going to go, "Do you know what? That's just a crushing weight. That's just a crushing weight on me."

"Well don't you love her?"

"I love her with my whole heart."

"Well then make a big deal about her."

"You know, I'd just rather... No, I'm not going to do that." It's not wrong to put on us, make much of, what you make much of in your heart. There's actually a great deal of freedom and joy in having that dream job. Talk about what you love most. So how do you make much of the excellencies of God as this holy nation? Primarily, making much of his excellencies by talking about dragging us out of the darkness and putting us into light.

If we look at what the Bible says about darkness, the Bible uses almost these exact words in the book of Colossians when it says he has transferred us out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of his beloved Son. So again, you have this language that men are walking in darkness, and the good news, the excellency of God, is that he is taking them out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of his beloved Son. In this text, he is pulling them out of darkness and into light, and we get to declare that.

So our declaration is not, "You're a sinner who needs to stop sinning." Our declaration is, "There is a loving God who wants to lavish upon you his love despite your sin. If you would get that, sin wouldn't seem so sweet." We get to be those who point out, "You're walking in darkness. You are dead in your trespasses and

sins." Now just to be frank, people don't like that, but most people are living with a real bankrupt worldview. They have no idea who they are or what they're living for. They're constantly chasing what they already possess in the hopes it's going to satisfy them. Their right decisions are wrong. On and on I could go.

They have good marriages but not the fullness of what marriage can be. They're training their children to be good, moral people but not necessarily the kind of kids who have hearts that love Jesus Christ. So we get to herald, "There's a better way." That's what we get to herald: "There's a better way." We get to get over into this kingdom of light, kingdom of the beloved Son, transfer us out of darkness into light. We get to talk about walking in glad obedience to the one who loved us and gave himself up for us. We get to talk about fixing our eyes on Jesus. We get to boast in Jesus. That's it!

So what that does is it frees you from the chains of all your other identities, because if I'm a part of a chosen race, if I am royalty, if I am a priest in the kingdom of God, if I belong to a holy nation, a transformed nation of men and women and I have been given the job of declaring the excellencies of God in Christ, transferring us out of darkness and into light, that brings purpose to *everything* in my life.

It brings purpose to my work. So if you're a CEO, a CFO, maybe you're the president of a company, maybe you pick up trash, maybe you weld... I mean, I don't know what you do. Build boats? I don't even know where that one came from. You're a teacher. You're a lawyer. That's what you do, but it's not who you are. Don't get those confused. That's what you *do*. Who you *are* is a man or a woman who is a part of the chosen race who, when all is said and done, is a part of the royal priesthood, a people belonging to God. You're part of a holy nation. In that identity, you do law, you teach, you build, you run, you govern.

Your identity in you is what God has bestowed upon you, and then you are making much of God and his excellencies as you do whatever it is you're doing, so that by making much of the excellencies of God, as you do what you're doing, boredom should be erased from your mind and your heart, because everything now carries with it purpose. I think one of the great, kind of, staples of the modern era is boredom amidst a thousand options. We are a bored people the majority of the time despite the fact there is more to do than ever before. We are a busy, bored people, which seems like a juxtaposition, but it's not in our culture. We're busy and bored simultaneously.

Really almost all of us have this deep yearning and longing for something greater than we're currently walking in. I'm telling you, there's a reason for that. The reason for that is you have been created by God to make much of the excellencies of Christ within the identity of belonging to God, being a possession of God, being a holy people, being a chosen race, being a royal priesthood. You now make known the

excellencies of Christ in the domains of your life, whether that be neighborhood, gym, hobby, whatever you do. You're about making much of Jesus.

Now let's get a bit pragmatic. There's a way to do that with your life, and then there's a way to do that with your mouth. So you make known the excellencies of Christ with your life. Let me give you some real-life examples of that here at The Village. There is a group of firefighters here who have gone down to Guatemala to train Guatemalan firefighters and share the gospel while they train. Now when you go to Guatemala on vacation and then you get back to the firehouse, now there are all sorts of questions about, "Where did you go on your vacation? Oh you went to Guatemala? Why would you go to Guatemala? Did you get sick?"

"Yeah, I got sick."

"Well, why were you there?"

"Well, we were training these firefighters on how to..."

"Oh, that's cool. Why were you doing that?"

"Well, I was doing that because it gave me an opportunity to make much of Jesus, to let them know Jesus loves them and has forgiven them and has made a way for them to live the fullness of life, to not be enslaved to things that promise fullness of life but don't deliver, but to actually be given by God fullness of life." Now you're making much of the excellencies of God by doing what? By doing what you do.

Then there are those who with their wealth are extremely generous. Then there are simple ways. There's a way to love your wife that declares the excellencies of Christ. There's a way to be patient with your children. There is a way to treat your children that reveals the excellencies of Christ. There is a way to do life that declares the excellencies of Jesus Christ. But that's not the only way we declare the excellencies of Christ. It's not just with our lives but with our mouths.

Listen, we talk about what we love, don't we? We talk about what we love. Let me spend some time with you, and it won't take me long to be able to tell you what you like, tell you what you love. We talk, and most often talk *passionately*, about the things that are uppermost in our affections. Again, this is why this isn't a crushing requirement, because if our eyes are fixed on Jesus, if we're becoming more and more and more like the image of Jesus, then having our eyes fixed on Jesus and our lives being transformed into the likeness of Jesus in and of itself begins to display the excellencies of Jesus. Then we get to speak about what we love most, which is Jesus.

Not only do we live out and show by our lives the examples of his excellencies, but then we share with our mouths, and what we share is what we talk about all the time here. We share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We let the law be the diagnostic, and then we reveal the cure by talking about what Jesus Christ has done for us in his life, death, and resurrection. Holiness is not an end in itself, although God has decreed that we will be a holy, blameless, spotless people before him and is ferociously committed to chiseling and shaping us in the days of our lives into greater and greater and greater images of Jesus Christ, more pure reflections of Jesus Christ.

In doing so, he is declaring his glory to the nations, and he is showing his excellencies to a lost and dying world. I know maybe some of you are like, *Well, Matt, that kind of makes God full of himself.* We talked about this in the fall, and so I always want to remind you of this. God being about God and God being for God's glory is the greatest news in the universe.

It's the greatest news in the universe because if God is for God, if God is about you being holy in Jesus Christ so that he might display his excellencies, so that you might herald his excellencies, so you might make much of his goodness and grace, that means the commands of God, then, are not about your begrudging submission, but the commands of God are actually about you walking in the fullness of life. So when God says, "Do these things," God is not after your begrudging submission, because God is for God. So God wants you to walk in what's going to bring you fullness of joy, not happiness all the time, but *joy*, so he might be made much of.

So it's a good thing God is for God. It's a good thing God's desire for holiness is about the excellency of his name. Again, I can't press this hard enough on you. The best part about God being about God is that ultimately, life is not about you. That might sound offensive, brother, sister, but listen to me. That's unbelievable news. The more you get through that head of yours, the more your heart will understand this isn't about you, the happier you will be, because if it's about you, people owe you something. If it's about you, you deserve this. If it's about you, people better do what you expect of them.

Think about how much conflict that breeds in your heart, in your life. Think how much anger that stirs up in you. Think of the entitlement you walk in. Think about the frustration you live in. But if it's not about you, think about how free you are. *I don't have those kind of expectations of people. It's not about me.* Now I'm free to actually serve other people, to make much of other people. I'm free to ultimately extol the excellencies of Christ, regardless of what people think, because it's not about me. Again, 50 trillion years. That's what I'm thinking.

I don't know how you've come in here today. I don't know how you would answer the question... *Who are you?* My guess would be that you would answer the question... *Who am I?* with a list of things you do. In love, I'm trying to plead with you that if you're a Christian, what you do is not who you are. Who you are leads to what you do. What you do is make much of the excellencies of Jesus Christ, regardless of where you work, where you play, what you do. Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for the grace you've afforded to us. I pray for the men and women in this room. I pray they would believe by the power of your Holy Spirit for the first time who you say they are, that they would quit being frustrated with trying to define their lives by what they do, they would quit feeling like a failure because they're unable to do *this*, or they're not as good at *this* as they'd like to be, or they haven't mastered *this* like they would like to, but they might just rest in your declaration that they are a part of the chosen race, that they are a part of the royal priesthood, that they are a holy nation, a people of your own possession.

You have done that that we might be freed up to make much of you regardless of where our lives are playing out. So if that's college, we make much of you in college. If that is in the workplace, it's in the workplace. If it's in singleness, it's in singleness. If it's in marriage, it's in marriage. We have been freed up with our identity found in you, not in us or outside of us, but our identity being found solidly in you, have been freed to make much of you, and to walk in the joy that only comes in a life submitted to you.

So bring salvation to this place today. Bring it to our hearts and our minds for those who don't believe. For my brothers and sisters who are trying to define themselves by what they do rather than who you say they are, I pray you would bring them grace to believe that you see them as you say you see them. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you guys.