

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

THE FOREGINERS | HANG TOGETHER

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So good to be with you. Everyone here in the room, everyone at the campuses, watching online: welcome. It is a beautiful day. A nice, crisp day. Flannels are here, which means fall is here. Right?

I love meeting people who just moved here from the west coast. They are like, “We are just so excited to experience the seasons.” I’m like, “Are you? Really?” They are like, “Yeah, we just love it right now.”

What I’ve come to find out is that you really don’t love the seasons, you like colorful leaves and you like paying too much for pumpkins. I think that’s what you enjoy. So just hold on to that same energy when you are in your third winter and you’re like, “What has happened?”

But honestly, so glad you guys are with us here today. It is an amazing season. And God is doing some incredible things. One of those big ones is coming up October 28, our Men’s Night. Men’s Night, any fellas going to be there who are in the room? At the campuses? A couple of deep voices from the crowd so that’s good to know.

If you have not signed up, I would encourage you to get signed up. It’s going to be an incredible night. Some good food, worship, teaching, and a chance to be together. Alright?

And if you have registered, this is a good time to be thinking about, “Who are the men in my life around Indy who need to be here with me on this night?” And then invite them. Alright? October 28. We hope to see you there.

And as far as today goes, we are continuing in our series *The Foreigners*. And what we’ve been doing in this series is studying the book of 1 Peter. 1 Peter. And the reason we titled this this way is because in this letter that Peter writes to the churches in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey—a lot of times this is how he refers to them.

He says, “Hey, you feel like foreigners because you are. There’s a reason for it. You came to faith. You came to know Jesus. You had this closeness with Him and with His people. But then when you leave that and you went back home to new cities and you started your old jobs, it’s very different. And it feels like in some ways you’re second-class citizens.”

And he meets them right where they are. He says, "You feel like that because there is a sense that that is true. Now your citizenship is in heaven. So it's never going to feel the same here on earth."

He meets them where they are, but he doesn't leave them there. Peter has this unbelievable ability to raise their heads up, "Even though you're foreigners where you are, that's not who you are. Your identity is so much richer than that."

And what he's going to be focusing on today is:

### **Who are you?**

That's a question I always love to just loft out there to all of us. Who are you? Kind of a loaded question. And maybe you'd answer that in a bunch of different ways. But at the end of the day, if someone asked you, "Who are you?" how would you define that? Who would you say that you are?

For me, I have a hard time with self-worth. I have a hard time with insecurity. I really don't think much of myself. And I think the older I get, the more aware of how not normal and not okay and not even true that it is. But most of the settings that I'm in, whether I'm at a meeting and I'm sitting at a table, whatever position I'm filling, in the back of my mind I'm thinking, "I should not be here. I don't belong here. They could find 10 other people who could do what I do."

And I'm telling you, what really kind of shows this is anytime I do something, I lead something, I preach a sermon, and someone comes up to me with positive feedback, and he says, "Hey, I just want you to know that you did a great job," my first thought is, "You are lying."

I'm going to welcome you in to what is the darkness of me. My thought is, "Wow. I knew it wasn't great. But I didn't know that I did so bad that you had to come over here and try to make me feel better." I promise you; I know it's not right and I know it's not true but that is the kind of stuff that I fight with.

Whether it's thinking too much of ourselves, or not thinking enough of ourselves, both are rooted in pride. I love the way Andy Mineo says it. He says, "I know that pride and insecurity are the same thing."

What Peter is going to do here is he is going to lift our heads up, "I want you to take a moment, forget about where you came from, forget about the family you were born into, forget about the job that you hold, forget about who people say you are, forget about your past and no matter what it looks like, I want you to raise your head up. And I want you to see who God says you are."

And we're going to read some stuff today that is all about identity, all about who we are as a church. And when you hear some of the things that Scripture says that you are,

your pride is going to tell you, “That’s not me. I’m a lot of things but I don’t think I’m that. I’m not worthy to hold that.” And I just want to encourage you now, before we even open His Word to fight the temptation to reject it. But to receive it and to walk out of here with a new identity.

Church, this is who we are today. And for those of you who are coming, who are guests, who are skeptics who are trying to figure this out, I want you to know that what we read today, what God says about the church and His people, that could be you. Not one day. Not a week from now. Not years from now. Today this identity could be yours. And I’m telling you, it is the greatest identity we could ever walk in. Alright?

So if you have a Bible we’re going to be in 1 Peter, chapter 2, starting in verse 1. Take a look at this. Peter says:

*“So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment now that you have had a taste of the Lord’s kindness.”* 1 Peter 2:1-3 (NLT)

So I want us to focus on a few things. And this is the hard part about teaching through 1 Peter. It is so good. Every word is so rich. And every word builds upon the next. We can really only read a few words. Let’s break this down and explain it. So Peter says, “Be done with all of that deceit, all of that hypocrisy, all of that old way of life.” Why? What happened before that? Why is he saying, “Get rid of all of that.”?

He’s saying get rid of all of that because in chapter 1, he said:

*“For you have been born again....”*

You were met with the love and grace of God. The old you has died. And now the spiritual you has been born again. Born to new life. Born to new desires. Everything in your life has been reordered. So live like that is true. The things that used to matter don’t matter anymore.

Now, God’s love is the most real thing to you. His vision for your life is the most important thing to you. So you’ve got to let go of all of this so that you can grab on to what God has for you. You’ve tasted His goodness and His kindness. Now continue to cry out for it.

He says, “Cry out for it like a newborn baby.” And I don’t know how much you know about newborn babies, I don’t much either, but I do live with one. She lives with me. She does not provide a lot when it comes to providing. But the way that he talks about newborn babies here and crying out for food, I want you to think about that.

Let’s just use a hypothetical situation when you think about the eating habits of a baby. Hypothetically, could you feed a baby—let’s just take a day—on a Sunday and then could

you wait a whole week and then feed that baby again that next Sunday? You guys think I'm thinking about church? Yeah.

Peter says, "No, no, no. When you think of your faith and when you think about crying out to God, I want you to think about a newborn baby who can't go without food for weeks or days but only minutes and hours. And the only nourishment that they know of is that spiritual milk." He says, "I want you to be just like that because you are born again. You have a new diet. You have a new purpose. You have a new calling. You have a new life that awaits you."

And then look at what he says next. He says:

*"You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor."* 1 Peter 2:4 (NLT)

Now, this is another one of those lines where I think we read Scripture sometimes and we have a little bit of an idea, a little bit of understanding of what these words are and what they mean, but we just read and jump past them. Today I want to double click on most of these words. And when we come into this, I want us to really focus in on: *temple* and *cornerstone*. Temple and cornerstone.

We just sang a song that had the word *temple* in it. Maybe you sang it and were like, "Yeah, I've kind of got an idea of what a temple could be." And *cornerstone*—I remember when I first started coming to church there was a big song that was "Cornerstone": "In Christ alone, our cornerstone..." and I would sing it with my hands not all of the way up but about halfway. I was like, "Yeah, I'm in." I had no idea what a cornerstone was. I thought the book of Acts was a literal ax. We just say things and act like we know what they are.

It makes me think of... have you ever been listening to a song now and it is a song that came out when you were in junior high? And you used to sing this song at the top of your lungs having no idea what you were singing. But you turn it on now and you start singing it, and the words come back, and you're like, "Oh my goodness. I should not be singing this song. I had no idea." It's like that but in reverse. So this is going to be a good thing.

So when Scripture talks about the temple, what is it talking about? Well, an easy way to understand the temple is this:

### **TEMPLE = The place of God's presence**

The place of God's presence. The temple was constructed in Jerusalem. And if you would have gone into ancient Jerusalem, this would have been the thing that you would have noticed. It is bigger than everything else. This was the place where heaven and earth overlapped. This is where God would show up to be with His people.

It is symbolic. Obviously, God could not be contained to a building, but He chose to be there in the temple. And if you look at all of the Bible, it's really the same pattern. God creates a space where heaven and earth overlap where He can be with His creation. But it is only a matter of time before we mess it up.

Think back to the Genesis story. He creates the garden, puts Adam and Eve in it. What is this place? This is where heaven and earth overlapped. And it doesn't take long for them to sin against God, and they are exiled from the garden.

But God's not done with them. He rescues them. Saves them. He calls them out. He makes them His people. He gives them this temp. He gives them all the ways that they can have Him in relationship, be in His presence. But it's just a matter of time before they disobey and before they sin against Him and eventually they are exiled from Jerusalem. And over, and over, and over again this happens until Jesus stepped up on the scene.

And Jesus comes in and He clears the temple to make room for a new one. You guys remember this? He goes into the temple and He is hot. This is one of the times when you see Jesus step into this temple—they have turned His Father's house into a mess. It's bad. They have taken advantage of people. There is money being exchanged. He loses it and starts flipping tables over. I get the picture that He is throwing people out of the temple like Uncle Phil style, "Get out."

And you remember they come to Him. One man gets everyone out of the temple and the leaders come to Him and they are like, "Hey, who do you think you are? What gives you the right to come in here and mess up the good thing we had going on?"

Do you remember what Jesus said? He says, "Alright, I hear you talking":

*"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* John 2:19 (NLT)

And then the laughter just bellowed across the room. All of the Pharisees were laughing. This was the most foolish anyone could ever say. They were like, "What, are you crazy? Do you understand how big this temple is? Do you know how special...? It took years and years and years to build this thing. And yeah, for sure, you're an okay teacher, you did a great job turning over the table. But there is no way you could build a temple in three days."

But Jesus wasn't talking about this physical temple. He knew that this temple's days were numbered. This temple was leaving, and a new temple was coming, one that He would be the cornerstone of.

So what Jesus was saying there was, "Hey, you are about to tear Me down. You're about to execute Me on a cross and leave Me for dead, but I will rise, and I will defeat sin and death and I will change the game of what it looks like for heaven and earth to overlap. I am bringing a new temple with Me."

And that's where He uses this language of, "I will be the cornerstone of this temple."

## **CORNERSTONE**

And cornerstone, once again, isn't a word that we use all of the time, or ever. But a cornerstone is a really big deal in ancient times. The cornerstone was the first stone that would be set during a construction project. This cornerstone was placed and then every other stone found its place next to this one. This was the point of start. And how I knew if I was aligned is if I matched up to this one.

So Jesus said, "I'm bringing a new temple. I'm the cornerstone. It's changing everything about what you've known between God and humanity and how they interact.

And then look at what he says for me and you. He says:

*"And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God."* 1 Peter 2:5 (NLT)

So what did he say? He said, "Jesus is the cornerstone." Right. "Jesus is the cornerstone and then you and I are living stones."

## **LIVING STONES**

Living stones—pay attention to that word living. You ever send someone a document and say, "This is a living document"? What are you saying? "Changes are still being made. Edits are still going through. We are making this thing better."

So what Jesus says here is, "I'm bring in, I'm ushering in a new temple. One where I am the cornerstone. And everyone who believes in Me will be born again. And they will not find their place in a physical temple, but they will find themselves being living stones stacked against Me, the cornerstone."

And why this is so important is that when we go through our lives, a lot of times when we wrestle with the question of identity, how are we stacking up? And depending on what you look to and how you answer that will change how you feel. If you are a living stone and you wonder, "How am I stacking up financially? How am I stacking up with culture?" you begin to build a life that Jesus never called you to build.

Followers of Jesus, the blueprint has already been laid. The cornerstone is already there. Our stones are merged together with the blood and body of Jesus, cemented to Him. So when I want to know how I'm stacking up, I don't get to decide what that looks like. My position is based upon my relationship with that cornerstone. Am I level to that? Am I plumb to that? Am I looking like that stone. Am I building the spiritual temple that Jesus has called me to be a part of? We are the living stones connected to the cornerstone, which is Jesus Christ.

And the wild thing is, Jesus came to usher in this new kingdom, but it was actually something that was prophesized about long before. This model was coming. This new temple would come. And that's what we are going to read in verse 6. Peter is actually going to reference that prophecy from Isaiah. Take a look at this. He says:

*"As the Scriptures say, 'I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.' Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, 'The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.' And, 'He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them."* 1 Peter 2:6-8 (NLT)

So what is he saying here? He says, "Jesus was that cornerstone that was prophesized about. Even though it was rejected by man, it will become the cornerstone that everything else to come would be built upon. And that was the life of Jesus, wasn't it? This teacher who came through, who ruffled some feathers, who flipped tables in the temple.

People rejected Him. They didn't believe He was who He said He was. So they sentenced Him to death. They got rid of Him. Threw Him into an empty grave. They didn't realize that He was the cornerstone. And He resurrected and He came back. That's what Peter is saying. That prophecy, that is about Jesus.

Basically what he says here is that we have two options when it comes to Jesus. We can either receive Him and build our lives on Him as the cornerstone and have a strong life that nothing else can produce, or He will be a continuous stumbling block that we will never be able to get around. You can't go around Jesus. You can't ignore Him. You will either build your life on Him or you will spend your life stumbling, falling more and more into darkness.

It makes me think of.... Have you ever stumbled and then were so embarrassed that you stumbled that you pretend like you were just going for a run? Do you know what I mean? You're just walking down the road. There is nothing in your way. But you catch just a little side of the sidewalk, and you trip a little bit. And instead of just letting that be, you can't. So you stumble and you're like, "No, I'm going to go for a little run. Maybe not. Maybe not. Maybe not. I'll just continue walking." People who see you think that is what you were doing.

I remember when I was at IU. There was this building, and these stairs were steep. And I promise you there were about 30,000 of them. And every day I would trip up the stairs. And instead of just tripping up the stairs, gathering myself, and then walking back up, I would trip and then take off running looking like Rocky Balboa in the middle of the IU campus running up these stairs.

What Peter is saying here is that a lot of us are stumbling through life, but we're pretending like we are running. We're pretending like we are thriving. So many of us jumped into a life stacking ourselves up against these goals and trying to find ourselves. Maybe it's in an amount of money or a profession, a career that takes and takes and takes. A life that we thought would bring so much. And instead of admitting that we are stumbling, instead of admitting that we don't like this, we just continue to pretend that we are going on a run.

But, in reality, I think if you were pushed and you were asked you would know, "Man, this life feels a lot more like falling than it does running and thriving and flourishing."

And what Peter is saying here is, "The world has to do that because they've disobeyed God's way because they don't match up with His cornerstone. They are going to continue to fall and fall. That is their fate." But he says, "For you, it's going to be different because you have all of this that God has already provided."

And now he's going to go into this bit of who you are. Remember what I said. It's going to be hard to hear. You're going to not believe that these words are for you. But I just want you to know that are. Okay?

Take a look at this. He says, "You're not going to fall. You're not going to stumble because you're not like that."

*"... you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession."* 1 Peter 2:9 (NLT)

This is who you are. When I phrased that question at the beginning of today if you answered it differently, probably much differently than how Scripture describes you, take it back. You don't have to live with that identity that someone gave you. You don't have to live with the identity that you've given yourself. Jesus has already given you enough to go off of. Don't accept anything less.

And what I want us to do is just to work through each one of these one by one to say this is who you are. Alright?

Take a look at this. The first one.

### **Chosen People**

He says, "You are a chosen people." Notice how he says this is who you are and then he uses only communal language to describe that. It's this idea that our relationship with Jesus can never be fulfilled without relationships with others.

So he says, "You are a chosen people." Some translations say a chosen race. But when you look at the original Greek, the word that is behind this is actually *lineage*. It's even smaller than that. It's actually a *family*. He says, "You are a chosen family."



Now think about how much hope that would have brought to these people. Scattered all across the empire, living this new faith, following Jesus. And for a lot of them, when they said yes to Jesus, their families said *no* to them. They were disowned. They were removed from the family. The family was the bedrock. The family was everything. And Peter says, “Hey, no matter where you find yourself, I want you to know that you have family here. You are a chosen people.”

That’s an incredible, incredible place to be. You and I, we are family because of God. It was the blood of Jesus that made us family with Him. And he’s saying, “I don’t want you to look past that. No matter where you find yourself, I want you to know that no matter your family background, you’re a chosen people.

Take a look at this. This is a big one:

### **Royal Priests**

If I had to guess, no matter how many conversations you’ve had with many different people and they ask you to describe who you are, you wouldn’t be like, “I’m a royal priest, actually. No, no. I am. I am. I know what you are thinking.” But I’m telling you there is so much power in this. You are a royal priest.

And like I said, it probably doesn’t come up in conversation with you. It doesn’t exactly come up with me. But when I say that I’m a pastor, people hear priest. They hear a lot of different things. Same difference. I think that you’re one of those.

And I know we joke a lot about how weird it gets when we tell people about what we do. But at the same time, there is also a high level of respect, most of the time. That’s why people begin to apologize. Like, “Oh, I didn’t mean to say that or make that joke. I usually don’t talk like that.” There is this idea like, “Man, I respect that. There is a discipline there that you’ve given your life to those things.”

What I want us to see is that I shouldn’t be the only one having these awkward conversations. As followers of Jesus we should be living in such a way, we are so committed, that when people see us, they see royal priests.

Even though you are an accountant, a firefighter, a police officer, a teacher, a social worker, a student, an artist—that’s what you do, but above that the purpose, the calling of your life, is that you are priest—a royal priest. Why royal? Because of your lineage. You are royalty and you have this unbelievable job as a priest.

I want us to take this path. I know words like *priest*—you probably have a thousand different definitions of what a priest is and why you don’t want to be one. But here. Let’s just look at the basic role of a priest from the Bible. This is what we see:

### **The role of a priest**

- Represent people to God

- Represent God to people

At the end of the day that is the calling over their lives. That is what they did day in and day out.

What does it mean to represent people to God? That means that I am constantly bringing people to the throne room of God, even if they choose to never go themselves, they are coming because of me. When I sit down and I pray, I look to God, and I realize that I have been made into a spiritual temple. I am a mini temple the God of this universe has chosen to dwell within.

And I'm very aware of my darkness and my problems so I think, "God, clean it up. Cleanse me. Make me holy. Make more room for Your Spirit, for the fruit of Your Spirit to dwell within me."

And then I look out to the church, and I pray for my brothers and my sisters. I bring them into the throne room of God. And then I look out to the world. People who don't know Jesus. And I pray for them. Intercessory prayer. I pray on your behalf because I'm a priest.

And then the second one is we bring God to people. When we talk about evangelism, this is what that is. We always talk about it within a relational context. We want to be living with people, the people in our neighborhoods, the people who we love, our family—these are the people we are praying for, and these are the people who we are telling God about.

A lot of us, especially within the past few years, we try to move into the place of like, "Hey, I'm cool with living it out. But I don't want to talk about it. There are so many rules and so much red tape. I don't know what I can say, and I can't say so here's what I will do. I will just be kind and loving and respectful and pray that conversation happens. Pray that it does."

Here's the problem with that. The way the gospel message hangs, what the gospel message is, it's news. It's a proclamation. It's a declaration. It in and of itself is words. So to share it I'm going to have to use words. And I know there's a thing like, "Hey, live the gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

We have a pastor here who really pokes fun at that. I poke at that knowing that when I first read it years ago, I was like, "This is my life quote. This is what I want to be."

But the more you get into it, the more you see that it is kind of short-sighted. It would be like, if I told you, "Hey, I'm going to start a mission here and my mission is to feed the hungry and when necessary I'm going to use food." Right? I don't think that there is another way to do it. I think you can leave that part out. You have to use words.

So he says, "This is who you are. You are chosen. You are royal priests." We get this opportunity to intercede, to be the one who helps reconcile God to His creation. What higher honor could we possibly be given? We are royal priests. Look at this. He just keeps going. He says you are a:

### **Holy Nation**

Now this is not a perfect nation. This is a nation that has been set apart. This is a nation that is distinct. This is a nation within a nation all of the time. That's one of the unique things about Christianity. It doesn't have a home. There is no place for Christians to go home to. Because the moment the Christian faith took off it began to scatter. It was right there on the fringe of three continents.

So when he's talking to all of these people who are now scattered everywhere across the known world, he says, "Hey, remember that you are a part of a holy nation. No matter the nation you used to attach yourself to, no matter what you used to claim allegiance to, I want you to remember that you are a holy nation. And no matter how your nation treats you, no matter how safe or unsafe you feel, no matter what they promise you, you need to know that it will never be enough. But the good thing is that you are connected to a holy nation."

And then he says this:

### **God's very own possession**

So he just called us all of these incredible things. Right? You are priests. And maybe when you heard that you were like, "I need to go home, freshen up my resume, I need to work some things out because I do not know if I qualify to be a priest."

I love what he ends here with this. He says, "You are God's very own possession." Let me tell you this. You can look from the beginning to the end of the Bible. When God picks someone, anyone, everyone, it is never because of how good they are. It is because of how much He loves them.

The weight of the priesthood, the weight of the nation will never find its way to your shoulders because the cornerstone is holding all of that.

Our job is to be there and to be everything that God has called us to be to a watching world. And He gives us so much on the identity side. This is who you are. This is who you are. Finally, in these last few verses he's going to say, "As a result this is how I want you to live." Look at this:

*"As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. 'Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy.'" 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NLT)*

He said, "Now. Once you were not a people. But now you are My people." And I love that phrase: My people. It's a phrase that I use all of the time when I take a picture and I post it. A lot of times in the caption I will say: my people. What am I talking about? I'm talking about these are my family, these are my closest friends, these are the people for whom I will put their needs above my own, these are the people that I will fight spiders for.

If I lived alone, oh, I would be moving so much because I wouldn't even go toe to toe with a spider. I would just leave. But not for them. For them I will fight spiders, I will get up in the middle of the night. I would do everything.

What Scripture is saying here is that you know what it is like to not be a part of a family. You remember what it's like to be literally dead in your trespasses. But now you have new life. Now you are chosen. Now you are living stones. Now you are priests.

And he's asking the question: Well, who are my people then? Is it just Israel? Just the Jews? Just my neighborhood? No. Jesus died for all people. He gave Himself for all people.

### **All people are our people.**

All people are our people. You can't find someone who God didn't create and Jesus didn't die for. Let that be enough for love. We don't need another common denominator. "But they don't look like me. Their skin color is different than mine. They grew up in a different part of the world. My family always told me this about them. They hold to this political ideology." It doesn't matter. We don't need another common denominator. Every person is someone who God created, and Jesus died for.

"What if they are claiming to be my enemy? What if they hate me?" Jesus said, "Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you." There is no way around it. If we are going to be living stones, then we're going to place ourselves in this vulnerable place to say, "No matter what you do or say to me, I will not be compromised. My love will shine through because I've been called out of the darkness, and I know what it means to live in the light."

One more. We've got one more little bit for us. He says:

*"Dear friends, I warn you as 'temporary residents and foreigners' to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world."* 1 Peter 2:11-12 (NLT)

So it's two-fold. Once again, this is who you are, now here's what I want you to do, "I want you to turn away from all of those desires that you once had because God has reorchestrated those. He bought them back. So now you don't have to live that way anymore. Refrain from that." Then he said, "I want you to live properly. I want you to live

like you are connected to this temple and that everywhere you go you are a representative of the One who sent you.”

I love how *The Message* translates this. Take a look. It says:

*“Friends, this world is not your home, so don’t make yourselves cozy in it.”* And here’s a line. *“Don’t indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life in your neighborhood so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they’ll be won over to God’s side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives.”* 1 Peter 2:11-12 (MSG)

What a life. Don’t live for your ego. Don’t get the things that you think your heart wants and lose everything else. He’s saying, “Don’t give up your place in the temple for the mansion that you’re trying so hard for, thinking that will make you feel at home here. Nothing will make you feel at home. Don’t risk it.”

And then he says, “I want you to live in such a way that you begin to break down the stereotypes of other people.” I don’t know if you know this, but people have a lot of thoughts about Christians and the church and what it is and what it’s not about. And all it takes is for them to meet one who is different.

We live next to people in our neighborhoods who have so many thoughts about what it means to be a Christian and what the church is all about. And because they know you, they’ve already made up their mind about you. But, we can live in such a way that it really confuses them.

Because when you live with stereotypes, when you live with secondhand information, it’s usually because you’ve never experienced the real thing. And when you begin to live next to someone who is a Christian, but they are not judgmental, you don’t have a box for it. You begin to weaken the belief that you have about those people. And you can apply this across the board.

When you begin to live in such a way that you’re caring and you’re loving and you’re kind they are really wrestling with that. Like, “I thought I knew what Christians were. I thought they were like this, but now that I’ve met her, I don’t know anymore.”

I love the way that Bonhoeffer said it. He says:

“Your life as a Christian should make non-believers question their disbelief in God.”

That’s the idea. “I’m living next to some royal priests and it’s stirring something within me because I see the life that they are building that is so different than the life that I’m building. I see how the foundation that they stand on weathers the storm so much better than what I’m standing on. I see how kind they are to their kids. I see how they invite neighbors into their homes. Who does this?”

And little by little our lives can begin to take away those stereotypes, to remove them. And it says that when this happens that people will begin to celebrate God for who He is and all that He does. And that's what we get to be a part of.

So I just want to go over this one more time of who we are. And I pray that you receive these words, I pray that you live like this is the truest thing about you.

**We are:**

BORN AGAIN

LIVING STONES

A CHOSEN PEOPLE

ROYAL PRIESTS

A HOLY NATION

GOD'S VERY OWN POSSESSION

Followers of Jesus, the church, this is who you are. You are born again. The old is gone. You've shared in a life like Jesus; you've been resurrected to a new life with new loves, a new purpose. You are living stones building up into God's spiritual temple. You have such a sacred place. You are a chosen people, family with God, making you family with one another.

You are royal priests. Everywhere you go is the space where heaven and earth overlap. Jesus has made a way. Now the living God, the God of everything has chosen to dwell within you. And He's tasked you to make a difference, to help bring heaven to earth. To represent people to Him and to represent Him to people. We are ambassadors for God.

We a holy nation. Distinct. Set apart. We live like no other nation. And this is all held together, not because of who we are or where we came from, our background, but because we are chosen people.

We are His very own possession

That is who we are. And by living out that truth, by living out that identity, we'll begin to reclaim the name of Jesus and what it means. We will reclaim the name of priests. We will reclaim the name of what it truly means to be royal. A king doesn't mean that he does what ever he wants. King Jesus proved that by saying, "I didn't come here to be served but I came to serve."

We can live in such a way.... Don't take that for granted. The life you live has the power to move someone from stumbling to have them stepping over to see Jesus for who He is. That could be your life.

That was my case. I had so many thoughts of the church and Jesus and God. None of them validated, just by what I heard. And then I met someone who was a Christian. Who was unlike anyone I'd ever met. And she shared the gospel with me. And I came into, not a church, I came into this very church—walked through those very front doors and I experienced a church that was unlike any church I could have ever fathomed.

And now, 12 years later, I've given my life to spreading the gospel, imperfectly, in the messed-up way that I do it. But I can tell you on this side there is nothing greater to give your life to. There is nothing stronger.

And for those of you who are here today and you're saying, "I want that. I want to be a part of that family. I'm not sure about the priesthood thing, but I could get to know that a little bit more, maybe." If that's what you want, God has literally moved heaven and earth for you to have this relationship, for this temple to come, for you to be the housing place of God's very Spirit, for you to have a Lord and Savior, for you to have a way to exist for eternity in a perfect relationship with Him.

That can begin today. To be born again. To die to anything else. To give up stumbling. To give up walking through the darkness. What you do is you repent. You say, "I'm done living that way. I'm done trying those things. I'm done looking to that for complete fulfillment. I'm done believing that the ache that I feel can be filled anywhere else. And, God, I bring all of my brokenness to You for You to make me whole and hopeful." That is a prayer that He answers every single time.

And what I want us to do right now, corporately we're going to have a moment of worship. Would you stand to your feet?

I was reading a commentary this week and it was talking about this new temple, living stones. It made me think of this story of a Spartan king. And in the story the Spartan king is standing there with another monarch and the monarch is very curious about the strength of Sparta, how they are able to move the way that they do, how they are able to conquer. And he said, "Can you explain it to me? What is the source of your strength?"

And the Spartan king doesn't hesitate. He looks right at him. And he says, "Our strength is easy. It's the walls of Sparta." And the old king looks around at the city and he says, "I don't see any walls. What are you talking about?" And the Spartan king looks to his army, and he says, "They are the walls of Sparta. Every man a brick."

And I think in the same way, when you want to know the strength of the church, it's us. Every man, woman, child a living stone being built up. Many temples being forged together from this place and expanding to the ends of the earth. That is who we are.

What I want us to do right now is worship. We're going to sing this song that we sang at the beginning of the service. And I pray that when you sing the word *temple* this time,

that it really comes to life, that you realize what was done, and you realize the new temple and the part that you play in it.

Would you pray with us?

God, we thank You so much for this morning. God, we thank You for just the chance to come to You. And, God, just for a moment, to let go of all of the labels, all of the beliefs, all of the self-talks about who we are and who we are not. And just to have a moment to be reminded of who You said we are. Who You've called us to be. And, God, it's Your opinion that matters anyway. You're the One who designed us. So, God, don't let us settle for anything else.

God, I pray that You would grab ahold of the hearts of everyone here today. That we would be strengthened together. That we would walk out of here knowing that we're going to different neighborhoods and homes and parts of the city, but we are one church, we are the walls of Your temple, we are the walls of Your kingdom.

Brick by brick, God, I pray that Your kingdom advances. God, thank You for the honor that it is to serve You. Jesus, we love You. It's in Your perfect name we pray: Amen.