

Fil-Am Community Church

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1 May 2016

Key Verse: 1 Peter 2:9-10

A CHURCH THAT INCLUDES YOU

1 Peter 2:9-10

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

This morning, we’re going to start a new series. In this series, we’re going to talk about a family that is out of this world. Some of you are thinking, “You just described my family.” But, we’re not going to talk about an earthly family. We’re going to talk about the family of God. The family of God is, of course, spiritual in nature. Its members, therefore, are not bound by kinship ties and yet they are still related by blood, by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ who died for them. Amen?

I believe that many of us here belong to the family of God. By family of God, I mean the universal, invisible body of believers from times past up to the present and the future. In the New Testament in the original Greek, this body of believers is called *ekklesia* which means “a called-out assembly.” In Spanish, it is translated *Iglesia*, and in English, *Church*.

It’s interesting how words evolve over time. For example, centuries ago the word “Fantastic” meant “existing only in one’s imagination”. Today, it means

something is really incredible. Then, there's "Backlog" which meant the biggest log in the fire during colonial times. Today, it means a reserve or a pile of work you still need to plow through.

A few years ago, "Text me" wouldn't have made sense. But today, of course, it's part of our everyday language. And if you don't know what it means, you don't have a cell. BTW, cell used to mean only jail, like prison cell, or it meant also a tiny part of the body.

The word "church" is the same thing. Never once in the Bible it was referred to as a building. The early Christians didn't say "Let's go to church". Rather, they'd say "Let's go the house of the Lord". Because to them the church is composed of individuals who have given their lives over to Jesus. But today, of course, it can mean the building where the real church meets.

Now, Fil-Am Church is what you call a local church. It is visible. We are flesh and blood. This is a physical location. And there are hundreds of thousands, if not, millions of churches like us scattered around the world. When you gather all these churches together, they comprise the invisible, universal body of Christ. This includes all churches that have been established since Pentecost. If you are a follower of Christ, the church includes you.

Now, we know there are various church denominations. Just like money has denominations – 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, etc. Is there a 50? I've never seen one. Anyway, there may be different denominations but they're all the same money. It's just that money is expressed through different values. The values could refer to the way churches differ in organizational style or worship style or even non-essential doctrines. One thing clear though is that denominations are merely labels. They don't guarantee membership in God's family let alone being saved. For a person may be a Baptist or a Pentecostal or a Presbyterian for a long time and yet never have had a personal relationship with Jesus. Conversely, a person may be a

genuine member of God's family even though he or she is not part of any denomination whatsoever. You see, when we get to heaven, God will not say, "Have you been a good Baptist?" or "Did you jump and shout like the Pentecostals?" or "Were you sprinkled with water as a baby like the Presbyterians?"

The question that all of us should have the right answer to is "Is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior?" If your answer is "Yes" to that question, well and good. You are a Christian then and a member of the family of God.

The term *Christian* was first given to the early believers. We'll find this in Acts 11:26, "*The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*" In Greek, the word used was *Christianos* which means 'follower of Christ.' As Christians, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. We carry the name of Jesus Christ. Thus, we should be proud of this label because we are carrying a name that is above all names. Amen?

Our text this morning gives us a profile of God's family. I hope that through this message we'll learn more about ourselves and the character of our God. But first, let me tell you that this verse originally applied to the nation of Israel. In Exodus 19:5-6, God says,

"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Because of unbelief Israel failed to realize the promise of God, and the nation forfeited its place as God's own people. In this present age, the church occupies the favored place that Israel lost through disobedience. But, of course, God has not forgotten Israel and will restore this nation in the future.

So, this morning, let's look at what the Bible says about members of the Church that includes you.

Who We Are

Verse 9 starts by saying that all of us believers are God's chosen people, *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God."* Peter is saying "You are special. You are not just any kind of people." Therefore, as members of the Family of God,

I. We Occupy a Unique and High Position

You see, our being special stems from the fact that God has chosen us before the foundation of the world to belong to Christ. Ephesians 1:4 tells us: *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."*

Now, how did God choose His people? He chose them not because of who they are but because of who they are not. All believers have nothing to boast about. We are all sinners, unlovable, and detestable. Yet, God clothed us with His love and made us His own. Now that we are members of God's family, there is something to boast about. We can boast about God's grace and mercy.

The fact that we are God's chosen people affords us the luxury of occupying a unique and high position on earth and in the heavens. On earth, our position is unique because we are the only ones who, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house. Look at verse 5 of 1 Peter 2:

"...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house."

This spiritual house is the church whose head or foundation is Jesus Christ, the living Stone. Christ is compared to a stone to denote his invincible strength and everlasting duration. At the same time, this Stone is living because he has eternal life in Himself and is able to impart this life to those who use Him as the foundation of their lives.

Now, let us talk about our high position. Let us turn to Eph. 2:6:

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”

Brothers and sisters, as far as God is concerned, we are already seated in the heavens. Each of us has a place there and no one can take that away from us. A seat is reserved for you in heaven. This should assure us every time we feel like we’re not going to make it. Brothers and sisters, we already made it! The enemy has no hold on us. Remember, we are God’s chosen people and His protection is always upon those whom He has chosen. Jesus says in John 10:28-29 that no one can take His sheep or chosen ones out of His hand or his father’s hand.

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

II. We Have Been Given Certain Privileges

In verse 9 of our text, we see that God’s people are described as a royal priesthood and a holy nation. In Old Testament times, only priests were given the privilege of offering sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. They serve as mediators between Israel’s holy God and his sinning people. This set-up changed when Jesus Christ came to earth and died. By his sacrifice, he tore the veil that separates the people from God. Thus, all believers have now become priests themselves because they are able to come to God directly but still through the intercession of the High Priest which is Jesus Christ. This is why the Bible in Hebrews 4:16 exhorts us to approach God’s Throne of Grace, *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

As his children, this is one of our privileges. We can come to God the Father without going through any human intervention.

Do not think that God will not hear your prayer just because you are not a pastor, or a missionary, or someone actively involved in ministry. God listens to all his children, whoever they are and whatever their capacity may be. Years ago, someone called me on the phone and asked me to pray for her. She said, “Rolly, can you please pray for me? I’m sure God will hear your prayer because you’re going to become a missionary.” That’s a big misconception. Any Christian is just as privileged as I am. If you’ve heard of the term Priesthood of all believers, this is what it is all about.

Christians are not merely priests, they are royal priests. Royal means having the quality of a king or queen. The Bible says that Jesus is the King of kings. It follows, therefore, that those who follow him have inherited the kingdom of God and have this kingly quality in them. Look at what Revelation 5:10 (NLT) says, *“And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth.”* It is, therefore, a great privilege to be part of a royal family.

Another privilege we have is that we have been made holy. A holy nation, that’s what we are. “Holy” means “set apart.” You see, each of us has a toothbrush. Do you share your toothbrush? No, you set it apart for your own use. To you, that is holy and sacred. No one can touch it. Not even your wife. Over your dead body.

God has set you apart from others to make you his own. For his own use. No one can touch you. The enemy cannot touch you. You know, some people wear a cross or display the cross in the house believing that it will ward off evil spirits. That is true only in the movies. The cross is the symbol of our faith. It reminds us of God’s love for us because Jesus died for us on the cross.

Nothing wrong in displaying it if that’s your intention. But you know what will make the devil run away with fear? The name of Jesus. The Bible says that demons flee at the mere mention of Jesus’ name. In any case, a Christian is always

protected by Jesus, whether he wears the cross or not, whether it is displayed in the house or not.

Now, going back to “Holy”, another meaning is sanctified or cleansed. We are no longer tainted by sin in the sight of God. We are already righteous in the sight of God. And so, there is no need for us to make ourselves clean because God himself has cleansed us by the blood of Jesus. 1 John 1:7 tells us that the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. *“But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.”*

He did this by dying for us on the cross. Sadly, billions of people don’t realize this. They rely on their own works in the hopes of entering heaven. In India, there is a festival called Kumbha Mela held every three years at four different locations in rotation. In this festival, Hindus make a pilgrimage to the Ganges River which they consider as the most sacred in the world. Then, in the river banks they bathe themselves thinking that the waters of the river will purify them and release them from the cycle of life and death.

So, every three years, they do this and they don’t mind the pollution in the river. If you grew up in the Philippines, just imagine yourself going down to Pasig River to take a bath. As you know, that river has become so dirty and polluted. So, we see the great lengths that people in India will go to just become holy.

Christians, we are privileged. We don’t have to go to any river to make ourselves holy. Even if we don’t take a bath, we’re still holy. Say to the person next to you, “You are holy. Did you take a bath?”

So, because we belong to the family of God, we occupy a unique and high position. We also have been given certain privileges. And thirdly,

III. We Are Peculiar and Precious to Him

When you became a Christian, did you notice any changes in yourself and in your surroundings? Did you feel that you are different from others, like you were someone special, and that the world didn't seem to be like it was before? Suddenly, were you also treated by others like you were strange?

The KJV or King James Version uses the word “peculiar” to describe God’s people. It says, *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”* You know what, the word “peculiar” is rather peculiar. This is one of those words that, as I mentioned earlier, has acquired a different meaning through the years. When the KJV was written, in the year 1611, “peculiar” meant “belonging exclusively to.” Then, it acquired another meaning, strange or odd. In a sense, this is true of Christians because when non-Christians see you acting differently, they say you are strange.

When I was in college, there were a number of Christians in campus. They belonged to CCC, IVCF, and a few other less-known organizations. These Christians were known for their zeal in witnessing. Moreover, they were known also to be decent, peace-loving, do-gooders, etc. During exam time, while everyone else was frantic and cheating, they remained calm and never compromised their honesty.

I met some of them and even discussed religion with them. I was a Jehovah’s Witness at the time, you see. Like everybody else, I felt there was something strange about them. “They are too good to be true” is what a lot of students said.

Folks, we are special because are strange and we belong to God. God owns us. He bought us with the blood of His son Jesus who died for you and for me.

Romans 5:8 says:

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

There is no greater love than that. Someone said, “The love of God is the ultimate reality, the deepest and strongest force in the universe.” When God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, it was a demonstration of the intense affection He has for all mankind. When He died on the cross, He gave it all He had. He died so that we may earn the blessing of a life that never ends.

Christians, you are precious to Him. Don’t ever think that God’s love will waver. It is as firm as a rock, as eternal as time, and as gentle as a leaf. Rest in God’s love. Be assured that His love will see you through. You are precious to Him.

Now, that we have established who we are, let’s look at

What We Do

A. We Declare the Praises of God

The last part of verse 9 says, “*that you may declare the praises of him*”

Peter is telling us to be vocal about our family association. There are a lot of things to be proud of about our heavenly father. We shouldn’t hide the fact that God is our Father. If Bill Gates or Steve Jobs were your father, wouldn’t you be proud of them? They invented the Mac and the PC. Well, I know our own fathers may not have a star status like other famous fathers, but if you’re really proud of your father, there’s something to brag about him, right?

And we have a Father in heaven who is far far far far greater than any father you can think of. He is almighty, powerful, faithful, loving, merciful.

He is just awesome! We should be praising him to other people. We should be telling others that he exists and that he is alive and that he is so good all the time.

When was the last time you told others about God’s goodness? When was the last time you testified to others about God’s power in your life? If you notice, in our home groups and in our prayer meetings, we always make it a point to have a testimony time. This is an occasion wherein we can tell others how good God has

been to us, his healing, his provision, his intervention in our lives. We should take the opportunity to participate in such a time because I'm sure God takes delight in the praises of his people. Our attitude should be like that of David in the Bible, who praised God not only in good times but in bad times as well.

We should praise Him not only this church but in other places as well. For example, when there's an opportunity, we can tell others how God has brought us through a trial in life. We can tell them God has been faithful to us. Who knows, that might be an occasion for the person we're sharing with to open his or her heart to the Lord.

So, we praise him. And

B. We Tell Others about the Gospel

The last part of verse 9 says that God called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. You see, before God called us, we were all living in darkness, we were blind, we didn't know where we were going.

Some of us thought that we were on the right track only to find out later that it led to death. In fact, without Christ, the Light of the world, all roads lead to death.

One thing is clear, Jesus saved us from death and gave us eternal life by his death and resurrection. We weren't saved because of our good works but because of the finished work of Christ on the cross. As verse 10 says,

“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

That is the gospel of God's grace. Because of His kindness which any of us don't deserve, we have been given the opportunity to become a part of God's family. There are others out there who need to see the light. Billions of people are dying, they need Jesus in their lives. The lost will continue to walk in darkness unless we point them to the Light of the world.

Earlier, I said that denominational labels are not important to God. What is important to him is that you answer correctly if he asks you, “Have you placed your trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation?” You may say “Yes” to this question. But what will your answer be if God asks you another question that goes like this, “When you were on earth, did you share the message of salvation to the lost or did you keep it to yourself?” I’ll let you ponder that question.

Through this message, I just wanted us to see how beautiful and wonderful the family of God is. There’s a lot of clubs and organizations out there that we can join but nothing can be more satisfying, uplifting, and reassuring than being a part of God’s family.

Just to remind you, by virtue of His calling, God has placed us in a unique and high position, he has given us certain privileges and considers each one of us as peculiar and precious to Him.

The question now is, “Do you belong to the Family of God?”