

Title: But You Are: Finding Your Identity in the Mercy and Calling of God

Sermon Summary: Drawing from 1 Peter 2:9-10, this sermon confronts the tendency of believers to allow the world, their past failures, and the opinions of others to define who they are, rather than resting in the identity God has declared over them. The pastor emphasizes that God's mercy initiates a divine transfer, extracting believers from darkness and transplanting them into his marvelous light. This is not a self-improvement project or an act of willpower, but a sovereign act of God who calls, chooses, and claims his people as his own treasured possession. Through four identity markers -- chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, and people for God's own possession -- Peter establishes that believers are not becoming these things but already are these things in the eyes of God. The sermon calls both believers and unbelievers to respond to God's mercy, which is actively drawing people out of darkness and into light, and challenges the congregation to allow these realities to reshape how they see themselves, their community, and their mission.

Key Points:

- The word "but" in 1 Peter 2:9 signals a decisive contrast between what the world says about a person and what God declares over those who belong to him through faith in Christ
- God does not merely improve circumstances; he gives believers a new identity, a new name, a new family, and a new future
- Allowing anyone or anything other than God to define one's identity -- whether culture, relationships, money, or past failures -- leads either to futility or foolishness
- Being comes before doing; identity in God must precede and shape behavior, otherwise old patterns will simply be replaced by new addictions or compulsions
- God's calling is not passive; it is an active, sovereign drawing of a person out of darkness and into light, rooted entirely in his mercy, not in any human merit or quality
- Believers are a chosen race, not because of ethnicity, intellect, moral purity, or any personal achievement, but solely because God loved them
- The royal priesthood is not about personal privilege or power but about representation -- standing between God and man, reflecting God's character to the world
- Holiness means being set apart for God's purposes, not sinless perfection; God did not save people so they could pursue their own desires under the cover of his blessing

- Believers are God's treasured possession, not as slaves but as cherished inheritance, much like a father's beloved child
- These four identity realities must be internalized simultaneously and allowed to transform how believers view themselves, their church, their community, and their mission

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Peter 2:9-10, which declares that believers are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for God's own possession, called out of darkness into his marvelous light, and recipients of mercy they had not previously known
- Colossians 1:13, in which Paul describes God rescuing believers from the domain of darkness and transferring them into the kingdom of his beloved Son
- Deuteronomy 7, which clarifies that God's choice of Israel was not based on their size or strength but solely on his love and faithfulness to his covenant
- Isaiah 43, in which God speaks of his chosen people as those formed for himself to declare his praise
- Malachi 3, in which God describes his people as his own treasured possession, spared as a father spares a son who serves him
- Romans 9, which echoes the language of Hosea -- those who were not God's people are called his people, and those not beloved are called beloved
- Hosea, in which God instructs the prophet to name a child Lo-Ammi, meaning "not my people," as a picture of spiritual estrangement that is later reversed through divine mercy and restoration

Stories:

- A child awakened in the middle of the night during a violent storm finds the familiar turned frightening as darkness fills the house and power goes out; the father calls out from the darkness, telling the child to walk toward his voice, and the child, though the storm has not stopped, trusts the father's voice and moves toward the light -- used as a picture of how God's calling draws people out of spiritual darkness through trust, not through the circumstances changing first

- The pastor recounts his experience in Marine Corps boot camp at Parris Island in 1976, where his senior drill instructor, a Black man he describes as one of the finest Marines he ever met, addressed racial tension by telling the recruits they were no longer defined by their race but were all green -- used to illustrate how a new identity supersedes the old categories the world uses to define people
- The pastor shares a humorous account of two men who claimed to have achieved sinless perfection -- one who said he had not sinned in two weeks, whose wife's reaction exposed the claim, and another who said he had not sinned in years, to whom the pastor responded that the claim itself was the sin -- used to clarify that holiness means being set apart for God's purposes, not attaining sinless perfection
- A brief reference to the mysterious Old Testament figure Melchizedek, who was both king and priest, is used to illuminate the concept of the royal priesthood and its fulfillment in Christ, who is described in Hebrews as a priest after the order of Melchizedek
- The pastor references the work of Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, and his insight that being comes before doing, using it as a framework for the sermon's central argument that identity must precede behavior