

Title: We Are a Priesthood of All Believers

Text: 1 Peter 2:1-10

When our retirement home was about to be built, my wife and I drove out to the site to enjoy its construction. All we saw was a pile of lumber. That didn't look like much of a house! But when we came back the next time, those lengths of wood had been put together and we could begin to see the shape of the place where we would live. Peter says that each of us believers is like a stone (1 Peter 2:4)—that doesn't look like much of a house!—but we can be formed together to build a spiritual house, a temple. Together!

There is a story about a foreign dignitary coming to visit the king of Sparta. The Spartan king boasted about the walls of Sparta and the protection they provide. The visitor looked around and saw nothing that looked like walls. "Where are those walls you seem to be so proud of?" The king pointed to his soldiers that stood nearby. The king smiled: "Those are the walls of Sparta. Each soldier is a brick!" Together!

The Bible often draws on this image of building. God promises to bring us a foundation stone (Isaiah 28:26). Jesus is called that very cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6). Our Lord has told Peter that Peter's faith is the rock upon which the church will be built (Matthew 16:18). We ourselves are living stones (1 Peter 2:5). Together!

Another image for the church is "a holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5). Usually we think of individual priests, those who offer leadership on behalf of others. Peter has written to those who have been exiled (1 Peter 1:1) that their life together has become priestly . . . going to bat for the empty, showing God's forgiveness to the guilty, sacrificing their resources that others might have what they need, living lives that show what it is to be captured by God, teaching by example and by word what God says to us. Do you see yourself as a priest for God? Together!

This series of lessons has spelled out what it means to be "Jesus' Beloved Community." Let's notice that punctuation; it is possessive. The community belongs to Jesus. This week's focal text affirms that we are chosen, royal, holy, God's own (1 Peter 2:9). We belong to Jesus. Together!

What Someone Else Has Said: Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love of God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love from the (brothers and sisters) is learning to listen to them" (*Life Together*, SCM Press).

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Bind us together, Lord . . ."

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