Set Apart Part 3: A Royal Priesthood

- We are back in this hybrid series that is part bible study and part sermon we started a few weeks ago all from the Book of 1 Peter. My goal for this is some deep growth in all of you! Remember, Peter was writing this letter from Rome. And it is to Christians who are being severely persecuted and tested.

- Last week we were challenged to a holy life, a set apart life, in the middle of this spiritually dead and hostile world. Holiness isn't just a suggestion but the calling to every believer in Christ! And today we are going to be challenged to level up again and push against comfort and complacency again because today we are learning about who we are in Christ!

Now before I jump in I want to ask with a show of hands who here remembers their very first job they've ever had?

- Some of you may have blocked it out of your mind. It could have been flipping burgers at Wendys, it could have been stocking at a grocery store, it could be mowing lawns, maybe some of y'all even had a paper route, you know when they used to do that. Do they do that still? I have no clue. My very first job was mowing the lawn of our middle school's Shop teacher. I was not good at all. I am not a lawn mowing expert now and I certainly wasn't in fifth grade.

- I bet all of you can look back to your first job and think of times you messed up too. Maybe you burnt the fries, missed someones house on the paper route, always put a few items in the wrong spot while stocking groceries. And what always happens is exactly what happened to me. You mess up and your manager pulls you aside and says the exact same thing my shop teacher: Mr. Rockerfellow said to: ***"Listen son, I know you are new at this but if you want to keep working for me you've got figure out how to do it right"***

- And the reason your manager, my teacher said that to us, or maybe it was just me, is I wasn't just a regular student to him anymore, I stepped into a new role, a new identity. I was an employee. So wherever you worked your identity changed. You were no longer just a customer you were an employee and the expectations were different for that identity. And as we begin chapter 2 of 1 Peter that is the exact talk we are getting this morning.

- Peter is pulling us aside and saying: "Hey son, hey daughter, you may not even be new here, maybe you've been here for most your life, or maybe you are newer but the thing is if you are going to belong to Jesus there is a certain way you must live for Jesus".

- When you came to Christ no matter how long it's been you stepped into something new, a new identity, and with that new identity comes new responsibility. And today we are going to get reminded. If we are wearing the uniform now, claiming the name, we gotta act like it! And it's so powerful I don't care if you've been saved longer than I've been alive this is relevant to you and it is good stuff! Even if you've heard it before, making it a fresh priority, walking in that identity in a fresh way, it's groundbreaking and life changing.

- My prayer is this actually changes the way you live this morning because following Jesus is not just believing it's being transformed, it is becoming. God through Peter is about to show us exactly who are and it's not according to the world, or our past, but it's who God says we are in Christ! ***You are apart of The Royal Priesthood!***

- That's exactly what we are going to dive into today, what does this biblically mean? We are going to look at the Old Testament because for the full context of 1 Peter you have to look back at what it truly mean't to be a priest. Not necessarily in our modern outlook of royal or priests but from God's definition, according to the scripture.

- But before we get to this new identity, this spiritual priesthood, Peter gives us a major prerequisite about walking in our new identity as royal priests, he is telling us about how our desires have to change. Now as we dive in we see it starts with the word: "Therefore" and remember we learned before when reading scripture that is important.

- This is in the context of the end of chapter 1 which talked about how we are like a vapor in the wind, like a flower in the field. Everything in this world is fleeting and doesn't last so he says therefore because of that now this…

1 Peter 2:1-3: "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." NIV

- Peter is telling us here now that we are Children of God, our desires for worldly things should be replaced with new food, spiritual food, and then he tells us as we seek the spiritual milk we also need to grow up. We shouldn't be in the milk stages forever we need to continually grow spiritually.

Hebrews 5:13-14: "Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." NIV

- Peter is not telling us to stay on a diet of spiritual milk. We crave it as new believers then we mature and grow up to solid food. We should desire the solid food, the mature things of Christ! The unfortunate reality is there are many, many Christians who have been saved for many years and never moved on from spiritual baby food stage. We've tasted that the Lord is good but we haven't grown up in our salvation. We say things like: "I don't feel like reading my bible" but we don't realize our craving isn't automatic it is cultivated. What you crave is determined by what you consume. Feed your spirit and your appetite is going to change.

- But Peter is setting us up here for the rest of this powerful passage. If don't hunger for spiritual growth you will never step into your spiritual identity. Let me say it like this…

Spiritual Hunger fuels Spiritual Growth

- Peter is challenging us today, it's hard to hear someone say: Grow up! It's hard to hear, but it's so necessary. God is calling us all to spiritual growth, not staying where we are. We have to step up, to walk into the fullness of who God says that we are. And in order to do that we absolutely must grow up! We have to have an intense craving for spiritual growth! A deep hunger to be mature in our faith!

- But we have to watch out for a trap though, a lot of people want to grow in their faith but live independently from the body of Christ. They want a relationship with Jesus but don't want to be connected to the church. They want God to work in them but not place them or root them in a body. Peter challenges that mindset of individualism as well. Let's read a little more…

1 Peter 2:4-8: "As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," 8 and, "A stone that

causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for." NIV

- God is speaking to us here that we weren't just saved to exist we are like living stones being built into that spiritual house. Peter has intimate knowledge of this because Peter when asked by Jesus who they thought he was Peter told Jesus he believed he was the Messiah and then Jesus spoke this powerful word to him about what was being built. This happened in Matthew…

Matthew 16:13-19: "When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" 14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." NIV

- Jesus didn't tell Peter upon this rock I will build in you a good life, He said build my church and hell can't prevail! Listen none of us were meant to be stand alone rocks, we were designed to be placed into a spiritual structure. A stone by itself doesn't do much at all but when set in place it is integral to something bigger and greater.

- Christianity isn't a solo sport, it's not cross country, we aren't running our own solo races we are team running together hand in hand. God is building His church and we get the honor to be apart of it! It says it like this in Ephesians…

Ephesians 2:19-22: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." NIV

- We belong to something bigger than ourselves and I know that is hard to receive for some folks because it goes against the efforts of building something big for yourself. God is the builder and knows exactly where to place you.

God isn't Just Saving People, He is Building Something Powerful

- We aren't just saved we were set in place, apart of the spiritual blueprint God designed, we aren't just individual believers we are apart of God's very house! God's Kingdom, God's plan. Peter is building up to something here, he has told us to crave spiritual growth because if we don't grow we will never step into what God has for us. He is telling us we are living stones apart of the something God is building with all of us together. And now God reveals through Peter a massive identity statement about us. This reshapes how we should see ourselves as believers.

- Many of you could possibly quote verse 9 of this chapter to me, you know it but we are going to really dig into it this morning, because it is life changing when truly put into action, this identity is a true spiritual challenge.

1 Peter 2:9-10: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, 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." NIV

- If we could truly grasp the gravity of what God is saying here, like I don't just mean be able to quote it but truly grasp it. It would change everything, it would massively rock our whole lives. And the awesome thing is this is actually a quote from the Old Testament in Exodus chapter 19 where God calls all of Israel to be a nation of priests. 1 Peter 2:9 was always God's plan to anoint all His people as holy! But then the people of Israel made the plan delay.

Exodus 19:5-6: "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, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." NIV

- This is right before The Mount Sinai moment and the Ten Commandments and Israel's rebellion, God planned to speak to all of Israel but they got scared and wanted God to speak to Moses and then Moses to them. They had the opportunity to hear the voice of God directly as God planned. God wanted all

of Israel to be priests, a holy nation but they themselves asked for Moses to be their intermediary so they didn't hear the voice of God. That happened in verse 19 of chapter 20.

- So because of the rebellion of Israel God created a tribe of Priests but through Christ, through the cross the original plan came back, we all have access to God. Now nationality doesn't matter God's church takes on this identity of holy nation, of royal priesthood. Not replacing Israel but fulfilling the original identity God had planned for them as a Kingdom of priests.

- ***In Exodus God said "you will be", be in 1 Peter God says "you are a royal priesthood" because it is not something we achieve it is something we received because of Jesus!*** And I know when you hear the word priest probably all of you have different mental pictures. I'd say most of us think of the Catholic tradition when you hear the word priest so it sounds super radical to you.

- I can tell you in the context of this being written, God speaking this through Peter it is a completely different thing. ***It's not a religious position, it is a spiritual identity. This is a Kingdom position we occupy through Christ that will change everything if we actually understand it.*** And that is my goal this morning that we grow to actually understand what it means to be a royal priesthood. And in order to do that we have to answer 2 questions:

1. ***What Was The Role of Priests in The Bible?***
2. ***What Does That Mean For Us Today?***

- This is not just a really empowering sounding title, this is a calling, this is a responsibility! God is telling us here we were set apart for something greater, you were called into something bigger than yourself, you have an identity that should change the way you live! So I think we should tackle that first question to understand this identity, we need to take a look at what the role of a priest in the Bible was.

- Throughout the Old Testament the priests weren't just religious figures they had a particular job, and I mentioned this role earlier when talking how Israel chose Moses to be this. ***They were Mediators.*** They were basically the middle men between the people and God. They offered sacrifices for sin, they represented the people before God.

- But in The New Testament that changed with Jesus. Jesus became the great high priest for everyone. He offered Himself as the final and ultimate sacrifice

on the cross for all sin. So now there is no more need for a human mediator between us and God. Jesus gave us direct access and now we are called priests. Not to replace Jesus, but to continue His work on The Earth!

- So today I want to walk through some truths about your identity as a royal priesthood. I pray you truly take these to heart and let them change you. And this first one is so foundational, this alone changes everything, it is so vital and important, and I touched on it already but we need to spend more time on it because it's life changing when you truly put it in action.

Priesthood Truth 1: You Have Direct Access To God

- This is so huge, so amazing! When you truly get the gravity of this it is truly shouting words! Because this wasn't always the case throughout history, this was not for everybody before the work of the cross. But as apart of the priesthood you have direct access to the presence of God!

- For centuries access to God was limited, it was restricted, in the Old Testament people couldn't just walk into the presence of God whenever they wanted. Only one man, once a year, the high priest, could enter the holy of holies. On The Day of Atonement he could step behind the veil and he had to bring a blood sacrifice because sinful people could not stand before a Holy God. But when Jesus sacrificed Himself He changed everything! Upon breathing His last breath and giving up His spirit it all changed.

Matthew 27:50-51: "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. 51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split" NIV

- At the very moment Jesus died the very thick curtain, the veil, that separated God's presence from the people was torn in two, ripped in half. From top to bottom. The separation was gone! Notice the way it was even torn, from top to bottom, almost even implying God reached down and tore it saying: "Hey what separated us is gone, child come right in"!

- For generations people needed that priest to stand in the gap but our new identity given by God tells us that is no longer the case, we are apart of the priesthood, we get to go right to God! Jesus is the only mediator we will ever need!

1 Timothy 2:5: " For, There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus." NLT

- You don't have to go through me to reach God, you don't have to go through any pastor to reach and hear from God. You can go directly to the throne yourself! I would love to be there for every single one of you every minute of the day because I love all of you but I can't I'm just one guy. And you don't even need me, you got the same VIP treatment that I have. We are all VIPs here! Because King Jesus bought us the ticket!

- You don't have to confess your sin to a priest to be forgiven, you don't have to wait for a special day to approach God. You can go to Him anytime, anywhere, and for any reason! Leadership is good, but it should never create a barrier between you and God. You get to go to God, salvation is through your faith confession, not a program done at a church, you can read your Bible, I don't have to read it for you. We are all apart of the priesthood, we don't need any mediator but Jesus, every believer has access to God through Jesus!

Hebrews 4:16: " So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." NLT

- Let everyone of us be bold to go straight to God and His presence, there we find grace, mercy, and everything we need! We don't have to beg to be heard, we don't have to be scared, there is no barrier, God gave us a seat at the table, He is always near, never distant! We have full access, and our prayers should be bold because of it!

Priesthood Truth 2: You are Called to Serve With the Anointing of God

- Listen fellow priesthood you are all called to serve in the supernatural anointing of God! You weren't saved to sit, you were set apart to serve and have an active role in God's Kingdom growth and ministry! You were called for more than just receiving your whole Christian walk, you were anointed to release into others. God never calls without equipping. Let's look at the priests in the Old Testament…

Exodus 30:30: ""Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests." NIV

- Before Aaron and his sons could serve they had to be anointed. And the anointing oil wasn't just a religious tradition, it was a symbol of divine empowerment. It was God's mark on His priests declaring: "this one is mine,

these are set apart for me!" It was visible confirmation they weren't serving in their own ability, but with the anointing of God.

- Some of us are waiting to feel qualified before we step into our calling. We make these excuses saying: I'm not ready yet, I don't know enough yet, God doesn't wait for you to have it all together He anoints you and then calls you to step into the assignment. You don't serve to get anointed, you are anointed to serve.

- God didn't just save you but He has anointed you for a calling of service, when His spirit is resting on you, you don't have to chase anything God's spirit already put it in you, anointed you, you don't have to try to manufacture what God already endowed in you. God anoints us all with different gifts but they are for the same work.

1 Corinthians 12:5-15: "There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines." NIV

- We don't have to be jealous of other's gifts, God determines the gifts given but uniquely anoints us all to serve, just in different ways. And the anointing isn't just for the feel good Holy Spirit goosebumps it's an assignment to serve! God didn't give you gifts just to make you feel good but to build up the body of Christ. God put something in you! And we have to move from spectator to servant, you are a royal priesthood!

Priesthood Truth 3: You Are A Representative of God

- Your life is a sermon to those around you, I wonder what it is preaching. A Priest didn't just serve in a temple they carried The Name of God everywhere they went in the world. They weren't just called to minister to God but to also represent Him in all they do. You are called to do the same every minute of every day. The Old Testament Priest wore a special garment called the ephod and it represented their role as intercessor or representative!

Exodus 28:12: "Fasten the two stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod as a reminder that Aaron represents the people of Israel. Aaron will carry these names on his shoulders as a constant reminder whenever he goes before the Lord." NLT

- On each of these onyx stones were six names of the Tribes of Israel, so six on one stone and six on the other. So what he was doing is when the high priest would enter the presence of God he carried the names of the tribes of Israel, God's people with him. It was a picture of intercession.

- You are called to be an intercessor or representative for your family, your coworkers, you friends, when you pray for them you are carrying them before God! When you pray for your city you are carrying it before God! When you stand in the gap for someone you are like the priest carrying the Tribes of Israel before God. That is a priestly duty, we are to carry others before God in intercession!

Malachi shows another priestly function…

Malachi 2:7: "The words of a priest's lips should preserve knowledge of God, and people should go to him for instruction, for the priest is the messenger of the Lord of Heaven's Armies." NLT

But Priests weren't just intercessors but they were messengers!

- They were charged with not speaking their own opinion but the truths of God. They weren't called to fit in with culture but stand apart living and showing God's way. And now those responsibilities fall to us! When people look at your life they should see God's truth reflected in how you live. When you speak your words should carry the wisdom and knowledge of God's Word. You don't need a title or a pulpit to do that, it happens every day in normal life.

2 Corinthians sums up New Testament priesthood pretty well…

2 Corinthians 5:20: "So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" NLT

- We are ambassadors, we represent the authority of our King, we don't carry our message but the message we were given by our King. Our allegiance isn't where we live now but our actual home of Heaven. We don't belong to the

world we belong to God's Kingdom and we are His ambassadors, His priesthood. We represent Jesus and live by the culture of Christ's Kingdom not the worlds culture. So where we go in life, whatever we post online, every single thing we do we are representing The King of Kings! Our God!

We are not just people of faith, we are people on mission!

- That should change absolutely everything about how we live! God is reminding us through Peter here we aren't just regular people, we have mission on us, responsibility in us all wrapped in our God given identity! We have the uniform on! We have to live different!

Priesthood Truth 4: You Are Called As A Priest to the Altars

- A main duty of priests was offering sacrifices to God, and as a royal priest while the system of animal sacrifice is gone we still offer sacrifice unto God. In fact we ourselves as living sacrifices. Sacrifice for God isn't just apart of your faith, it is your faith. Priests went to the altar to lay something down, it's okay to come and receive at the altar but we also have to practice laying things down at the altar. Too often we want a faith that fills us but not a faith that costs us. ***Real faith costs.***

- We are reminded here in 1 Peter priests weren't called to comfort they were called to the altar. And if we are in Christ we are priests which means we no longer live life for what is easy we live for what honors God! Hebrews says it like this, shows what Jesus did for us…

Hebrews 10:11-12: " Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God," NIV

- For centuries priests stood at the altar every single day offering sacrifices for sin. Every lamb, every bull, every drop of blood was a temporary covering that could never fully remove the sin. Their job was never fully done because the sin was never truly gone. But Jesus our Great High Priest came and sacrificed Himself once and for all the work was finished! Jesus didn't just make a sacrifice He became the sacrifice. This means we no longer need to make sacrifices to pay for sins but we are still called as priests to sacrifice. To live sacrificially.

Romans 12:1-2: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." NIV

- That old sacrifice system was a shadow of what God always intended and wanted for His priesthood, His Holy Nation. He didn't want the blood of animals He wanted you! That is what a true, proper, worship is, it's you. And so many of us get stuck here: ***We love the idea of Salvation but struggle with the idea of Surrender.***

- We love the promise of eternal life but don't love the idea of laying down our own life. But here is the thing church: ***God is not calling us to convenience God is call us to consecration! As a Holy Nation and Royal Priesthood.*** So worship isn't just what we sing, it's what we sacrifice. So what is holding us back? Our time, our comfort, our resources, our obedience? Priests don't negotiate with the altar they surrender to it.

- God doesn't just want our Sunday He wants our Monday through Saturday too! He doesn't just want your singing in worship He wants your life in obedience! True worship isn't just lifting up our hands, it's about laying down our life! God wants all of you, not just part of us. We need to understand this about our identity as royal priests, whatever we place on the altar God will fill with His power. God wants to fill you but we've got to fully surrender our whole selves at the altar. Don't keep any part of yourself from God.

Priesthood Truth 5: You are Chose to Declare The Praises of God

- This is one of priestly duties, this is why we exist, we were chosen to declare the praises of our Mighty God! We weren't saved to sit on the sidelines, we weren't set apart to stay silent, we were redeemed so our very lives and every breath could be a declaration of the goodness of God! Let me re read verses 9…

1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. NIV

- Our job as priests is not just know God's goodness but to proclaim His goodness! He brought out of darkness for the proclamation of His Glory! Our

very attitude, our joy, our peace, our faithfulness, our very lives, every moment should proclaim our King and His Goodness! In the Old Testament the priests were the ones who lead praise and worship in the temple. And now thats the role of us all, a whole Kingdom of Priests, it's every believers job. You don't need a guitar and a microphone to be a worship leader, we are all worshippers.

- You don't need a stage to declare the goodness of God, you just need a testimony. Too many of us have lost our praise. It's easy to praise Him when things are good but we go silent when life gets hard. We praise God at church and then complain at home. We say God is faithful but live like we are forsaken.

Our praise cannot be based on circumstance, it must be based on our calling, who God called us and made us! It's based on who God made us, our identity as royal priests! You are apart of the priesthood! You were chosen to declare the praises of God!

- Once we were spiritually dead, but then God saved us made us apart of His People, God showed so much mercy to us! God mercifully made us apart of the family! We didn't earn this but God freely made us this, we were chosen and redeemed, given identity, and by our glorious God. From the Exodus all the way to the Book of Revelation we see the affirmation of our identity as royal priesthood.

So what does that mean for you today?

- That means He made us what He always intended us to be a Kingdom of Priests. His plan all along. He gave us that mighty identity, this is our calling, it's not just for me as a Pastor it's for every single one of us. You are apart of His eternal plan! And if all this is true, which it is man it should change us drastically!

- Don't wait for someone else to carry the fire, carry it yourself, don't just attend church be the church everywhere you go! Don't think the ministry is someone else's it's yours, it's for you! You are anointed to serve! Don't live beneath your calling! Step in! Surrender!