

# HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE

## (Sermon Summary)

### **Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-10.**

It was to be anticipated that this would be a quiet Sunday Evening Service (Boxing Day). There are still threats of lockdowns in the air although there may be reason to hope that here in England we will escape this. But the state of the nation has a dispiriting effect on us as does the result of recent outreach in the local community.

So it is good to remember who God declares us to be as we find it in 1 Peter 2:9, which comes, at times, like news from a foreign land to us.

#### **1. These people needed encouragement.**

Like perhaps many of us at the moment, the people Peter wrote to needed encouragement. They were in the early days of Nero's reign as Emperor and were already experiencing suffering and trials (1 Peter 1:6 and 4:1). They were experiencing reviling at the hands of their neighbours (1 Peter 3:16 and 4:4). They might also have been discouraged by the number of people who were rejecting the message of hope held out in the gospel (1 Peter 2:7-8). It is always uncomfortable to be a minority. We might be left asking how so many people could really have got it wrong and whether we really have got it right.

#### **2. These are amazing words.**

Contrasted with the disobedient, the people Peter was addressing are the 'You' of a totally different range of names and titles. These are perhaps words we should paste to the mirror when we wake in the morning and are feeling under par. Because they are true, whether we are feeling well or not, whether we are feeling discouraged or not. They are spoken to very ordinary people, many of whom were slaves who would never have any great influence over world affairs. Instead of being nobodies, the Lord declares of them, and us, that we are bearers of titles of honour and royalty, which give us an identity and establish the pattern of our relationship with God.

We are described as 'chosen generation' which reminds us that the place we have in the affection of God is not of our doing but of His decision and making. We are a 'royal priesthood' which indicates that our service to God is elevated by us being called

'royal'. We are a 'holy nation' so that, though scattered across the world, we are seen by God as present before Him as one, and with our distinctive laws and statutes.

Then we are also 'His own special people', the title we shall look at now.

### **3. Special.**

We speak of something being 'special' when we want to distinguish it from other things. Being 'special' means being set apart and distinctive. It is not that we stand out because of our appearance or our birthright. It is not that we have great talents. It is God that determines we are special according to His own will and purpose. It is all due to Him and nothing is due to us.

We see this in Deuteronomy 7:6-8 regarding the Lord's choice of Israel out of all the nations of the world. They were not chosen for their size or power. They were made special by God's own choice and decision. It was His election that established a bond with the people. It is all a mystery as to why it should apply to us, but we have to leave that as being part of the mystery of God's will. We see in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ that He would travel distances, just to help one person, such as in the case of crossing the Sea of Galilee, surviving a storm, to meet the Gadarene demoniac and set him free. Cornelius in Acts 10 is another example in this way. It is not a matter of equal opportunities or equality of outcomes. The stubborn reality is that our place before God is the result of His sovereign will. We are able to speak of His mercy in calling us out of darkness and into His light (v10).

### **4. His own.**

It is something again to learn that the Lord looks on us as His people. He has acquired them and will care for them and delight in them.

In many places in the Scriptures it tells us how He accords titles of great dignity to us that mark us out as valuable in His sight (see Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 14:1-2; Malachi 3:17; and Titus 2:14). We are like treasure and jewels to Him. This has some wonderful implications. Everything that is valuable is carefully guarded and kept under surveillance. The devil cannot prevail over us. None can snatch us from God's hand. Also, as we think of ourselves as His own special treasure and jewels, He will polish, refine and nurture us. He will develop different facets of our character and bring out some surprising features in us. It is also very instructive about our true identity in an age where identity is so much a matter for debate. This is who we are at heart.

So, whatever days lie ahead for us, we are strengthened by the words spoken of us here – 'We are His own special people'.