



So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

1 Peter 1:1-12, ESV

THE CHURCH: OUR IDENTITY AND FUNCTION

December 11, 2011

Rev. Tom Hamilton

There is a sense in which that's what this forty-day journey is all about—rehearsing the gospel and responding to the extravagant heart of God. I hope it is becoming clearer every day. Our gracious, merciful, ever-loving God has chosen us—chosen us to be his people. We have been exploring what that means for us as individuals.

Eugene Peterson, who has given us *The Message*—a wonderful translation of Scripture, some years ago wrote a book on discipleship—discipleship in an instant society. He used Nietzsche's phrase as a title for the book: *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. In that book he said:

And going against the stream of the world's ways, there are two biblical designations for people of faith that are extremely useful: *disciple* and *pilgrim*. Disciple says we are people who spend our lives apprenticed to our Master, Jesus Christ. We are in a growing learning relationship, always. A disciple is a learner, but not in the academic setting of a schoolroom, rather at the work site of a craftsman. We do not acquire information about God, but skills in faith.

Think about that as you think of yourself as a disciple—an apprentice to Jesus—learning to be like, to think like, and act like Jesus.

The other word Peterson underscored was "pilgrim."

The word "pilgrim" describes us as people who spend our lives going someplace, going to God and whose path for getting there is the way, Jesus Christ. We realize that "this world is not home" and we set out for "the Father's house."

We have to think of this not only in terms of us as individual Christians, but as the church.

Today's Reflection from:
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Written by: Maxie D. Dunnam