Sermon – God's People
Sunday June 22, 2025

Introduction

Here's a question for you: What's the purpose of the church?

Raise your hand if you think it's one of these things:

- A place to connect with others.
- A place to get inspiration and support.
- A place to help you grow in your faith.

How many of you said 'yes' to any of these answers?

If you did, you're right. The church is all of these things, but here's the catch. If that's all you think it is, then you're missing the point.

See, we live in a world that trains us to think like consumers. We walk into restaurants, movies, even friendships asking, *What's in it for me?*

And here's the problem – it can be so easy to do the same thing when it comes to the church. We can often leave here asking ourselves:

- Did the worship inspire me?
- Did the message engage me?
- Did I get anything out of service?

It's natural to ask these questions. But what if the church isn't designed to be just a dispenser of spiritual services?

- What if the church isn't about your personal preferences but about God's priorities?
- What if the church isn't about consuming spiritual goods but about contributing to God's mission?

Because **the church isn't primarily a place—it's a *people***.

A people called and set apart for God. A people chosen and shaped by God's love. A people sent into the world, not to get their needs met but to give their lives away for others.

So the real question isn't, *What do I get from church?* The real question is, *What does God want to do through His church, through his people?*

Sermon Series

We're in a series called **KINGDOM COME: Living God's Tomorrow Today.** Many of us grew up thinking that this is the gospel message:

Jesus died for me so I can go to heaven when I die.

But Jesus never says, *The kingdom of God is where you go after you die.* What does he say?

He says, **The Kingdom of God is at hand. (Mark 1:15)**

In other words, God's kingdom isn't a place we'll go to after we die; it's breaking into the world right now.

But what is the kingdom of God? Here's the definition we've been working with. **God's kingdom is**

God's will
to restore God's world
through God's people
in God's time.

In other words, God's kingdom isn't just about rescuing individual souls.

- God's kingdom is about *redeeming the whole world*.
- God's kingdom is about healing everything sin has broken: lives, relationships, communities, systems, institutions, even creation itself.
- God's kingdom is about transforming the world, not escaping it.

But how does all this this happen? Does God's kingdom just drop out of the sky? Does God just scrap this world and replace it with a new one?

No, the Bible teaches that God isn't getting rid of this world; he's *restoring* it. God's plan isn't to work around His people, it's to work *through* them.

Because God's kingdom is God's will to restore God's world *through God's people* in God's time.

Today we'll be focusing on the third part of this definition – *through God's people*.

And this is so relevant for us because Cornerstone is currently in a season of discerning what God has in store for our next chapters as a church. And as we seek God's direction, we need to remember that we're not passive spectators waiting for change to happen. We are God's people, God wants to bring his love, healing and hope into our community through us.

Because the question isn't, *What do I get from church?* The question is, *What does God want to do in our community through us?*

To help us answer this question, the Apostle Peter reminds us of our identity and purpose. Please turn with me to our **Bible Passage 1 Peter 2.**

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. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Now for the rest of this message, we're going to do something a little different – okay? Every time I say, How does God want to restore the world? You respond by saying, *Through his people*. Okay? Let's try it.

How does God want to restore the world? *Through his people*.

Because the church isn't God's backup plan. The church is God's Plan A, there is no Plan B. In fact, this has always been God's desire.

Adam and Eve

It started in the garden. God creates Adam and Eve not just for them to enjoy paradise but so that they could reflect his image, care for his creation, and extend his rule.

Because how does God want to restore the world? Through his people.

So God blesses them and says:

"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over every living creature…" (Genesis 1:28)

You see, Adam and Eve were his first kingdom ambassadors. This was a great privilege and responsibility. But instead, they chose to live for their own kingdom instead.

As a result, sin enters the world and damages all relationships: our relationship with God, with others and with the world.

But God doesn't gives up. Because God's desire has always been to restore the world through His people.

Abraham

So he calls Abraham and gives him an incredible promise—not just to bless him, but to bless the world through him.

Because how does God want to restore the world? Through his people.

"All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3)

You see, God is now forming a covenant people – a people who will carry out his kingdom purposes on earth. Because God's desire has always been to restore the world through His people.

Israel

Abraham's family would later grow and become the nation of Israel. However, they would become slaves in Egypt and forced to work for Pharaoh. But God would deliver them from slavery, bring them into a relationship with Himself and give them a new identity.

"You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:6)

In other words, Israel is called to show the world what it looks like when God is King.

Because how does God want to restore the world? Through his people.

But like Adam and Eve, Israel forgets their purpose. Like you and me:

- They want blessing without obedience.
- They use worship for their personal gain.
- They turn to idols instead of trusting in God.

As a result of their sin, God disciplines Israel, exiles from the land and scatters them among the nations. It looks like the story's over.

But God never gives up. Because his desire has always been to restore the world through His people.

<u>Jesus</u>

So what does God do next? Does he scrap his plan? Does he start all over? No what God does next baffles the human imagination: he steps into the story himself and sends his Son Jesus to come into the world.

Now Jesus is the fulfillment of everything Adam, Abraham, and Israel were meant to be.

- Where Adam gave into temptation, Jesus overcomes it.
- Where Abraham took matters into his own hands, Jesus remains faithful.
- Where Israel sought God's blessing for themselves, Jesus brings God's blessing to the world.

Jesus doesn't just preach the Kingdom of God—He *embodies* it.

In His life, we see what it looks like when God truly reigns:

- The sick are healed.
- The hungry are fed.
- The outcasts are welcomed.
- The lost are found.
- The dead are raised.

Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus launches a new creation. He defeats sin, overcomes death, and opens a way for the world to be restored—so that God's kingdom can finally be established.

And just when you think Jesus is going to do it all on His own, he does something no one expects. He calls people to himself, establishes the church and then commissions them to continue the mission he started.

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. (John 20:21)

Because how does God want to restore the world? Through his people.

With all this in mind, let's return to our passage**.**

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. (1 Peter 2:9)

How does Peter encourage the church to live out its mission? Does he give us a to-do list? Does he give us an action plan? No, he simply reminds us of who we are.

Because before we can do anything *for* God, we need to remember who we are *in* God. Our mission always flows out of our identity.

So in the time we have left, I want to unpack three core identities that will help us live out our mission.

First, **We Are A "So That" People**.

Peter says, you are all these things ***so that*** ***you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness.***

That phrase "so that" is packed with meaning. It reminds us that all God has done for us—choosing us, saving us, shaping us—isn't for our own sake. It's for the sake of others.

As we discern how God is leading us into a new chapter, we need to remember this: **The church doesn't exist for itself.**

- We don't exist to meet our own needs.
- We don't exist to protect our own preferences.
- We don't exist to maintain a building, run programs, or build a name for ourselves.

We exist for the sake of others.

- We exist **so that** our neighbors can experience the love of Christ—whether or not they ever step through these doors.
- We exist **so that** the hungry are fed and the lonely are comforted.
- We exist **so that** the resources God has given us are used for the flourishing of our community.
- We exist **so that** lives are restored, justice is pursued, and light is brought into dark places.

If our vision stops at what happens inside these walls, we've missed the point. Because the church isn't a place, it's a people. A people who are:

- Blessed **so that** we can be a blessing.
- Forgiven **so that** we can forgive.
- Loved **so that** we can love others.
- Healed **so that** we can bring healing and hope.
- Set free **so that** we can stand against oppression.

We are a "So That" people - through whom God brings his kingdom into our community**.**

Second, We Are A Display People.

Peter calls the church a *royal priesthood*.

In the ancient world, a priest was a go-between, a "bridge", someone who stood in the gap between God and people. Priests made God visible. They represented God to the world and brought the needs of the world before God.

And Peter says: *This is who you are.*

We are a **Display People**—we are called to make the invisible God visible to the world.

This means we're called to reflect God's character in our church, our homes, our schools, our workplaces and our neighbourhoods.

- We display God's love when we love people who are hard to love.
- We display God's generosity when we sacrificially use our time, talent and treasure to serve others.
- We display God's grace when we let go of grudges and forgive those who've hurt us.
- We display God's hospitality when we make space at our table for those who are different, those who are left out and those who have no voice.

What if when our community thinks about Cornerstone, they don't think of our building or our Sunday service—but they think of the people and how we embody God's love. Because that's what it means to be A Display People who make an invisible God, visible to our world through our lives and our actions.

Third, We Are A "Set Apart" People

Peter calls the church a *holy nation*. The word *holy* means distinct, different and set apart.

Just think about what we see when we look at the world.

- We see **hopelessness** in young people overwhelmed by anxiety.
- We see **despair** in places where poverty is a struggle.
- We see **division** in families torn apart by politics.
- We see **cynicism** in people who have been disappointed too many times that they no longer believe change is possible.

It can be easy for us to live in the same way too. But as the people of God, we're called to live differently. We're called to live in a broken world not with apathy, cynicism and resentment—but with love, hope and courage.

We are set apart - not to withdraw from the world, but to live in it and show what it looks like when Jesus is King.

Just think - when people look at us—when they see how we treat each other, how we serve our neighbors, how we care for the marginalized, how we spend our time and money, what will they see?

Will we look like everyone around us? Or will there be something different about us?

Now they won't see perfection. But hopefully they will see a glimpse of Jesus. Hopefully they'll see a people who refuse to give in to fear, greed and division – why? Because we belong to another kingdom. We belong to Jesus and his kingdom.

Because who are we?

- We are a So That people.
- We are a Display People.
- We are a Set Apart People.

Because how does God want to restore the world? Through his people.

<u>Conclusion</u>

There's a story of a group of people who lived by a rocky coastline. Ships often crashed in the hidden reefs and as a result many lives were lost in the cold, raging sea.

So a group of people came together with a clear mission: to save lives. They built lookout towers, trained volunteers, and kept rescue boats ready to launch at a moment's notice. Their focus was urgent and their purpose clear.

But as the years went by, fewer ships were wrecked and the urgency faded. Slowly, these rescue volunteers started meeting less to prepare for storms and more to prepare for social events. The life-saving society that once existed for the sake of others became a social club that now existed for the sake of themselves.

You see, this society had forgotten their original mission. They lost sight of the people still drowning just offshore because they became more focused on themselves.

Church, this is our challenge. As we discern what God has in store for us, may we not be a church that slowly becomes comfortable, inward-focused, and forget why we exist. Instead, may we always remember that our mission is to be a social club; but it's to save lives, bring hope and make a difference!

Because the world outside these walls is full of brokenness, despair and pain. So what do we do?

- We remember our identity and purpose.
- We step out of our comfort zones and step into our calling.
- And we live as God's So That People, God's Display People and God's Set Apart People
    - healing the hurting, loving the lonely and bringing hope wherever we go.

Because how does God restore the world?

Through *His people*.