Sermon – Chosen for a Living Hope
Sunday October 18, 2026

Introduction

Take a moment to think about where you live.

- How long have you lived there? 20 years? 5 years? Maybe you just moved in?
- Do you have a favourite coffee shop or a place you go for walks?
- Do you know your neighbours and their stories?
- Do you know where people gather?

Or if you're honest, is your neighbourhood just a place where you live? You leave your house, get into your car, go to work or school, run your errands, come home, pull into the garage—and barely notice the people and places around you.

Statistics Canada found that only 53 percent of Canadians said they really know and trust their neighbours. In 2024, only about 54 percent of people said they feel a strong sense of belonging in their neighbourhood. But:

- What if our neighbourhoods are more than just places where we happen to live?
- What if God has placed us there for a purpose?
- What if our neighbours are people God is inviting us to notice and bless?
- What if God wants to work through us to bring his love into the places we call home?

I think about one of our elderly neighbours. We've had a good relationship with them over the years and recently, one of them discovered she has some serious health issues. She's also caring for an aging family member, and she's scared and doesn't know what to do.

It reminds me that sometimes, right across the street or just a few doors down, people are going through things we don't know about. And sometimes, what they need isn't for us to have all the answers. They just need someone who cares, someone who will listen, someone who will walk with them.

What if that's part of what it means to love our neighbours? Not just being friendly but noticing what's happening and being present?

Introducing Joining God in the Neighbourhood

Today, we're launching a 40-day initiative called **Joining God in the Neighbourhood**. The idea is simple: Go into your neighbourhood. Pay attention. Pray. And notice where God is at work. We've even put together a workbook with lots of great ideas to help you, which I'll talk more about later in the message.

Yesterday, at our Prayer and Envisioning Day, we talked about how, at a time when so many people are struggling to find a place where they belong, God is calling Cornerstone to become an even more significant hub of belonging in our neighbourhoods and surrounding communities. A place where people

are known and loved, grow as followers of Jesus, and are sent out to bring the love of Jesus wherever they go.

That vision doesn't begin with a building or a ten-year plan. It begins with ordinary people like you and me, noticing people, praying, and becoming part of our communities.

That's what these next 40 days are about. We're practising how to live as people through whom God can bring his love and presence into our neighbourhoods.

And that's why we're also beginning a new six-week sermon series called *Chosen for a Purpose: Living as Exiles on Mission*. We'll be exploring the book of 1 Peter, where Peter has something important to say about what it means to live faithfully for God right where he's placed us.

Because Peter is writing to Christians scattered throughout the Roman world. They're trying to follow Jesus in places where they don't feel like they belong. The values around them don't reflect the values of God's kingdom.

So Peter calls them exiles. He reminds them who they are. And he teaches them how to live faithfully right where God has placed them.

What does it look like to live faithfully right where God has placed you?

Today, we'll be talking about three important reminders from our passage: You are chosen; You have a living hope; and You are called to live differently.

The first reminder is this: **You are chosen**.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces… who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father… 1 Peter 1:1-2

Peter begins this letter by reminding them who they are – You are chosen.

And we need to be careful with that word. Because being chosen doesn't mean we're better than others. Throughout the Bible, being chosen means you have a purpose.

God chose Abraham and said: **I will bless you… and you will be a blessing… and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12:2-3)**

God chose Israel and said: **You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Exodus 19:5-6)**

You see, God chose you not just so you can be blessed. God chose you so that you can be a blessing.

And that changes how we think about our neighbourhoods. God has placed us in our streets, schools, workplaces and communities so that we can be a blessing right where we are.

When my girls were younger, we had a bedtime routine. Every night before they went to bed, we would ask them: *How were you a blessing today?*

They would say things like, “I shared my snack with a friend.” “I helped my teacher.” “I included someone who was sitting alone.”

It was a simple question, but it reminded them that God has given them a purpose.

What if we started asking ourselves that question - How am I a blessing to others?

Because we live in a world where people are lonely, struggling and wondering if they matter.

What if God wants to use you to be a blessing to them? To show them that they’re seen, they’re loved and they’re not alone.

You are chosen – not just to be blessed but so that you can be a blessing.

This leads to our second reminder: **You have a living hope**

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

I love that phrase: living hope. Because Christian hope isn't pretending that everything is okay. After all, Peter is writing to Christians who are suffering, scattered and confused. And yet Peter tell them, You have a living hope. Why?

Because Jesus has been raised from the dead. And because Jesus is alive, death doesn't have the final word. Suffering doesn't have the final word. The brokenness around you doesn't have the final word.

Even when things look hopeless, when people are divided, when prices are expensive, when the future is uncertain and there's not much we can do about it… God isn’t finished yet!

Turn to your neighbour and tell them, God isn’t finished yet.

God is still at work. He’s restoring, healing and making all things new.

And that's important when we think about our neighbourhoods. Because we’re not supposed to think, “I'm going to bring God to these people.” God is already there, working in ways we don’t see.

- Maybe he's softening someone’s heart.
- Maybe he's bringing help to a struggling family.
- Maybe he's creating a place where someone can belong.
- Maybe he's stirring someone to care about a need in the community.

Sometimes God’s work is obvious; sometimes it’s subtle. Sometimes it happens quickly; sometimes it takes time.

So don't just notice what's broken. Learn to notice where God is at work, bringing healing, belonging, and life.

You have a living hope. God isn't finished yet.

This brings us to our third reminder: **You are called to live differently**

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. (1 Peter 1:14-15)

So Peter says: Be holy.

Now what do you think of when you hear that word? Maybe someone who's super religious, morally superior or stays away from "bad" influences.

But being holy doesn't mean being set apart *from* other people. It means being set apart *for* God and for other people.

Being holy means that our lives belong to God. And when our lives belong to God, it changes how we live with the people around us.

We love differently. We welcome differently. We treat people differently.

We're not called to withdraw from the world around us. We're called to be fully present in it, living in a way that reflects the love of Jesus.

We see this in Jeremiah 29**.** God's people had been defeated by the Babylonians. Many of the Israelites had been taken from their homes and carried into exile. They're now living in a foreign country, surrounded by people with a different culture, different values, and different gods.

After being scattered and exiled, you might think God would say, *Stick together. Keep doing your religious thing. And keep your distance from the people around you.*

But that's not what he says. Instead he tells them, *Stay where you are. Build houses, plant gardens and settle down.*

And then: **Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you… Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. (Jeremiah 29:7)**

There's something here that can speak to us today. God is inviting us to become part of our community. To:

- Seek its flourishing.
- Pray for it.
- Love it.
- Contribute to its good.

Isn't that what Jesus did?

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. (John 1:14, The Message)

Jesus didn't love the world from a distance. He entered into it and moved into the neighbourhood.

- He became present.
- He noticed people.
- He listened.
- He ate with them.
- He welcomed them.
- He served them.

Because that's what holiness looks like. Not staying away from the world. But becoming fully present in it.

So what if following Jesus isn't just about coming to church? What if it's also about how we live in our neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools and communities?

Joining God in the Neighbourhood

Because we know who we are, because we have a living hope, and because God has called us to live differently, we can begin to living in our neighbourhoods in a different way.

That's what we're going to practice over these next 40 days. Joining God in the Neighbourhood isn't another program. It's not another thing to add to your to-do list.

It's an invitation to slow down, pray, notice where God is at work and to join him there.

The Workbook on your chair is designed to help you do just that. You can also download it from our Joining God webpage where you'll find other resources, including activities for kids.

Each week includes a short devotional and a simple practice.

- You might take a prayer walk.
- You might become a regular somewhere in your neighbourhood.
- You might find a way to serve your neighbours.

If you have children, you could do these activities together and talk about what you're learning as a family.

The goal isn't to do every activity in the workbook. Just choose a few things that can help you pay attention to the people and places around you.

Because the goal is for God shape us. To become people who are a little more attentive and intentional about how we live in our neighbourhoods.

So don't worry about doing everything. Just start somewhere, and pay attention to what God might do.

Commitment Card

So are you ready? We're inviting you to make a simple commitment for these next 40 days.

Please take out the Commitment Card that was placed on your chair. Or you can scan the QR code and complete it online.

Over the next 40 days, we're asking you to choose a place where you'll intentionally practice the exercises in the workbook. That could be where you live, work, study or regularly spend time.

For example, you might choose the neighbourhood where you live, or the community around your workplace, and spend the next 40 days praying and doing the practices in the workbook there.

And then on the card, tell us what community that is - for example, Markham, Stouffville or Richmond Hill. This will give us an idea of where God has placed Cornerstone people throughout our community.

We want to do this together as a church – so are you in?

Once you've completed the card, place it into the offering bag when it comes around later. I'll give you a moment to fill it out now.

This morning, we talked about how:

- **You are chosen.** God has blessed you to be a blessing. So how can you be a blessing to someone this week?
- **You have a living hope.** Jesus is alive and he's at work in our neighbourhoods. How can you pay attention and notice?
- **You are called to live differently.** To become part of the community and love the people around you. How can you shine for Jesus where he's placed you this week?

So as we head into these next 40 days, let's ask God to help us see our neighbourhoods differently.

- Not just as places where we happen to live, but as places where God is already at work.
- Not just as places where we pass people every day, but as places filled with people God loves.
- And not just as places where we go about our own lives, but as places where God might work through us to bring his hope and healing to others.

You are chosen. You have a living hope. And you are called to live differently.

So let's pay attention. Let's pray. Let's notice where God is at work.

And let's join God in what he's doing in our neighbourhoods.

Let's pray.