

A Royal Priesthood.

The Priesthood of all believers.

Over the past few months, I have had discussion with a number of people about what the concept of the Priesthood of all believers is about. Some have expressed frustration of others responsibilities, some have tried to absolve themselves of participation, and others have stated that the concept should give them a greater voice in church life. The discussions have lead to a point where those people have suggested I should preach on it.

So, before we start a new series, I thought now might be an opportune time. Actually, it has been something that has been burning at me as it is part of how I view the future for us as a church to function. So, part of my vision thought processes. But do remember, that today we only are looking at one passage on the subject. This is not a total theological treatment on the subject, nor is it everything the bible says on it. It is our starting place. Feel free to investigate further for yourself. So, I thought we would pick this passage from 1 Peter 2 which is about the concept and unpack it a bit.

Let's go.

1Pe 2:1 *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*

1Pe 2:2 *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

We hook into this passage realising that it has a context. The previous chapter talks about living a Holy life. – Holy meaning called by God to live for Him. (Holy=specially recognized as or declared sacred by religious use or authority; consecrated: or dedicated or devoted to the service of God, the church, or religion: or saintly; godly; pious; devout:

The hints it gives to living holy are in v 1

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy

and all slander.

Ok, living holy, serving God has these components and processes.

We start with tools. Get rid of malice, deceit, hypocrisy and slander. These are not holy things. Really! Yep. Why be told these things? Because there is a reality that these things are in the church. Face it. We experience all these things in our church don't we. Haven't we. Yep. So, the bible in its reality, tells us to deal with it – get rid of it.

Then the author, Peter, shows us that this holiness is a process.

Long for spiritual milk and grow up.

Milk is the first food a baby has, then they grow through starting solids, having veges, eating meat etc. Eat spiritual food. Grow up – Grow up spiritually – that's what it is saying. And getting rid of the childishness of Malice, deceit, hypocrisy and slander is part of that development process.

How's that work? How do you do that? Spend time learning about God stuff. And if we take the thought process of eating – it is regular, more than once a day type of stuff. So there is a need for us to open our bibles daily BUT also listen in church, get to bible study – it is all part of the process. Notice where this verse takes us though.

1Pe 2:3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Get that. Read it again.

if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Huge question, are you really with Jesus?

Stop here and answer that for yourself. Where is my spiritual state? Notice it says "If indeed". The question is are you really with Jesus?

So, I'll give you a minute to close your eyes and think about that. Maybe deal with whatever needs dealing with.

(1 minute silence)

Let's keep going.

1Pe 2:4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

Now here we go, this is cool. We come to Jesus, who the world ridicules (Yep still does!) but God gives credit to.

Notice the next verse is part of the same sentence. So often when we read or preach we cut things in half or compartmentalize things- This is one sentence! One thought process) so let's join it together.

1Pe 2:4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

1Pe 2:5 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.

Oh, this is huge. As Jesus was the original stone or brick, we are bricks too and we are designed to be part of the house. (Ok we call it a church but the term here is used – house meaning a building.) OK here we have that priesthood concept. But let's look at it from their perspective.

A priest was / is, according to the dictionary, someone who is: a person whose office it is to perform religious rites, and especially to make sacrificial offerings.

1. a person ordained to the sacerdotal or pastoral office; a member of the clergy; minister.

In the Old Testament priests stood between the presence of God in His sanctuary and the ordinary Israelites, dealing with the blood of the sacrifices and atoning for the people's sin so that they would not be destroyed. The high priest in particular served this mediatorial role.

So, if we unpack this: we are being made into a bunch of priests, that is **mediators between people and God**. Ooh this is interesting. This is not just a pastor's role – this is talking to the lot of us. We are "The Priesthood of all Bathurst Baptist People". OK. Now the author unpacks that a bit starting with how we link to Jesus.

1Pe 2:6 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."

1Pe 2:7 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,"

1Pe 2:8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

OK Get it. Jesus is the foundation of all this. We get built into Him. Even though the rest of the world don't get it.

Now, look where this takes us.

1Pe 2:9 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.

Crikey, a chosen people, what's that mean – Chosen by God to do His stuff.

What about the royal priesthood? We are mediators and officiator's of God's ministry. We each do God's ministry.

A Holy Nation – a bunch of people set apart for God stuff.

A people for his own possession – God's people

Why

1Pe 2:9 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.

This whole priesthood of all believers thing is about proclamation. It's not so much about how we run church, or do internal ministry - it is about the missional way we are church.

So, if we are priests, that is we are mediators that are between God and people who need to know about Him, we need to be able to communicate what needs to be shared.

The next portion of the passage gives us more tools to do that. Remember the first few verses gave us tools so that we could

grow into people who can do this priesthood thingy. Here we firstly recognize where we fit.

1Pe 2:10 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.

We are God's people, we belong with Him. He has been merciful to us, in other words he has not given us what we deserve but something much, much better.

Now the tools I mentioned.

1Pe 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

As sojourner's and exiles. – recognise our place in the world. We are not the same and sometimes yes, we feel like aliens, like we don't belong. Back in the 70's Larry Norman made an album Called "Only visiting this planet." He stated "The world is not my home, I'm just passing through."

That is why the author here explains in the last verse where we fit – we belong to God, we belong to His people, we belong with His people. (That's why church as we have it is an important thing to be involved in – we belong together)

Notice the big tool.

Abstain from passions of the flesh.

Now in our thinking, that is probably interpreted to abstain from sexual immorality. Yet, in bible times it had a wider perspective and I think it has broadened even more today. Yes, sexual sin is something to stay away from and alongside that the "light Sexual sins" I quote an author talking about things that we don't perceive to be as big a sins. Lust, perving, and of course stuff like pornography. Why are they termed light sexual sins" – because you don't get caught. Here is an integrity thing. Don't. Just don't. It maybe hard in our modern society with TV, online access, just advertising is a temptation. Marianne pointed out to me last week when we were watching a show that one particular actress never seemed to wear a bra. My comment back was " Why did you tell me, now, I look to

check!” See how hard it is. The idea is to abstain, don’t look in other words.

Notice where the next verse takes us.

1Pe 2:12 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.

This is a huge concept. Maintain integrity. Keep doing good no matter what is said or inferred about us. It goes further – do good deeds and glorify God. That is part of the priesthood of all believers thing. **Do good deeds** for others and glorify God. It really is pretty simple isn’t it. Do good stuff. Actually it nearly covers it.