

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter (Year A)

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*1 Peter 2:2-10*

*Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

*Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'*

*To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner', and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.'*

*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, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts 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.*

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So I'll start off this sermon with a confession. I'm tired and I'm ready to practice some sabbath. This is the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in a row that I've preached and I'll admit that the well from which I draw from to write sermons is running a bit dry. The good news is that I'll soon be getting a much needed break from writing sermons because next week is the last Sunday I'll be leading worship before I go into strict self-quarantine and, eventually, paternity leave. Y'all are going to have some excellent worship leaders when I'm gone. The same crew behind me will be leading y'all musically but we'll have some familiar faces and perhaps some new ones in the pulpit.

But for this Sunday and the next, y'all are stuck with me, a grateful but sermon-weary pastor who will look forward to coming back from paternity leave with a refilled well of sermon analogies and content!

So, therefore, today's sermon will be a shorter one but I'm going to ask y'all, as I did a month ago or so, to do something with the few extra minutes you'll receive today because of the shorter sermon. Take five minutes and reach out to someone in this congregation you haven't had a chance to yet since we were able to gather physically. However you do so is up to you: phone, email, text, card, and/or flowers. It's been over two months now since we've been able to see each other physically and that's a long time. Let's keep the gratitude and generosity flowing and stay connected.

It is fitting, on this Mothers' Day, that the opening analogy of today's text is that of a newborn infant longing for its mother's milk. I've been thinking about this a lot lately, not just because of today's text but because my wife is in the last stage of her pregnancy. In just a few weeks, we will welcome our first child into this world and Tricia and Hazel Grace will learn together how to breastfeed. It's a beautiful, intricate, delicate, and powerful thing - the love between a mother and her child. It's fitting that that would be a metaphor to describe the relationship between God and God's beloved people.

Today's text reads a bit like a pep talk; as if it's given to a people who are feeling weary and worn down. It reads as if its words aren't written to an infant, but to an adult who needs to be reminded of where they came from. And the truth is that we all need reminding from time to time of how we've been nurtured by our Mother God, who feeds us with truth, grace, justice, and steadfast love.

And when we're reminded of the motherly love that God showers upon us, we take that good news from the past and the present and it carries us into the future. After reminding the weary people that they have been nurtured and fed by their Mother God, the author of this letter carries them into a promise of the future.

Hear again these words of scripture (you'll notice I've changed the language a little bit to observe Mothers' Day): *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of (she) who called you out of darkness into (her) 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."*

Once...but now. Once...but now.

Do you hear the promise in these words? Once, we were a people scattered. But now, we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. We have been claimed. We have been sealed. We have been given the stamp of approval by a loving, mothering God who grows us into salvation. We have tasted and seen that the Lord is good and the author of today's text gently reminds us of that blessed truth.

And the "once" statement which reminds us of the past carries us forth into a "but now" statement that propels us into the future. You see, this declaration of covenant - this language of chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's own people - is a call to action.

The scripture continues: in order that you proclaim the mighty acts of God.

Friends, since we have been chosen as a royal priesthood, we proclaim the mighty acts of God. And right now I'm seeing plenty of them alive and well in this congregation. I'm seeing people calling one another. I'm seeing people getting fed. I'm seeing people writing cards to one another. We're in the process of building a blessing box to serve as a little food pantry for our neighborhood. We're ministering to our young families. We're caring for and keeping connected with our older members. We're embracing technology in new ways in order to continue our spiritual growth and nourishment amid this continuing pandemic.

God's mighty acts are at work within us because once we were a scattered people, but now we are God's people, a particular portion of God's people known as Beaumont Presbyterian Church. And it is our job to proclaim God's mighty acts and show mercy to one another as God has shown us mercy in full measure.

In the name of God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, may all of us, God's children, say: **Amen.**