

RESURRECTION RESPONSE (6): “Belonging to the Right Family” – a sermon by Gary R. Hindman, FPCUC. Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-10.

Text: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, {Gk [a people for his possession]} 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. (vv 9-10)

1 Peter 2

The Living Stone and a Chosen People

1. Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander.
2. Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation--
3. if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.
4. Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and
5. like living stones, let yourselves be built {Or [you yourselves are being built]} into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
6. For it stands in scripture. "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him {Or [it]} will not be put to shame."
7. 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,"
8. 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.
9. 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.
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.

A cartoon showed a busy mother talking to a psychologist: "Let's see," he began, "you say you spend 50% of your energy at your job, 50% on your husband, and 50% on your children. I think I see your problem!"

Then there are the two children, a boy 7 and a girl 5, who went to the florist to purchase a mother's day gift. Their mom was delighted with the modest plant, especially considering they had used some of their allowance money to buy it. But the boy was rather long-faced when he presented the gift. "I'm sorry this is just a little plant, mother," he said. "We could not afford the big bouquet they had on sale but it seemed perfect for you because it had on it a big gold ribbon that said, 'Rest in peace!'"

I am sure a lot of moms can identify with both of these stories. Mothers are very, very important and we thank and appreciate you for the good job you are doing and we are very glad for a day like today when we can wish you a happy, peaceful, quiet, restful "Mother's Day"!

Since mothers are of primary importance in the family, I want to draw our attention to those closing verses of today's scripture passage and think about the family that God has invited us to. Listen again to these sacred words: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people...called 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." Family is very important to God and God calls us into his family.

I would like to take you back to the location of my very first parish. Axtell, NE is a village of 650 people about 15 miles equidistant between larger cities that range from 3 to 30 thousand people. The main form of livelihood is farming. The community has a school, three churches and a smattering of businesses serving the farming community.

Everybody knows everybody and everybody knows everybody else's business. I suppose that is the downside of the small town. But the upside is people care about each other and just about everyone is related to someone else. There are no fences, few locked doors, one part-time police-man and a voluntary fire department. It's hard to get into trouble there and impossible to get lost and if you should ever move away from there, you can always go back and visit your family and friends because most of them are still there. People know who they are and there is a lot of security in such a place...as well as a few drawbacks.

A hundred years ago most Americans lived in a town like the one I have been describing but today, the small rural village is an exception to the rule. 40 million Americans move every year in our country. Put another way, every decade half of us will have moved! And so we have become a restless, rootless society, akin to the nomadic life of Abraham and Sarah.

But the children of Abraham always knew who they were, despite their nomadic ways because they felt a kinship with their God—the God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, from bondage to freedom, to the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. They were a people with a history. They felt special, chosen, blessed. In short, they were a family of people and it is in reference to them that Peter writes to the Christian believers of his day. Only there is a very, very important difference. God was creating a new family and adopting them into the new family through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Once you were no people, but thanks to our Lord Jesus, you are adopted into the great family of believers and you are now a people. And in this wandering, restless society, that is very important. You who are part of the Church of Jesus Christ are in God's family and this church is a part of the greater family. You belong some place; you belong here, among the people of God! Given this fact I want to talk this morning about what it means to belong to the right family. First though, a couple of observations:

First, it is not easy being a parent. In his book entitled *America on Six Rubles a Day* the comedian Yakov Smirnoff writes: "Coming from the Soviet Union, I was not prepared for the incredible variety of products available in American grocery stores. While on my first shopping trip I saw powdered milk, you just add water and you get milk. Then I saw powdered orange juice, you just add water and you get orange juice. And then I saw baby powder and I thought to myself, 'What a country!'"

Sorry, Yakov, it is not that easy to have a baby and it is certainly not that easy to raise children into adulthood.

Monica has been sponsoring some Sunday evening meetings with the parents of teenagers in our church. Pastor Dave and I have been invited to be with them. One thing is apparent: parents of teens these days are pretty concerned about the culture their children are exposed to every day. They fear they are losing the grip and that the negative influences out there may be more powerful than the positive ones they have instilled. It is not easy being a parent.

When Robert Young was starring in the popular television series "Father Knows Best" his teenage daughter, in real life, asked him, "Dad, how come each week on television you solve the most difficult family problems imaginable, and yet at home you seem so, so stupid?" He smiled and said, "Well, honey, at the studio I just have a good scriptwriter." It would be nice to have a good script writer to make sure everything turned out all right.

Former church member Barbara Perry used to say, "It would be nice, when our kids get to the stage where they are nearly impossible to live with, just to place them into the oven like a Swift "Butterball" turkey and, when the little thermometer popped up you would know they were done and ready once more to take their place among the human race."

It's not easy being a parent, **but then again, it is not easy being a child either.** Our children are facing difficult problems and choices. The top three disciplinary problems in school 40 years ago were listed in a survey as talking, chewing gum and running in the halls. Now the list is headed by rape, robbery and assault.

Twenty years ago the greatest fears of primary school children were animals, dark rooms, strangers, high places and loud voices. In a recent survey it was said to be parental divorce, nuclear war, lung cancer, pollution and muggings. It is not easy being a parent; it is not easy being a child, but that's all the more reason why family is important.

From the family we get our basic values. Scripture teaches, "Bring up children in the way they should go and they will not depart from it." Hence the phrase, "Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter." Kids learn from example.

In the *Cathy* cartoon a few years ago Cathy said, "I love you Mom, but I'll never be like you. I will not think like you, I will not act like you, and I will never look like you." Mom replied, "Oh, I know, I used to say the exact same thing to my mom, and I wound up thinking just like her, acting just like her, and looking like her. See, you're just like me already." At this, Cathy dashed out of the room screaming and the mother said, "Oh, isn't that cute, that's just what I used to do."

It's kind of scary to think about because like it or not, our actions as parents speak louder than words. What we do may be modeling our children's behavior years from now. That is why we would do well to re-read the beginning of our Bible passage for today. It says, "Rid yourselves of all malice, guile, insincerity, envy and slander...and come to the living stone" who is Jesus Christ. Such a posture will get us ready to be part of the wonderful family of God, but we should also want to set an example for our earthly family as well.

We not only get our basic values from the family, **we get our basic support.** A counselor named Paul Chance wrote an article some time ago in *Psychology Today*. He told of watching a TV show in the living room with his parents and siblings in the late 50s when broadcasts were live. A woman was walking down the stairs carrying what everyone thought was a real baby. Midway down, the woman dropped it. Since it was not real and since it was a live broadcast, the actress simply picked up the doll and finished her script. But Paul Chance remembers when the "baby" fell, his own mother instantly lunged at the television as if to catch it while the rest of the family just sat there.

We get our basic support from the family and, more often than not, it starts with our mothers. But Paul Chance has lived long enough to see the beginning of a role reversal. He went on in the article to tell about his mother's dying days in the hospital, full of tubes in an intensive care unit and unable to speak. He held her hand and told her he loved her. Since she couldn't use her voice, she spoke with him by squeezing his hand. She squeezed it really hard! She was trying to send a message to her middle-aged boy. She would always be his mother to her dying breath and though he had come to comfort her, she would comfort him. Most mothers are like that; most dads, too.

Such support from family members is really important but we live in a time when families are under attack. If you have come from a family with a strong set of parents who set out firm values and kept your feet to the fire, you are so very fortunate. But even if that is not the case, you can set the example in your own family as a faithful mother, father or child; or as a good member in our church family whether you are single or married, with or without children of your own; and you can set an example in your own personal life. As you do, you are following the example of the great eternal family of God to which we have been invited--a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.

Undoubtedly you are from a wonderful family but the scriptures are inviting you to be part of the best family ever, the family of God. Believe what the Word of God is saying to you: "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people!" Believe it. Live it. Share it. Amen!