

A Peculiar People

What do people who are not part of the church think about the church?

- Building – steeples & stained glass, pews & pulpits
- Clergy – robes & rituals, preachers & priests, scandals
- Western religion – one religion among many, no right to impose on other cultures
- Organized religion – money, membership, exclusivity
- Source of social ills – holding us back from progress, keeping us in the dark ages, contributing to social prejudices, conflicts, even wars

These descriptions do not describe Jesus or the church He left behind to represent Him to the world: *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light* (1 Peter 2:9).

1. **“Chosen people”** - Not about the building.
The Church is people (Gr. “ekklesia” – called out ones). We can’t really go to church or invite people to church. We are the church. We are not confined to Sundays; we are at work Monday to Saturday. Before we get proud about being “chosen” think about Peter and the other disciples. God chose the foolish to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1:27); there’s no partiality with Him (Acts 10:34). God so loved **the world** that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes.... Like a marriage proposal, it involves our choice too.
2. **“Royal priesthood”** - Not about clergy and laity.
It’s the priesthood of all believers - all of us can worship, pray directly, intercede for others, lead people to Christ, baptize them, and disciple them. Even in the Old Testament, all of Israel had the opportunity to be priests together: *Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (Exodus 19:5, 6). Only the Levites chose to side with God’s commands (Exodus 32:25,26).
3. **“A holy nation”** - Not a religion for one culture.
The Christian faith began with the Jews, spread to Europe, and was always intended for the outermost parts of the earth (Rev. 7:9). Christianity is not a religion at all (Jesus was not a big supporter of religious types). It’s about relationship, one family, one “nation” with representation from every nation. And it’s a “holy” nation. Before we get proud again, remember Peter, the other disciples, yourself – it’s about His holiness, not ours!
4. **“To show forth His praises”**
The church isn’t pulling us back into the dark ages; it’s pushing us toward the light. Those who blame the church for the problems in our society could not be further from the truth:
 - 80/20 rule applied to humanitarian aid
 - Our previous mayor coming to RMMA to help with the homeless and addicted
 - The Church was the key to the western nations becoming developed
 - Now the evangelical church is growing at an unprecedented rate, three times the current rate of population growth, but not in the western nations (we are slipping from our Christian foundation).

It’s time for the church to be the church: a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, showing forth His praises. How? *Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven* (Matthew 5:16).