

A Holy Nation People

1 Peter 2:9

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

God chose us. He chose us to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation (Ex 19:6; 1Pe 2:9). He chose us to reveal his glory and bring his love to the people who living in darkness, under the power of sin and death. In these post-modern times we have an unprecedented opportunity to reach the whole world for Christ. We can connect with the people who live on almost every part of our globe. But people are not led to Christ by technology. They are led to Christ by the witness of God’s people. They are led to Christ by God’s word and by the work of the Holy Spirit. God chose his people to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6; 1Pe 2:9). Our priestly duty is to reach the unreached and bring them to Christ (Ro 15:16). This is his purpose for the whole Church, of which we are a part. Christians of every kind, in every place share this task together. We must be a holy nation people to do this. I want to think today about what it means to be a holy nation people.

First, Holy Nation People Love God.

In Exodus 19 God told the Israelite people whom he loved and redeemed from slavery that they would be for him a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. He gave them the law to make them holy. The heart of the law was the great command: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Dt 6:5) More than anything else, a holy nation people love God. Love for God is expressed in obedience to his word. The people of Israel could not keep God’s laws or obey God’s word. But God did not fail. In the fullness of time he sent his Son whom he loved, Jesus. Jesus died to make us holy. His blood purifies us from all sin. The cross of Jesus is God’s expression of his great love poured out for sinful mankind. We can love God because he first loved us. When we receive God’s forgiveness, we receive God’s love. His love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Ro 5:5) A holy nation people love God and obey him.

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will do what I command.” (Jn 14-15) What did Jesus command? Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). Making disciples of all nations is the priestly duty of all believers. Just before his death on the cross, Jesus gave his disciples a new command. “A new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (Jn 13:34)

Second, A holy nation people love each other

Jesus' disciples took seriously his command to make disciples of all nations. So that by the 6th century Christians had gone into most of the world with the gospel. The Nestorian Christians had reached Central Asia and China and had gone all the way to Korea. The Ugar people in Kazakhstan and north China were once Christians. Their name, "Ugar" means "Christian." Christians reached India. Turkey was a Christian stronghold. Egypt was Christian. Jerusalem was a Christian city. Why, then, did the Christian Church disappear from many parts of the world? There were many reasons. There was the Muslim conquest. There was severe persecution. Persecution, however, did not destroy the church. Rather, the Church spread and put down deep roots because of persecution.

I believe that the major reason for the failure of the church to win the world for Christ lies in its failure to be a holy nation people. The church did not obey Jesus' command to his disciples: "Love one another." Jerusalem was conquered by the Muslim general Saladin while Christians bickered and fought with each other. The Crusaders of the 12th century tried to retake Jerusalem with the sword. This was not God's way. They failed. Rather, they sowed seeds of hatred that would block the spread of the gospel in those lands for centuries. From the 4th century, Christians sought holiness in many ways, but they did not love one another. Religious leaders thought that holiness was found in purging the church of heresy. So they burned so called heretics at the stake. They expelled those who did not conform to the church hierarchy. Some sought holiness by withdrawing from the world. Instead of loving one another as a holy nation people should, Church leaders turned to theological debates, heresy hunting, asceticism and politics. Ordinary people were not permitted to read the Bible. The commandment to love one another was ignored. I believe that the collapse of the church was from within. It was due to disobedience. The Christians did not love God, nor did they love one another. Jesus still commands us to make disciples of all nations and to love one another.

Jesus also told us to love our neighbors and to love our enemies. Jesus showed us how. He tirelessly served the sick and demon-possessed. He forgave those who beat him and mocked him and crucified him. He laid down his life for sinners who were enemies of God. We try to follow him by loving our neighbors. Christians from all over the world gave and even went to help tsunami and earthquake and hurricane victims in Indonesia, Pakistan, and New Orleans. Some great Christians have followed Jesus by loving their enemies. Pastor Sohn Yang Won forgave the communist who killed his two sons. He adopted him as his own son and led him to Jesus. This is the radical love of Christ. Graham Staines, Australian missionary and his son were burned alive by militant Hindus in India. His wife forgave his killers and remains in India to show the love of Christ to the people who murdered her husband. Christians risk and give their lives to serve needy people of Iraq. In a world where a spirit of revenge and irrational anger are prevalent, it is hard to love our neighbors and harder to love our enemies, but the most urgent and most difficult command to obey is Jesus' command to his disciples, "Love one another." The devil is insidiously at work to break relationships and keep us from loving one another. Brother Yun, the "Heavenly Man" of the underground church of China, said that criticism and rejection by Christians in America was more painful than persecution and torture by unbelievers and anti-Christians in China. It is hard to love our fellow Christians. There are many good reasons for not loving

this person or that person. We have expectations and we are disappointed when others don't come up to our expectations. Hurt feelings are hard to overcome. Wounds need healing. It is reasonable to expect someone who has wronged us to repent. And surely we must defend the truth. But Jesus didn't make allowances for these things. He simply said, "Love one another."

What is love? The Bible's view of love is different from the world's. The world says that love is sex or passion. The Bible says that love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy or boast. It is not proud or rude. It is not selfish. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. It doesn't enjoy sin. Real love is honest and truthful. Love doesn't change and it doesn't give up. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes.(1Co 13)

The standard of love is Jesus himself. He said, "Love as I have loved you." Jesus exemplifies love. We must continue to grow in the mind of Christ. At the heart of Jesus' love is forgiveness. We who are forgiven must forgive. Forgiveness is unconditional. We must forgive our coworkers, our spouses, our children, our parents and ourselves.

Jesus' love is not selfish. Jesus died for us. The Bible says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to his own interests but to the interests of others." (Php 2)

Jesus' love is life-giving. By his death he gave us life. God's word brings us from death to life. Jesus invites us to share God's life-giving word with those who live under the power of sin and death.

Godly love builds up. It does not tear down others by criticism, mistrust, or by thoughtless words or actions. God's love does not discourage others. We must actively encourage and build up one another for Jesus' sake. We must remember that our enemy is the devil. When our fellow Christians are accused or criticized, we must stand with them. We must trust and love and encourage. And we must pray for one another.

Love is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23; Ro 5:3-4). Holy Nation People are people who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Holy Nation people are people who have received the Holy Spirit. Holy nation people seek to obey Jesus' command to go and make disciples of all nations. Holy nation people love God and love one another. We are here from all over the world, and from many churches and missionary sending groups to pray for and to encourage one another in the great task of world evangelism. May God help us to love one another. Let us be a holy nation people. Let us pray for one another and for lost and wandering young people. This is the 100 year anniversary of the great revival in Korea. May God's people make a vessel for the Holy Spirit as we seek to love one another. May God again pour out his Spirit on the church of Korea and send out 100,000 missionaries by the year 2041. May he work through his holy nation people by the power of his love and Spirit to bring God's love to North Korea and to win the Muslim world for Christ.

