

**THE  
BON AIR  
PULPIT**

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**Scripture: 1 Peter 2:9 Sermon**

**Sermon: What Is It?**

For me, trying to decide what ought to be said. You see they only give me four times and I have been speaking all of my life so the question is which of the four things is better to say. Well, I am kind of in that position again. I have four sermons left to preach to you. My question is of all the things that could be said, what should I say? And I have decided that one of those ought to be from the book of First Peter, Chapter 2, beginning at verse 9 and I wanted to read that passage of scripture down through verse 12 for you today. You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you might declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. Dear friends I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul. Live such good lives among people that even though they accuse you of doing wrong they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

When I pastored a church in Germany, my mother and father celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary and so I wanted to send them a gift that would represent the country in which I lived. And we decided to send them an advent house. An advent house is a Christmas decoration, it looks like a chalet, there are four doors, you open each one on the four Sundays before Christmas, inside it are the various scenes around Christmas. Around it are all of the other scenes of Christmas and then there are on four corners candles and on top of it, it has kind of a windmill affect that turns by the heat of the candles. And so it was weeks and I hadn't heard from my parents whether they had received the gift or expressed an appreciation and finally one day the letter came and my dad had written it and expressed appreciation for the gift and he said, "It was so nice and we really enjoyed it," and then he said, "What is it?" Then I realized that they had never seen one before and the instructions were all in German.

I often have remembered the little statement that a camel is a horse that has been put together by a committee. And I think of my brothers, what they did to that house was beyond description. But it reminds me that there is a basic law of logic that says, that essence determines function. That is, you have to know what something is if you know how to use it. And there are many things I have seen in life I didn't know what in the world to do with it because I never knew what it was. Now if you came by my house this week and you saw me out getting the snow off of my driveway and I was doing it with a hammer then you would understand what I am talking about, essence determines function. You would say, "Pastor you don't get snow off of your driveway with a hammer. Well you see, if you don't know what something is, then you don't know what it is good for. **HEREHEREHREHDKFNDKNFKDNFKD**

But this passage of scripture is to tell you what a church is and if you understand what a church is and what God has called it to be, then you know what you are suppose to do. So let me remind you that Church started way back at the very beginning of the Bible. There was a man by the name of Abraham and God said to him Abraham I want you to leave your country, I want you to go to a new nation, I'm going to bring out of you a whole group of new people and this is what I am going to do Abraham, I'm going to bless you and I'm going to ask you to be a blessing to the world. Then you recall when Jesus came, Jesus began to call people, and he said, "I want you to come to me, I want to teach you and then I am going to send you out into the world where you can be a blessing to others". Now what God said in this passage of scripture is that God is in the business of choosing people that he can use and in your life if you had given yourself to Christ you are one of those that God has chosen and he has chosen you so that He can use you. Now once you understand that, then your whole new perspective of how you view yourself changes. Church isn't something you come to once a week. Church is God's call on your life so that God can bless you so that you can share those blessings with the world and so who you are is that you are one of God's instruments to carry out His missions and message in the world.

Now He said to do that ,this is what I want you to do. I want you to do some things, be some things and I want you to say some things. First of all, he said, "I want you to know that you have to do some things." He said, "I have called you and blessed you so that you can be priests of God." Now I love the Latin word for priests, it is the word pontifex and the work pontifex means a bridge builder. What a priest does is that he represents God to people and what a priest does is that he represents people to God. They are the people who have one hand on God and one hand on people and they are the means by which people find God and they are the means by which God finds people. Now what God called you to be is to be a priest. You are to be one of those bridge builders that God is moving in your life so that they can be able through you to be able to find God. And what you are to be is a person that is always looking for folk that you can help God to find them.

One of the books that I want to write one day is of the most fascinating people I have ever met and if I ever get to write that book one of them is going to a man by the name of Maurice Keefly. Maurice Keefly never went past the sixth grade, had a family, found himself in the midst of the depression without a job. He didn't know what to do but one thing that they did as a family is they kept eating Mrs. Keefly's pies. So he decided what he would do is that they would get in their kitchen, make pies and they would go up and down the streets and sell them and he literally survived for years selling Mrs. Keefly's pies. He decided that maybe it was better not just to have one basket but to have more so he built a big factory in Memphis and he made little pecan pies like this and he made apple pies like this and he put them in vending machines and he began to sell them all over the United States and when I met him he was an older man who had made multi-millions of dollars, and he came to me and said on many occasions, Pastor if there ever is anybody that comes to you that has a physical need you bring them down to my restaurant and I will feed them and if I can help them and if I can help them in our relationship to Christ I want to do that. One day one of those men appeared at the church I took him down to Mr. Keefly's restaurant, Mr. Keefly said, "Come on I'll give you something to eat, he took him back to his private dining room and sat him down and ate and then he turned to me and he said, "Pastor I'd like to talk to this man by himself if you don't mind excusing yourself." So I went outside and was able to look through the window and saw Mr. K as he opened his Bible and as he began to talk to the man from the Bible about how that man could find a relationship with God, look through the window and saw him with his Bible as he got down on his knees and then as he called me back in and said this man has something he wants to tell you. And the man said I came looking for food but I wanted you to know I found Jesus Christ. Mr. K said to me as I walked out of that door, "I understand that God sent me here not to make apple pies, God sent me here to make Christians. He understood that God had a claim on his life and God's claim was that he would be one of the priests of God. Now as you end the year and get ready for the new year this is what I want to challenge you to do. I wanted to challenge you to do what ever you could to find some new way to be looking for people in a special way that you could help them relationship with God. Now you may not feel as comfortable as Mr. K did to sit down individually with an open Bible, but it may be that you could look for that person at work that's going through a difficult time and you would be able to be there for them to tell them that God is there and that you are praying for them. It may be that you could help a child, it may be you could help a needy family, it may be that you could work through the church. There are all kinds of ways that God can use you, but what I want you to do is walk out this building today and recognize that you've just recognized your ordination. You are ordained to be a priest of God to help people to (?) their relationship with Him. I want you to do something. We have been blessed that we would be people who are always looking for people that we can help them find a relationship to God. Second thing he said, "I want you to be something." All of us have heard the statement, stop doing something just stand still. Stop doing just be something and he said what I want you to be is I want you to be holy people. I want you to be people that when they look at you they'll see God living inside of you and that means that you are going to have to think different, values are going to have to be different then the world, you are going to have to feel that certain things are more important than what other people think and they are going to be able to look at you and say you know that's the kind of life that God wanted to have. Our son in law is in visiting with us now from Africa. My son in law is an agricultural missionary. When I visited him in Africa he had a large plot of ground about the size of this auditorium and he was growing all kinds of things on it. I said, "What do you call all of this." He said, "This is a demonstration farm." He said, "I send people by here so that they can see first hand how do you grow certain things." You know what this church is? This church is a demonstration garden. If you want to know what God can do in a life the Pastor ought to be able to point to your life and say if you want to know what God does in a life look him up. If you want to know

what God does in a home look her up, if you want to know how Christian parents ought to relate to their kids look them up, if you want to know how people ought to relate to difficulty and trouble in their life look them up. You are a demonstration. You are to be the holy people of God and when people come to look and what church is about and what God's work is about, ought to be able to look in your life. Third thing he said, He said, I not only want you to do some things, I want you to be, "He said, "I want you to say some things." This is what I want you to say, "I want you to declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful Light." When people walk into the door of this church they ought to sense a heartfelt gratitude to God for what God has done in our life. Do you understand that Christianity is the only singing religion in the world. It's the only building that you come to in the name of God where people sing praises unto Him and the reason is that we understand that he has done something so remarkable in our life, so wonderful in our life, we just can't help but tell Him about what He has done. The focus of my life and the focus of church should never be on us. It ought to be on Him and what He has done for us. And when we come and sing this is what we are doing, we are lifting our gratitude and our praise to Him. Thank you Lord for what He has done. Over six hundred times in the Bible it says we are to praise God and it says one of those six hundred times this is what it says, God inhabits the praises of His people. You want to know the presence of God in your life, just start praising Him. Stop always just asking, start praising. Stop thinking about what my problems are, start thinking about who He is. And what you are going to find is a sense of His presence, what you are going to find is a strength you didn't know was available and what you are going to find is people are going to be attracted to God because they sense all of what you are about. You see praise comes when things are going well, and praise goes when things are going difficult. Several years ago in this congregation a family went through a, most difficult circumstance. I have stopped saying I know what you are going through, because sometimes some of you go through things so deep I recognize I am an outsider looking in. I've never been there. But this family such, such deep, deep sorrow. The Sunday after the funeral that family was right back there. I see some people who come to church and never sing and there are reasons people never sing, I guess they are frightened

Started praising Him. Everybody around them could hardly sing because they were crying. And the presence of God was so great in this room that you literally could feel His presence. I understand it more and more that's what God called us to do, good times, bad times, dark days, bright days, he has called us to praise Him, focus is not on us, focus is on Him. And dear friend you better get use to that, because that's what heaven is all about. Every time the book is open and heaven is pictured, they are all of there praising Him. You have more to praise Him for then you can ever imagine. You are going to have to spend eternity with Him because you are going to need that much time to praise Him. And what church is, is people ought to walk in and see a joyous, glad people with gratitude to God with a focus on Him, that's what it's about. Ending a year starting a new one, dear God I am going to start living up to my ordination, I'm going to start looking this year for people that I can bring to you. Dear God I want to live, I want to live so differently that people can say, only God could do that in a life. And I want to start praising Him when I am along, when I am in church I want to praise Him, and that way I can understand why God has called me and what my life is all about. Some of you in this room today recognize that you have been a part of who God has been looking for and you sense that urge in your life, and you want to come today and say I want to give my life to Christ, we want to come to be a part of a church where we can do what you have talked to us about today, and we feel this within us and we know it is God, we want to respond today. As you know the way we do that in our church, is we ask you to stand, we sing a hymn of invitation, we ask you to come and to share with the congregation the decisions that you have made and I pray right now as you feel the touch of God in your life that you will want to do it now. Will you? Why don't we stand together and sing.