

# Why Am I?

## 1 Peter 2:2-10

### Introduction

Very early in our childhood many of us were introduced to a Dr. Seuss character named "Sam." Or as we knew him "Sam I Am."

Sam came into being as a result of a bet between Dr. Seuss and his publisher. The bet was that Seuss could not write an engaging children's book using a vocabulary of only 50 words. Seuss won the bet, and the result was this very readable book... one of the very first books my kids could read on their own.

In this story Sam knew who he was and he knew why he existed. He was Sam and he was a passionate promoter of green eggs and ham. He would eat them in a box with a fox or in house with a mouse if need be. And he wanted you to like them too.

Many times during my ministry a person in one of my congregations has said something to me like this:

I feel like there is something I am supposed to do but I don't know what it is. What is it that God wants me to do for Him?

Good question. It is one of the essential questions of our faith. As we begin our walk with Jesus there are two such questions everyone of us will eventually wrestle with, both having to do with our identity in Christ. They are:

Who am I?  
Why am I?

Sam knew the answer to both questions. Sam I am and green eggs and ham. Good for Sam. If only it were that easy.

Walking in faith pushes us toward answers to both of those questions. Who are you in Jesus Christ? And what is His purpose for your life? What is your “why?” Our text today helps each of us answer those questions.

The first half of verse 9 provides at least part of the answer to the first question:

Who am I?

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession... (1 Peter 2:9)

There is enough content there in those four phrases for multiple sermons but those phrases are for another day. Today I want to focus on the second identity question; namely, “Why am I?”

There are specific things that are unique to each one of us. God won't call everyone of you to go to seminary. He won't send us all to Africa. But He has given you spiritual gifts that are to be used to build up the body of Christs. That is also another sermon.

Here in 1 Peter, the last half of verse 9 provides a general answer to that “why” question – something all of us need to know as we figure out our “why”:

Why am I?

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, **that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** (1 Peter 2:9)

Why has God made you His special possession and a holy nation and a chosen people and a royal priesthood? So that you will declare His praises.

But what does it mean? What do we proclaim when we extol the name of Jesus?

## **PROCLAMATION #1: IT'S NOT DARK HERE ANY MORE**

Look at verse 9:

... who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

I had a friend named Roy. Roy's wife's name was Mary. Both of them are in heaven now, but I always think about them when I think about light and darkness.

You see, Mary liked to rearrange the furniture in her living room, and she did it often... real often. Like 4-5 times a week. You never knew where the couch would be. Or the chairs. Or the lamps. Roy worked second shift and would get home after the rest of the family had gone to bed. And because they lived in a small trailer, he was reluctant to turn on the lights.

It's hard to walk in the dark, isn't it? Roy was always tripping over furniture, even though it was his house!

As Christians, we are called out of darkness into God's wonderful light. We don't walk in the darkness anymore. There are many things that make life dark. The Bible talks about several, but let me point out two:

First ... people who don't comprehend what God is doing around them as said to be walking in darkness. Here's how the first chapter of John describes it:

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:5)

Two people can look at a beautiful sunset. One will see the artistry of God; the other sees a pretty sunset.

- Two people can hold a newborn baby. One sees the magnificence of the Creator God; the other the result of biology.
- The difference is a matter of darkness. For one The Light of the World is shining. For the other, the light hasn't come on.

As we proclaim the praises of God we help people see what they need to see. Help them to see Jesus. Help them to proclaim "I see it now!"

Second ... darkness can represent despair.

- The world constantly tells us reasons to be fearful, anxious, angry, or hopeless. But as people of the light, we are called to lay down despair and embrace hope.
- No matter how bad things look, we know that Christ has already overcome the brokenness of this world.
- In Him we have eternal hope. We don't have to live in despair anymore—we can step out of the darkness and walk in the light.

## **PROCLAMATION #2: I AM NOT WHO I USED TO BE**

Look at verse 10:

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God ... (1 Peter 2:10)

This is a statement of how lives are changed by the good news of Jesus. Once I was not, now I am.

These words were written by Peter – the one who three times denied knowing Jesus but now was the ROCK on which the church was built.

- They could have been written by Paul, once a persecutor of Christians and now an evangelist

- Or by the blind man who received his sight. Once I was blind by now I see.

Those stories of transformation continue to happen every day. In fact, there's a story out there involving somebody I want to meet her and hear her story firsthand. My friend Pastor Sim Bowen made me aware of her this week when we sent me a link to this Facebook post.

- If you know Sim, you can probably hear him say "Hey Brother, your church is on a Facebook post. You probably will want to check it out."
- Now, ordinarily that statement would terrify me, but Sim assured me it was a good thing.

Here's the post: *(show image, and read the post)*

God did something in this young woman's life, and her encounters with God on this property played a big role in that.

- I want to hear her full testimony, so I've reached out to her.
- My hope is that she will be willing to come here, and share her story with all of us.

When start walking in faith with God, you start to change. You may not be what you used to be, nor are you right now what you will be. Every day should bring you closer to the image of His Son Jesus.

The Apostle Paul addresses that in 2 Corinthians:

And we all ... are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord ... (2 Corinthians 3:18)

And that's the story we proclaim. The most powerful evangelistic statement is this: God is doing something in me. No one can argue with it.

## **PROCLAMATION #3: I HAVE EXPERIENCED GOD'S MERCY**

Again, look at verse 10:

... once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:10)

When I was in high school, the local boys' baseball league for elementary aged boys had too many kids try out. There weren't enough slots for everyone, so they recruited my brother and I to coach the leftovers – the ones that no other team wanted. And we were bad. Very bad.

- That first year we lost every game and the scores were not close.
- I was running late to a game one day because of work. When I pulled into the parking lot, I saw that we were behind 32-0 in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning.

Many sports leagues, including high school sports, now have a “mercy rule.” The rule allows a way of escape so that players don't have to experience the pain and humiliation of something that bad.

Whether we like to admit it, none of us is good enough on our own to earn a place in heaven.

We need a mercy rule. And God offers it. Jesus and the cross are our mercy rule.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. (Titus 3:5)

Proclaim it!

## **APPLICATION**

We are who we are so that we might do that the old Wesleyan hymn directed:

You servants of God, your Master proclaim,  
And publish abroad his wonderful name;  
The name all-victorious of Jesus extol,  
His kingdom is glorious and rules over all.  
(LBW #252)

That's fancy talk. And it's a great song! But it is also our "why." As the church and as individual Christians, this is what we have been called to do.

Pray to ask God to help us do it!

Amen.