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1 Peter 2:4-10

No Fear November:

A Foundation for November

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Website: In 1 Peter 2:4-10, the early church leader Peter encourages the scattered early believers. These men and women were being rejected by society at large. Peter doesn't tell them to reclaim society, but to come to Christ, focusing on building his kingdom. We are not to align ourselves with the world's powers, but heaven's powers. This seems irrational to many but Jesus' way will always prove true. *Align yourself with Christ the Cornerstone.*

Pew Research Study: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>

*Sermon below. Slides available at CornerstoneWestford.com/sermons

Pre-Introduction:

1. As part of my studies this week, I took some time to get more informed about the election.
2. The more I learned about politics, the more I realized I am not an expert in politics.
3. Instead of teaching you poli-sci, I'm going to give you principles from the Bible.
4. I hope these God-centered principles will guide and challenge you this election (let's pray).

Introduction: (Slide #1)

1. Chances are, if you are a Christian, you feel largely rejected by American culture.
2. The Pew Research Center published a report in May affirming your feelings. (S2)
 - a. Those who call themselves Christian declined from 78.4% to 70.6%, -7.8% points.
 - a. Protestant Christianity declined 4.8% points to 46.5% of the population.
 - b. Among Evangelicals we decreased 0.9% points to 25.4%.
 - b. While Non-Christian faiths grew 1.2% points to 5.9% (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc.)
 - c. Unaffiliated atheists, agnostics, or nothing in particular grew the most, adding 6.7% points to 22.8%.
3. 3/4 of Christians vote Republican and 2/3rds of non-Christians vote Democrat (Amy Black, Wheaton).
4. As Christianity shrinks, those who were historically the influencers are becoming a minority.
5. Christians hold to many values and opinions that culture now rejects.

(So the question is... What are we going to do about it? Last week we asked...)

(Are we going to abandon culture and run away?... That's not loving to culture or our neighbors.)

(Are we going to go to battle and win back the culture?... That leads to bruised relationships and hurt.)

(Or are we going to try to cause those around us to flourish?... Showing genuine concern for others.)

(Peter has a similar message for his audience.)

- A. A man named Peter wrote a letter to a bunch of Christians who were also being rejected. (S3)
 - a. Peter starts his letter in **1 Peter 1:1**, To God's elect, **exiles scattered** throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, (NIV®)
 - b. This Map of Asia in Roman Times shows these regions located in modern day turkey. (S4)
 - c. All across the ancient world Christians are experiencing suffering and persecution.
 - d. They are suffering grief and trials, from harsh masters, abuse from pagans, and insults.¹
 - e. Peter wrote this letter right before the evil emperor Nero began killing Christians in AD 64.

(So what's Peter's solution? Does he tell his believers to recapture culture?)

(Does he suggest they form an alliance with a powerful politician or country?)

(No, instead Peter tells them to do something that doesn't make sense.)

I. Align yourself with Christ the Cornerstone. (1 Peter 2:4-6a) (S5)

A. Come to Christ, he was rejected too.

1. Peter calls Jesus "the living stone—rejected by humans." (v. 4)
2. Later he quotes an OT passage, calling him "a chosen and precious cornerstone." (v. 6a)
3. What is a cornerstone? It's the most important stone in a building project.
4. It's the first stone laid on the foundation to determine the width, length, and height of the walls.
5. Notice what Peter calls those who come to Christ; we also become "like living stones." (v. 5)
6. We are being built into a "a spiritual house"—a temple—church isn't a building, but people.

B. **Application:** If you feel especially rejected this election, come to Christ, he won't reject you.

1. You have a choice, you can either try to recapture what you've lost, or find something new.
2. This election is an opportunity to re-orient your life to something far better than politics.
3. Christ wants you to build his kingdom, a home for exiles, refugees, and the outcast.

¹ 1 Peter 1:6, 2:18, 4:3-4, 4:14

4. In Disney's The Hunchback of Notre Dame, the gypsy Esmeralda sings "God Help the Outcasts."
5. *God help my people ~ We look to You still ~ God help the outcasts ~ Where nobody will*

(Come to Christ, he was rejected too.)

- C. We come to Christ by remembering his rejection.
1. In Jesus' day, politics and religion were perfectly wed.
 2. He was rejected by the Pharisees (the conservatives) and the Sadducees (the liberals).
 3. Jesus was put to death because he didn't fit the religious or political mold of his day.
 4. But Jesus rose from the grave and then ascended into heaven—he's now the king of kings.
 5. You can align yourself with him by confessing your sins and believing in him.
 6. Christ takes on your rejection and God welcomes you into his family.

(Align yourself with Christ, the Cornerstone.)

II. Don't align yourself with Egypt. (1 Peter 2:6b-8) (S6)

- A. Egypt is any earthly power that puts itself before God. (v. 6)
1. Why am I talking about Egypt in 1st Peter? In v. 6, Peter quotes from an OT book.
 2. His audience, who were rejected by their culture, had something to learn from an OT situation.
 3. **Isaiah 28:16b** See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will **never be stricken with panic**. (NIV®) (S7)
 4. Isaiah is writing to the leaders of Jerusalem because they are threatened and afraid.
 5. The nation of Assyria is looming to the north and Egypt is looming to the South.
 6. How do you choose between making an alliance with violent Assyria and ungodly Egypt?
 7. How do you choose between the lesser of two evils?
- B. **Illustration:** Have any of you ever played the "would you rather" game? (teenagers)
1. Would you rather be a chicken or a cow?
 2. Would you rather be in jail for 10 years or in a coma for 20 years?
 3. Would you rather fight 100 duck-sized horses or 1 horse-sized duck?
 4. There's good news... you don't have to be a chicken, or in a coma, or fight a massive duck!
 5. There's always a third option—you don't have to play the game—you don't have to be afraid.
 6. In Isaiah 28:16, God presents his people with a third option—himself.
 7. When Egypt didn't show up to defend Israel from Assyria, God did!
 8. This option is sure, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." (v. 7)
 9. Others will spend themselves building a kingdom that will fall, but that doesn't have to be you.

(Don't align yourself with Egypt.)

(Align yourself with Christ, the Cornerstone.)

III. By aligning ourselves with Christ, we free ourselves to do good. (1 Peter 2:9-10) (S8)

(At the beginning and end of this passage, Peter describes Christians as priests.)

(What do priests do? First, they worship, and second, they mediate.)

A. First, priests worship. **(S9)**

1. It's our job to offer "spiritual sacrifices" to God. (v. 5)
2. How do we do that? Romans 12:1 says, "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice."
3. We worship God by offering ourselves over and over again to God?
4. What can you offer to God? Your politics, your patriotism, your vote, your pride?
5. Your family, your job, your identity, your sexuality, your friendships, your whole being.
6. Peter calls anyone who knows Jesus "God's special possession"—God wants the best, you!
7. First, priests worship.

(By aligning ourselves with Christ, we free ourselves to do good.)

B. Second, priests mediate. **(S10)**

1. A mediator is someone who facilitates a relationship between two parties.
2. It was the role of the priest to go before God and intercede for the people.
3. It's our job to go before God and seek the wellbeing of a culture that rejects us.
4. We can't do this job by leaving or fighting, but seeking to make it flourish.
5. We live among the people because our great high-priest came and lived among us.
6. Jesus is the God who humbled himself and became like broken people to save us.
7. How might you seek to mediate God's presence in a broken election season?
8. **Application:** When someone at work barks out a political opinion you disagree with, love them.
9. When a political canvasser shows up at your house or calls, say a pray for the election.
10. Second, priests mediate.

(We're not here to fight, to take flight, but to flourish all those around us.

(By aligning ourselves with Christ, we free ourselves to do good.)

(Align yourself with Christ, the Cornerstone.) **(S11)**

Conclusion:

1. Emma Daniel Gray died on June 8, 2009, at the age of 95.
2. For 24 years she was the woman who cleaned the office of the President of the United States.
3. She served six presidents till she retired in 1979. Her official title? Chairwoman.
4. Mrs. Gray was a devout Christian.
5. She would stand and pray over the President's chair each time she dusted it.
6. Her cleaning supplies were in one hand, the other on the chair.
7. She'd pray for blessings, wisdom, and safety.
8. The world looks at Christians and rejects us and our beliefs.
9. It's tempting to think if we can just get the right person in power it will be okay.
10. We already have the right person in power, and he came as a servant.
11. Now we're called to not just worship, but serve others, like him.
12. Align yourself with Christ, the Cornerstone.

Preview: Come back next week for the last No Fear November sermon.

Romans 8:38-39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV®)