

A Royal Priesthood 1

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and embracing the concept of a royal priesthood, where every believer is a priest with equal standing before God, and has a different function in the church.

Duration: 40:51

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 2:1-10

Topics: "Royal Priesthood"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preparing and equipping the people of God for the work of ministry. He compares it to parenting, stating that just as parents should teach their children to be independent, leaders in the church should teach and train believers to do the work of ministry. The speaker references Ephesians 4:11-12, which states that God has given apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry. He highlights the need for leaders to focus on training and teaching, rather than simply teaching the Word of God, in order to empower believers to serve and build up the body of Christ.

Transcript

Turn with me please to the second, the first book of Peter, 1 Peter chapter 2. And we have dealt with the issue of worship as part of looking at the operation and the function of the church. And I want in the next several months, it's going to take us a few months, to look at the whole issue of the church, how it's structured and how it functions, the different ministries, and how we relate to one another. Now, I'm going to try not to be too technical.

If you want to be technical, we can. Many of the studies that I'll be doing come from what will soon be the book. But, and so if you want the technical side, that's there.

But we're going to try to keep it as simple as possible, but still stick to the word. Now, the problem we have here is that many of these ideas are very, very different to what you are used to, to what is normally taught in churches, whether they are Roman churches or whether they be Protestant churches. Because we have 2,000 years of tradition, and in those 2,000 years of tradition, I really believe the church has moved far away from God's original intention for the way that the church ought to function.

And what I'm sharing with you is the results of really a lifetime of search. From when I first came to be saved, when I was 16, which is a little while ago, I have spent my life trying to understand God's purpose

and God's plan for the church. And I have spent many, many hours talking, discussing, reading the scriptures, searching the scriptures, reading every book I can on the subject.

I have many, many books back home and also here. Whenever I see a new book on the church, I buy it and I read it so that I can try and understand. And so what I'm giving you, I believe, is the benefit of a lifetime of study, but is also very, very different.

So you need to listen carefully, and we'll give time to deal with the questions after each session. So 1 Peter chapter 2, first letter of Peter, first epistle of Peter, chapter 2. And we'll read from verse 1 through verse 10. Therefore laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Coming to him as a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious. And you also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on him will by no means be put to shame.

Therefore to you who believe he is precious, but to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. And the stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, they stumble being disobedient to the word to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Who once were not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. And you'll see that he speaks in verse 9 that you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood. And that's what I want to speak to you about tonight.

I know I've touched on this subject before, and yet it's important for us to put it again in the context, particularly of the next series that we're dealing with. The priesthood of every believer. This is a concept which is here in the scripture, which every Protestant and Roman church subscribe to.

And yet nobody or very few practice it. It's amazing that the priesthood of every believer simply means that we are all priests, that we do not have a special priestly class. In the Old Testament there were the priests and the Levites and the people.

Well, from the top you had the high priest, and then the priests and the Levites, and then the people. And there were huge separations between these groups of people. Now, we don't have that in the New Testament, and that's really what I want to share with you this evening, that we may be able to understand that.

Today we speak about the clergy-laity setup. Clergy-laity. And so some of us are clergy and the rest of us are laity.

That is a common expression which is used in churches and in church language. And yet it doesn't have any kind of biblical basis. If we go to 1 Peter 5, while we're here in Peter.

1 Peter 5, verse 2. Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion, but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly, not as being lords over those entrusted to

you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Now, the word clergy is from the Greek word kleros, and this is one of the few places it is found in the New Testament.

And it's interesting in verse 3, not as being lords over those entrusted to you. Some translations have it God's heritage. That is the word kleros, from which we get clergy.

Now, I don't want to confuse you, but just stick with me on this one. This is the one place where it may just become a little bit technical. The word clergy as we use it today means those who are specially ordained to perform the services of the church.

To do marriages, to do funerals, to serve the Lord's table, and those sorts of things. That is, those are the clergy. But when the Bible uses the word clergy, it's speaking about who? The church.

Everybody. Verse 5, that's where that word is. Verse 3, that's where that word is found.

And I know it's not very obvious because of the English words that we use here. Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you. Those entrusted to you is the word kleros.

Now, we've used the word. You can see how we do exactly what the devil did in the first place. Has God said? And then he just changes it right upside down and makes black white.

And here the scripture speaks about the clergy as being everybody, the people. And we change it to meaning the leaders. Then if we go back to where we were in 1 Peter chapter 2, the word laos is the Greek word from which we have the word laity, which means the people.

In Greek and in English it just means the people. The common people. And here you find it says you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people.

There's that word laity, laos. People, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, who were once not a people. That word laity again.

But now are the people of God. The word laity again. Who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

So here's this word laity. But who does he say they are? They are a royal priesthood. So the laity is the priesthood.

The people are the priesthood. So this whole concept, this whole language of clergy laity, just has no biblical foundation whatsoever. Now the concept of a priest and the priest fulfilling that function and that role is taken from the Old Testament.

And we perpetuate it in the New Testament. And we say, well, you know, in the Old Testament there was the high priest and the priest and the Levites. And so we need to have that or a copy of that in the New Testament.

People were referred to Moses. Remember Moses couldn't handle all of the problems with the people. And his father-in-law said to him, well, what you need to do is you need to delegate some of this responsibility and appoint people over ten and over hundreds and over thousands and so on.

And so, again, we take those models and we apply them to the church. And we say, well, we need to have leaders who are responsible for these various areas. Now there are two things that we need to say concerning the issue of priesthood.

And, of course, we know that the Roman church uses the word priest specifically like that. Most other churches, Protestant churches, don't use the word priest. But, in fact, they have the same function but with another title.

They may call him pastor or whatever else you like. But it's the same principle, the principle of a priest whose function was really to stand before God on behalf of the people. That was really the function of the priest.

Now there are two important things that we need to understand about that. First of all, it was never God's intention for Israel to have a priesthood. Go with me to the book of Exodus chapter 19.

Exodus chapter 19. And this is Mount Sinai just before the law was given. In chapter 20 we have the Ten Commandments.

But Exodus 19 verse 5, Now therefore if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people. Do we find that concept of special treasure anywhere else? In 2 Peter. A peculiar people, a special treasure.

To me above all people, for all the earth is mine. Verse 6, And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

So God wanted Israel to be a kingdom of priests. Everybody to be a priest. The priesthood was only instituted later on after the worship of the golden calf.

Remember when Moses came down from the mountain, and the problem around the golden calf really had to do with this whole issue of a representative of God. Because God says, I want to have a relationship with all of you. I want to speak to you one on one.

That was the whole emphasis at Mount Sinai. God spoke through Moses up to that point. But God says, now I'm going to speak to all of Israel.

And you know what Israel did. We've dealt with this. Israel said, no, we can't have God speak to us.

He's too difficult to understand. He's awesome. He's fearsome.

We can't have God speak to us. Moses, you go and speak to God. And hear what God has to say and come and explain it to us.

And so the people selected Moses, and they instituted this concept of a man between God and the people, when God, in fact, didn't want to have any man between him and the people. And then the moment Moses was out of the way, he was up in the mountain for 40 days. Remember what happened.

They said, what happened to Moses? Now who's going to lead us? Who's going to be our God? Because, in fact, their relationship up to that point has not been with God, but their relationship has been with Moses. And so the moment Moses is out of the way, they need something else. And so they make the golden calf.

And remember Moses comes down from the mountain, and he's very angry, and God is very angry, and Moses calls, and he says, who's on the Lord's side? And remember who came out? The Levites. This is the first time that these men are now set aside. And they say, we are on the Lord's side.

And he says to them, gird every man his sword, and go in amongst your brothers and kill. And 3,000 were killed by the Levites on that day. And so you can see the beginning of a process through which God wanted to have a kingdom of priests, where everyone would have a relationship with Him, to a situation where they were now the special class of men who would stand between God and the people.

Now, by that, and listen very carefully here, by that, it does not mean that God did not always intend to have priests who would serve in the temple, or in the tabernacle. But they would simply serve in those areas of ministry, but they would not be between God and the people. They would just be part, they would just be their job.

But they would not have this intermediary role of standing between God and the people. But they would do the sacrifices, and they would erect the tabernacle, and they would break down the tabernacle, and they would move it, and they would do those sorts of things. But that would be as a function on the side, not a function of standing between God and the people, but serving the people in the special area of ministry.

And there's nothing wrong with that, and that's a very important thing to understand. What I'm suggesting and what I'm teaching is not that there are no leaders in the church, that there are no apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. I believe in those ministries.

But those ministries do not stand between God and the people. And so when it comes to the church, every one of us is at the same level. Every one of us has the same standing before God, but we have different functions.

And that's the important thing. And so in Israel, there would be priests, they would have a different function, but they would not be people who would stand between God and the people. Now, what we do is we have difficulty understanding how can somebody have a different function and yet not have status, where he becomes more important than me.

How can somebody be an apostle or a teacher, and he's not in a position that is elevated, but he is just like me, but he just has a different job. But this is the principle that Paul establishes in the book of Corinthians. And he says, in the body, what part is more important? Is the heart more important than the kidneys? Or is the eye more important than the ear? No, they're all important, but they have different functions.

And the fact that the one part has a different function does not make it more important than the other. Those parts that are less important, we give them more honor, in a sense. The parts that are less essential.

What is more essential, my face or my heart? My heart. I can live without my face, but I can't live without my heart. And yet, what gets more honor? My face.

Why? Because it is less important. It has less honor, or it has less technical importance, and so we give it a little bit more honor. Why? So that all the parts of the body may be equal.

Now, we have the same problem in marriage. Who is more important, the man or the woman? No. Who is more important, the man or the woman? They are one.

One is not more important than the other. But, does that mean that they have the same function? No. One is given the responsibility of being the head.

Now, that does not mean he is more important. It just means he has a different job. That's all it is.

And so, in the church, there are some who have this job, and there are others who have another job. But they are equal. This is what we struggle with, because in the world, it's not that way.

Now remember, Jesus said, that's the way it is in the world. Those who want to be important amongst them, they lord it over one another. But he says, amongst you, it shall not be so.

But he who will be first, will be last. He who would be great amongst you, will be your servant. And so, the issue is not who is more important.

The issue is simply, what is my function? That is the question. You see, from a human perspective, it's always about pecking order. You understand that word, pecking order? Who bites the next one? You know, like chickens.

The rooster always pecks the others. And when you have a litter of puppies, I don't know if you've ever seen little puppies that are just born. Their eyes aren't even open yet.

And they're already biting and pushing and shoving to see who's important. Who's the most important of those little puppies? And they sort it out. Very, very quickly.

And they know. Those animals, even in their limited understanding, they know exactly who is the top dog. And who is the bottom of the ladder.

And that's why it's very dangerous sometimes to bring another dog into the family. Because now that dog doesn't fit into this structure. And so they're going to fight.

Until they've worked it out. Where does this dog fit in, in this whole setup? And of course, that's where we have difficulty training dogs. Because the dog is looking for a leader.

And if you're not going to be the leader for the dog, the dog's going to become your leader. The dog's going to make you do what it wants it to do. Now, children are very much the same.

I'm serious. And so that's the way it is in the world. And that was the way it was amongst the disciples.

They said, who's going to be sitting on the right and who's going to be sitting on the left? Who's the most important here amongst us? Who's the bottom of the ladder? Who's going to wash the feet? And of course, everybody wanted to be the right and the left hand. Nobody wanted to wash the feet. Because it was... Now, that's the wrong question.

The question is not who is most important. The question is not where do I fit in, in the order of things. And you see, the problem is that most churches will structure it in this way.

When you ask the church for a... I keep getting the words wrong. I forget what you call it here. We call it an organigram.

A chart, an organizational chart of the church. The structure. They will always know exactly.

There's the senior pastor and then there's that associate and there's that associate. Now, they're both associates but this one is a little bit more important than that one. And then there's the executive pastor and he fits in over there.

And there's the worship pastor or the music director and he fits in over there. And then you have the board and you have the deacons and whatever have you. And so you have this whole structure.

And everybody is concerned where do I fit in to this whole thing. That's the wrong question, folk. And that's why Jesus comes down so hard on his disciples because they're asking the wrong question.

The question is not who is more important. The question is what do you want me to do. That is the question.

And what he wants me to do and what he wants you to do may be two different things. Because the body is made up of different members who have different functions. We can't all be teachers.

Can you imagine us all coming on Sunday night and saying, well, I'm going to teach. Some of us teach. Some of us pay the money.

That's a good one, eh? Well, there are guys who teach that. My job is to teach. Your job is to fill the pews, listen to what I have to say and pay money.

That's what they teach. Now that's not it. But we have different functions.

And when we recognize that we have different functions and we have different jobs, then there's no issue. You see, when you have a painting job, you're not going to ask the motor mechanic to do the painting. Now, I understand that hopefully the motor mechanic can do a little bit of painting also.

And that the painter can do a little bit of fixing motor cars. But if you want your car fixed right, you get the mechanic to do that. And if you want your house painted right, you ask the painter to do that.

And it's the same in the church. If you want to get the teaching, you ask the teacher to teach. If you need encouragement, you ask the prophet.

And I'll explain how the prophet works in another session. But the prophet's function essentially is to encourage. You get him to do that.

And so each one has a different function. Now, we'll answer the question in time. I don't think we're going to get there tonight as to whether everyone has a ministry.

That's a very important question. We'll answer that. But the fact is that my only question should be, and the question you should be asking, is what should I be doing? That's all.

And that's the end of the conversation. The whole idea that a teacher is more important than a deacon, there is nothing like that in the scriptures. Or that an apostle is more important than a pastor.

That is just not in the Bible. Or that a pastor is more important than the people. That's not there.

The concept of giving honor to men because of their jobs is not a biblical thing. You see, we go into the world today and you find that a painter earns \$20 an hour, let's say. But a plastic surgeon earns, how much, brother? \$1,000 an hour.

And we say, this one is more important. He lives in Beverly Hills. He has his own TV show.

That's the world's way. Which one is more important? I think the painter is more important than the plastic surgeon. Because the painter is doing an honest job.

The plastic surgeon is dealing with men or women's vanities. It's really got nothing to do with an essential service. And yet we'll give more honor to the one and less honor to the other one.

And James deals with this. Remember when somebody comes in amongst you? And he says, I'm a plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills. We'll say, come brother, sit, sit up here.

Another brother comes in and he says, well, I sweep the streets in Van Nuys. We say, oh brother, you can sit at the back there. But in fact, the brother who sweeps the streets may have a teaching ministry.

And when he teaches, we give him respect. Not him, but the ministry. We listen to what he has to say.

We don't say, oh, he's a street sweeper. What does he know? He's a teacher. Given to the church as a teacher.

And so it doesn't matter what he does in the world. We listen to what he has to say when he teaches. And so the functions, then, have to do with the gift, the function, the ministry, the calling that God has given to each one.

But let's never confuse that with importance or with rank or with hierarchy or with structure. And in fact, the lesson Jesus was trying to teach the disciples over and over and over is that you need to be the servants. As I have washed your feet, you need to wash one another's feet.

What is the most important ministry in the Bible? Oh, we would say the apostles have to be the most important ministry. But what does Paul say about the apostles' ministry? He says God has put us, the apostles, where? First. No.

He says he has put us last. He has put us last. And we have become the off-scouring of the earth.

In other words, when you wash a pot and you scrape all the burnt stuff off the bottom and you throw that away, he says that's what God's made us. And today, if you look at the church and the function of churches today, everybody wants to be an apostle. But Paul says, no, God made the apostles last.

He made us the off-scouring of the earth. And so man's idea of importance and God's idea of function are two totally different things. Now, I understand that this creates all sorts of questions and problems.

The one problem is, and a question which I have often been asked, surely if this is true, then you're going to have chaos in the church. Because everybody is a chief. And there's no Indians.

Or everybody's an Indian and there's no leaders. But that's not true. Because remember that it is God who is building his church.

Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And if he is building the church, then I need to trust him that he will put in the church the ministries that he needs. Or that he wants.

And that the church needs. And he is not going to raise up a church and leave it without leaders. Now, the leaders may not be the men that we would want.

They would not be the kind of leaders that we would envisage they should be. But they may be the people that God has chosen. Now, we'll deal with that whole issue of leadership.

But this whole idea of this clergy and laity thing came about in the second century. So about 100, 150 years after the day of Pentecost. The church began to establish a separation between the priesthood and the people.

And the reason for this was because there were many problems in the churches. And so they said, well, we've got to fix these problems. And one of the ways to fix the problem is to put somebody in charge.

And so we'll put a priest in charge of the church. And they called him a bishop those days. In those early days, a bishop was an elder who was a ruling elder who was what we call a monarchical bishop.

In other words, he was the pastor. And then he had elders under him. And so he would run the church.

And so if there's a problem, we speak to him. He's going to sort out the problems. Now, that was man's solution.

It was not God's solution. And every time we find a problem in the church and we apply a human solution with it to that problem, we may fix the problem, but we're going to create a far bigger other problem. And so if you have a problem with your plumbing at home and the pipe begins to leak, well, there's one thing you can do.

You can take a hammer and you can knock that pipe flat so that the water doesn't run through it and it doesn't leak. So you fix the leak. That doesn't fix the problem.

You've now created another bigger problem. Because now there's no water in the rest of the house. And that's what we do with the church.

We have a little problem here and we bring some kind of man-made idea and we sort out that problem, but it creates huge other problems. And that's where it's come from. And so it has continued all the way through till today.

The idea that you have a single leader of the church or a clergy and a laity set up or something which is not the priesthood of every believer is very, very dangerous. It's very dangerous. It creates huge problems.

The first problem with it is that it denies Jesus as the head of the church. Because we're saying we don't trust Jesus to fix His church, to resolve the problems and the issues in the church. We have to make somebody responsible to deal with these issues.

We no longer can the people go right directly to God and the people are conditioned. And this is the problem is that people are conditioned to believe that there's one man or a select few who have all the answers. And so if I have a problem, then I run to the pastor.

He's got to fix my problem. If I need something from God, I run to the pastor. When I move around the building, sometimes I go out in the parking lot and I have to pick up the papers and so on.

And quite often people will see me and they'll say, Are you the pastor here? Now, I don't want to give them a three-hour Bible study. So I just say yes. And nine out of ten times they will say, Please pray for my daughter.

She has this and this problem. Because that's the function of the priest. To stand before God on behalf of the people.

And then to come back to the people and say, Thus saith the Lord. And so we have no need for Jesus anymore. Because we have a man who's going to tell us what Jesus wants.

And who's going to intercede on our behalf before the throne of God. Now the problem is that the moment you put a man in that position, you create huge problems. Because in order for that man to secure his position, because now invariably he becomes paid.

Well, let's say he's not paid. Let's say he has a secular job. But he's taken that position because he has a problem with pride.

Because with a position comes honor. And so the kind of man who will take that position says, Well, you know, he has a chance for me to do something. Whatever his motives may be.

But it doesn't take very long when people begin to bow before him and worship him. And to, yes sir, no sir, three backs, full sir. That his head begins to swell.

Now he needs the honor of the people. He needs his ego to be struck all the time. So what does he do? In fact, this is real.

And this happens over and over and over. Not just in isolation. This happens in 99.9% of the churches today.

What he then does is he makes sure that the people remain dependent on him. So he's always going to stand between God and the people. He's never going to get to a place where he's going to say, You need to have a direct relationship.

He's not going to teach the people to be dependent on God. Because he wants people to be dependent on him. Because his job is dependent on that.

And if he earns a salary, it's even worse. Because what happens if this church gets to a place where they say, We don't need you anymore. Then what happens to me? Who's going to pay my salary? Where am I going to go now? So what he does is he makes sure that the people remain dependent on him.

And in order to do that, what he does is he keeps the people away from Jesus. He keeps this distance between the people and the Lord. That is a terrible thing.

But that is the truth. And that is the way that it happens. When in fact what he should be doing is pushing the people as a servant under the people.

Closer to the Lord all the time. So that they can become independent of him. I've made it very clear in this church as I've done in many, many other churches.

That I pray for the day that we will be able to agree. There's no need for me in this church anymore. That is my job.

You say, well brother, that's not in the Bible. Let me show you. In Ephesians chapter 4. That's the chapter that deals with the ministries.

Ephesians. And I know that we touched on this also in a different time. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 11.

He himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. For the edifying of the body of Christ.

Till we all come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God. To a perfect man. To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Verse 12. For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. Now the old King James used to have a comma there.

In other words, the way it would read was this way. That the ministries were there to equip the saints, comma. For the work of the ministry, comma.

For the edifying of the body of Christ, comma. But in fact, the correct, the best translation on this incidentally is the NIV. Which says something, does somebody have the NIV? Lonnie, will you read that for us? Verse 12.

That's it, thank you. To equip God's people, to prepare God's people for works of service. In other words, in the King James or the old King James.

For the equipping of the saints, that they may do the work of the ministry. It's not the job of the ministries to do the work of the ministry. It is the job of the ministries to prepare the saints, that the saints may do the work of the ministry.

To prepare God's people for works of service. And so my job is an equipping job. My job is a training and a teaching job.

Not to teach you the word of God, but to teach you to do the ministry. That really has to be the function of every teacher and every leader in the church. To bring people.

You see, as parents, if we're going to teach our children to always be dependent on us. We will fail as parents. We have to teach them to stand on their own feet.

So that the time can come that they will marry or they will leave home. Or in our case, we will leave the home. And they are on their own.

And they can live their lives and make their decisions. And raise up their own families. But if they have to be dependent on me or on any parent all the time.

We just haven't done a good job. And it's the same in the church. And so the job of the ministry is not to do the work of the ministry.

But to prepare the people of God. To prepare the saints for the work of the ministry. Now I'm going to stop there because we've only just begun to introduce.

And what I want to do next week is to deal with some of the other problems that comes as a result of this. And then the positive side. So can we stop the tape there? And then we'll take a few minutes of questions before we serve the Lord's table.

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