



October 9, 2005

LIVING BEYOND MYSELF

"WHAT? ME, A PRIEST?"

1 Peter 2.9-10

In the First Testament of the Bible, before Jesus showed up on the scene, God's Spirit worked through a select group of people called "priests." God's Spirit has always flowed through any ordinary person who is open to the idea of God flowing through them, but these First Testament priests served as a mediator between God and his people. The average person didn't think they had a direct line to God, so they had to go through the priest.

*"Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, 'This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, **you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." Exodus 19.3-6*

But when Jesus arrives on the scene, the religious culture gets turned upside down as he starts making statements to normal, everyday people.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5.13-16

*"Jesus replied: '**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor as yourself.**' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22.37-40*

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. **Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.** These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts." Deuteronomy 6.4-6*

*"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but **love your neighbor as yourself.** I am the LORD." Leviticus 19.18*

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13.34-35

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1.8

Then on one day, a day called the Day of Pentecost. And from that moment the message was clear: This is for everyone who follows Jesus Christ. Everyone who follows Jesus Christ now has direct access to God. Everyone who follows Christ has the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in them. Every one of them is extraordinary. Everyone has been anointed as a priest to carry God's love and hope to each other and to this world

*"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. 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." 1 Peter 2.9-10; Hosea 1.6-2.1*

*"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. **Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others,** faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. **If anyone speaks,** he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. **If anyone serves,** he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 4.7-11*

*"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is **prophesying,** let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is **serving,** let him serve; if it is **teaching,** let him teach; if it is **encouraging,** let him encourage; if it is **contributing** to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is **leadership,** let him govern diligently; if it is showing **mercy,** let him do it cheerfully." Romans 12.3-8*