We’re thinking about what it means to be “the People of God” this year. For us, that means the Jewish people at first, and now Christians too. What does it mean to be set apart by God in this world? Is the answer to this question an obvious one? I don’t think so. To start, we need to answer one fundamental question, and the answer we choose will help to shape everything else.

Question:
Is the main point of being a Christian about me being saved, OR
Is the main point of being a Christian about the Church doing God’s work?

The reason we’ve been looking at Exodus this quarter is that this is the first time we really see “the People of God” being formed. These are our people, our mothers and fathers. Whatever God’s purpose was for calling these people out, God’s purpose for us is the same. Read these words from the LORD, spoken to the people when the laws were given to them:

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 (Exodus 19:5-6).

The laws (like the 10 Commandments, and others) were given to this one particular people. These were new ways of living for this particular group. These laws were designed to set this people apart—to make them unique, and to ensure that the people would always remember who they were. Some of the laws make tons of sense. Some seem a little wacky. But it doesn’t matter: these laws set the people apart. God basically says: “If you will do these things—in other words, if you will stay true to who you are and who I am—then I will use you as my priests for the whole earth.” You are set apart, made “holy,” so that you will be my priests.

The role of the priest is to be a mediator. The priest stands between God and the people. Your PA is the priest in your relationship with Residence Life. Your senator is the priest in your relationship with the federal government. Your lawyer is the priest in your relationship with the courts. Church is the priest between God and all the earth. We don’t exist to make ourselves stronger. We don’t exist to live the good life, or to be blessed. We exist to bring God’s blessing to all that God has created—this mission goes all the way back to Genesis 12.

And the really radical thing is, if we will be this People then God promises not just to be our master. God promises to go with us, in a loving relationship with us. In Exodus the covenant is personal and beautiful...but just wait until we get into Hosea, where the relationship between God and the people is a marriage—or even better, the book of Mark, where God collapses all distance between us and actually becomes us. This is intimacy, in our life and in our death.

There is no greater comfort or peace than what we find in this relationship with the Creator. But it’s more than just comfort: it’s a mission, and it’s the purpose for our lives.