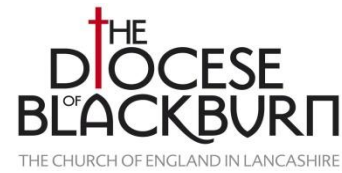


# WEEKLY SERMON

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## The Temple God is building

*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 marvellous light' 1 Peter 2:9*

It's not always easy to see what God is doing in our lives and in our world. We wonder what kind of church will emerge when we're back to 'normal', whether or not there'll be a job next month, how I can survive another week without seeing grandchildren or visiting friends?

In the uncertainty of these days, it is refreshing to read 1 Peter, a letter written to remind us to 'stand fast' in the purposes of God for us (5:12).

Through Peter, God tells us exactly what he is doing in the world: he is building a temple, built on the living Stone, the Lord Jesus (2:4).

Unlike their pagan or Jewish neighbours, Peter's first readers had no temple to attend, either locally or in Jerusalem. And the temptation must surely have been to feel somewhat second-class.

But here is the startling truth: they themselves are God's temple, made up of believers in Jesus Christ. As they met together in their local gatherings – unimpressive as they may have looked – they formed the temple where God himself had chosen to dwell.

And this truth holds good for us today. As we gather together as believers in the Lord Jesus, we are part of the spiritual house that God is building; it may not always look impressive – but here is what God is doing in the world: taking 'living stones' – individual believers – and building a temple.

One application of this reality is that we are to 'declare' his praises. As the architecture and decoration of the tabernacle and temple in the OT pointed to God's character, so as NT believers we are called to speak of all that God is and all he has done in the Lord Jesus.

This is at the heart of our calling as the temple. In our reading and preaching of the Bible, in our sacraments, creeds, prayer and song, we make his goodness and greatness known.

May God continue his great work of building this living temple here in Lancashire – that as churches where we speak clearly of God's greatness and generosity in Christ, where the Christian believer can be nurtured and where the not-yet Christian can find a message of real hope.

**Rev Canon Andrew Raynes**  
**Vicar of Blackburn Christ Church with St Matthew**

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES