

5-3-20

Sermon- The Right Tools for the Job

Scripture- 1 Peter 2:11-25, CTW: Psalm 23

Hymns- 100, 552

Theme- In the beginning of this letter, Peter starts by calling us the chosen people of God who are "living as foreigners in the world". Because of that, he claims that God gives each of His people "more grace and peace." During this time of unprecedented quarantine, have you taken the time to envision what your future is going to look like once the restrictions of the world are lifted? In this passage, Peter gives you the right tools for the job.

I. Introduction: I don't know about you folks, but one of the things people are doing during this Lock-in situation is to do some repairs around the house. I am no exception. Our dogs enjoy the free run of a totally fenced in back yard. In order to get there however, they must go through a doggie door that leads from our back porch to the outside.

Our current doggie door was installed about ten years ago when we hired a contractor to enclose the back porch, making it a four season room. Over time that door has seen much use by two or three dogs running at a full gallop to get to the back yard because some brave rabbit or squirrel has dared to enter the yard. I can tell you that no rabbits or squirrels have been harmed in the making of this story...not even close!...but the door itself has certainly taken a beating. Partial repairs have never solved the problem because the door was never meant to take that kind of heavy traffic.

So, having some time on my hands I decided to fix the problem "ONCE AND FOR ALL!" How many of you have ever said that?

When the new heavy duty extra large doggie door came in from Amazon.com...I was ready to get the job done.

Of course when one takes on a job like this, you have to first think ahead and plan what tools you might need to "git er done". Since my tools were in the basement, I had to make many trips up and down the steps to get the tools to first take out the old door, (which I had over time reinforced with many screws, nails, bolts, you name it), and then cut a bigger opening and install the new door.

To make a long story short, in about a half a day, I was able to accomplish the project and I am proud to say the door, (after some hesitation by the dogs because Daddy had installed something new), the new door is operating fine and the project as a success.

Having the right tools, planning ahead, and persevering through any difficulty, produced success. And an added bonus was that I ended up having the same number of fingers and toes that I started the project with!

So what does that have to do with Peter's lesson for us today? Well it is proof that being well prepared with the right tools and understanding how to use them, is a good thing especially when it comes to living a life of faith and obedience to God's will.

The section of 1 Peter which is our passage for today, is entitled "The Conduct of God's People in the Midst of Suffering"...certainly Apropos for what we are all going through today...especially since we are on the verge of "opening things up again", and we may not be really prepared for what that will look like.

Let's take a look at the tools Peter gives us:

II. First Peter Makes Sure That We Understand That Our Loyalty is to the Kingdom of Heaven, Not of Earth.

Verse 11 "I warn you as temporary residents and foreigners, to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls." Peter has never been known to mince words or beat around the bush, and he certainly does not do that here.

A. Think of How You Show Loyalty to Earthly Things

Peter in verse 12 reminds us to live properly among your neighbors...they need to see proper and heavenward focused behavior.

I must admit that when I have cul-de-sac meetings with my neighbors (the 6 foot rule always being maintained), that I fall into earthly conversations where we complain about having to wear masks, stand in lines, accept restrictions on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. **That goes against what Peter calls us to do.**

Maybe by showing our neighbors that we are content with our current lot, we might make them feel more accepting and at ease with their circumstances. Think about it the next time you reach out to others...you can actually help their state of mind by showing them your refreshing kingdom attitude!

Peter reminds us in Verse 12 that this will cause THEM to give honor to God when He judges the world!

Have you shared in your bounty...(no not just your Bounty paper towels), but in the abundance of your household? **Proverbs 22:9** tells us that we will receive blessings when we share in our blessings already received. I'll put in a shameless plug here that says if you are ever in doubt about what our day to day Christian life should look like...turn to Proverbs early and often!

Show respect for human authority. As you know, I spend a lot of time nowadays on social media, as a way to keep in touch. Peter would have us use that as an opportunity to show others our

respect for authority. (Even if sometimes we do not feel it...we must think of the greater good!)

Right now on Facebook, there are many posts critical of our leaders at all levels, and not much support for what they are trying to do to manage this once in a lifetime crisis. I believe that this passage calls us to support our leaders and medical professionals.

Like the old Indian saying: "Never criticize a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins. He who is present at a wrongdoing and does not lift a hand to prevent it, is as guilty as the wrongdoers..." Dear Lord, help me to never violate this principle!

Go back through your posts and see if you have done that...it is never too late to start...it could produce real fruit for the kingdom.

B. Think of How You Show Loyalty to Heavenly Things.

Here Peter reminds us that our behavior should not just be the absence of evil and derogatory actions, it should be weighed from the standpoint of positive behavior. In verse 15 he says that our honorable behavior should silence ignorant people...so mere abstention from negative behavior is not enough...we need to take action in a positive sense.

We have been freed in Christ to do the right thing. We have been empowered by God to CHOOSE to do the right thing whenever the chance shows itself. Paul says in **Galatians 6:9** "And let us not grow weary of DOING good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

This is to be an inspiring verse because it reminds us that doing good in the name of the kingdom is not a sprinting event, it is a life long Marathon.

So, since we have so much time on our hands right now, let us spend time thinking of new ways, new opportunities presented by this crisis to expand the reach and influence of God's kingdom!

III. Next, Peter Reminds Us to Think of the Nature of the Loyalty that Christ Calls Us All To.

A. Verse 17 Lays Out Several Goals for Us. We are to respect everyone, Love our Christian brothers and sisters, fear God, and respect our rulers.

Notice the difference in the directive...it is at two levels...LOVE for our Christian brothers and sisters, which is the highest goal for the greater good of the kingdom, RESPECT for all else...

John 15:12 is where Jesus laid that one on us...this is my commandment (to my people) that you love one another as I have loved you.

This is a qualified statement which he repeated in the Garden prayer, John Chapter 17, saying "Father, I am NOT praying for the world, I am praying for those who you have given me, for they are yours. I pray that they be one, just as you and I are one...that the world may see and believe that you sent me."

This is the love that is to be evident between believers...for the purpose of showing non-believers ("the world"), if you will, that God is real, He loves us, and that He has a plan.

Peter continues by saying that because of this, the next level of care would be to show respect for others and especially for our rulers. We are to temper all of our behavior with these truths.

B. Verse 18 Says We Are To Show Submission, Patience, and Endurance. As you can imagine and have probably experienced, this requires self-discipline and training on our part. **Hebrews 12:11** is a great verse for this: "For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been TRAINED by it.

I would guess that you are saying, "why should I have to worry about all this in the middle of the biggest crisis I have ever seen

in my life?" But remember that God often places us in situations like this in order to test...and stretch us, all for the betterment of the Kingdom.

If you don't believe me just spend some time reading the Book of Job...

IV. Finally, in Verses 19-25, To Comply With God's Wishes, We MUST First Lower, Then Raise Our Expectations.

A. We Must Lower Our Expectations Of The World.

1. Our Leaders are not now, nor will they ever be, perfect. Expect that...put yourself in their place...lower your expectations with patience and understanding. If you ever think you can do better, walk a mile in their moccasins. You may just find a better way to help, rather than hinder them as they try to do the impossible.

2. OBEY- God and your leaders. In the coming months as we are lead out of this pandemic, there may be new rules to follow. Ones that we may not like. Do not dream that all of the restrictions will be dropped at once. Our leaders are scared too... imagine facing what they have to face. Peter tells us in Verses 18 and 19 that we are to do what they tell us, not only if they are kind and reasonable but even if they are cruel! He goes on to say that God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment!

B. We Must Raise Our Expectations of Life in Christ.

He is our example so we must be in the word to learn a better understanding of Christ and His wishes for us. Peter gives us all a great place to start here. Verses 22 through 25 are taken directly from the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 53 which spells out the attributes of the coming Messiah and concludes this: "Once you were like sheep who wandered away, but now you have turned to your Shephard, the Guardian of your souls." We have been given an opportunity here, let us not waste it. Amen? Let us Pray...