



Sunday, June 11, 2023

Speaker: Pastor John VanderWindt

Scripture: 2 Peter 2:1-22

Sermon: Reminders to seek the truth of Scripture



The Lord's Supper

Lord, comfort us where we are. Lord, we come to you with our hurts, with our sorrow, with our joys and our thankfulness. Lord, we ask for Your cleansing blood to come upon us. We confess, Lord, that we have not always lived the way You have called us to live. Lord, we ask for Your cleansing, that we may be whole, that we may be dining with You in this glorious feast that You have given us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This morning, we come to the Lord's table and we come from the east and the west, the north and the south. We sit here as the people of God at the kingdom table. Jesus, when He was on earth, after He had died, He walked with the two men to Emmaus and they didn't recognize Him until He broke the bread. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him at that point. And this becomes the Lord's table.

Our Savior invites those who trust in Him to share in this joyous feast that He has prepared for us. Our Savior Jesus Christ has ordained and instituted this holy supper to nourish and sustain those who are born again and grafted into his family, the church. Christ has instituted an earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body and wine/juice as the sacrament of His blood.

Just as truly we take and hold the sacraments in our hands, we eat and drink them in our mouths by which our lives are then sustained. So truly, we receive into our souls for our spiritual life, the true body, and the true blood of our Lord and Savior.

We receive these by faith, which is from the hand and the mouth of our souls. This banquet is a spiritual table in which Christ communicates Himself to us and for all of His benefits. By the use of these Holy Sacraments, we are moved to a fervent love of God and of our neighbors. Come to the table those of you who have much faith and those of you who wished you had more. You who have been to the sacrament often and those who have not been in a long time. For those who have tried to follow Jesus and for those of us who have failed.

Come. The Lord has prepared a table for us. And if you are sorry for your sins and sincerely follow Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you are invited to come with gladness to this table. Hear the words of our Savior **(Matthew 11:28-29) 28** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Come then. For all is ready. We come not because we ought to, but because we may. Not because we are righteous, but because we are penitent. Not because we are strong, but because we are weak. Not because we are whole, but because we are broken. And through Christ, we become whole. Jesus, on the night in which He was betrayed, He took bread and He broke it and He gave it to His disciples. He said, "This is my body which I have broken for you, to pay for the sins that you have, that you may be free."

After supper, he took the cup and He blessed it. And He said, "This is my blood which I have shed for you. Which I shed on the cross for your sins that you may be forgiven and that you may truly understand the love of God and the price which I paid for your life."

[Elders pass out the bread.]

Jesus took the bread and he broke it and he said, "This is my body." We just sang that, "I'll probably never know how much it cost." Think about that for just a moment. The Lord of the universe took on flesh just to have it killed so that we may live. That shows the deep, deep love that Christ has for each of us. He was willing to die and take our place. So as you eat, remember and believe that Christ's deep love paid for a complete remission of all your sins.

[Congregation eats bread.]

We invite you to take the juice and again hang on to it and we will drink together.

[Elders pass out juice.]

We just sang, "Worthy is the Lamb." The lamb who was slain. In the Old Testament, God told the people of Israel that they needed to sacrifice a lamb and that sacrifice was at three o'clock in the afternoon. The priest would take the lamb and he would kill it. Then he would take the blood of the lamb and he would sprinkle it on the altar. That blood symbolized the life of the lamb that was shed for the people of Israel. So when Christ said, "This is my blood, which I shed for you," He died at three o'clock and His blood was shed. And in shedding His blood, He said, "This is my life. My life that I give for you. I give my life fully for you so that you may have life." Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.

We talked about the costly price of Jesus' sacrifice. That costly price of the shedding of His blood. So together as we drink, Jesus says, "I want you to remember the sacrifice that I gave for you. And that the sprinkling of blood on the altar no longer has to happen because of my blood that I shed for you. That it is a complete remission of all your sins." So take it, drink all of it. Remember and believe that the blood of Christ was shed for you.

[Congregation drinks juice.]

Join me in prayer. Dear Lord, we thank You for this amazing banquet table that You have invited all people to. Lord, we thank you that at this amazing banquet table, we are fed with your life, the bread of life, with the bloodshed for us that we may have life. Lord, we pray that you will cleanse us, feed us, and nourish us. That we may walk in your ways. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Sermon

We're in the presence of God. And in the presence of God, there is life. This morning, we took time to celebrate the gift of the banquet table which gives us life. And that needs a, "Praise the Lord." [A couple people say "Hallelujah" in the congregation.] And last week, - oh, there are some of you who are catching on - we learned that when from the front, someone says, "Praise the Lord," the rest of us say, "Allelujah." [Congregation yells, "Allelujah."] All right. So let's make that a regular practice here because we need to spend our time as a community. Church is a conversation between us and God. So here together we do, "Praise the Lord." [Congregation yells, "Hallelujah."]

This morning, I invite you to turn to **2 Peter 2**. If you look at my Bible, you'll notice that it's way near the end. It's just a little book with three chapters in it. For those of you who have been with us for a while, we've been doing D6 for a couple of years and a couple of weeks ago, we broke off of D6 because of Pentecost and there was one left in D6, and it was not 2 Peter 2. We had done 2 Peter 1 the week before and then D6 missed 2 Peter 2 and went to 2 Peter 3. And I thought, if we're studying all scripture, let's do 2 Peter 2.

Next week, I'm gone but the week after and on the 25th, when we have the installation of elders and deacons, we will do 2 Peter 3. Now we have to remember that these books are written as letters. We see them as chapters and verses. But the original recipients had one long letter. There were no breaks. So sometimes, it's good to go back and revisit a couple of places in the first chapter to set our scene as to where this is coming from. So we need to do that.

So let's first go to 2 Peter 1. In **2 Peter 1:1-4**, the second part there says, **1** "To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: **2** Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. **3** His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. **4** Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature..."

2 Peter 1:5-9, you may remember my sermon about the boxes. What you need to do to add to your life. And then we'll jump to **2 Peter 1:12-13**, **12** "So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. **13** I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live..."

And then **2 Peter 1:16**, **16** "For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. And then we jump to **2 Peter 1:19-21**, **19** "We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. **20** Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. **21** For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

So here we have Peter, saying, "You have been given power by Christ, through the knowledge of Him. Through the knowledge and the truth of Him. Throughout the Old Testament, there have been prophets. We are eyewitnesses. There have been prophets who have prophesied unto God." And then he says, "But."

So you need that background to get into **2 Peter 2:1-22**. And join me now as we read it.

1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. **2** Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. **3** In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; **5** if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; **6** if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; **7** and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless **8** (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— **9** if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings; **11** yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord. **12** But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.

13 They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. **14** With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! **15** They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness. **16** But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet’s madness.

17 These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. **18** For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. **19** They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”

20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. **21** It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. **22** Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.”

This is the Word of the Lord. Let's pray. Dear Lord, today we have celebrated the joy of life in You. And now, Lord, we read about how sinful the world is and how we often get caught up going back into the sin that you have freed us from. But Lord, we are also grateful that You give us Your life. You call us from that to live a life with You. Lord, we ask that You will open our hearts and our ears to hear your voice.

I pray, Lord, that the word spoken today may be of You, that nothing of me may come out. Lord, we can only do this because You loved us first. And because of your love for us, we love You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This passage is kind of a tough one to hear. The reality is, we live in a world in which truth is often changed. And so today, as we have up here the scriptures and the reminders of Christ's death and resurrection, let us keep that in the forefront of our minds as we go through this piece. It says in 2 Peter 2:1, **1** "They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them..." They're right. Jesus paid for us, as we already celebrated in the Lord's Supper. Jesus paid for us.

In **1 Corinthians 7:23**, Paul says, **23** "You were bought at a price..." And in Galatians **3:13**, it says, **13** "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." And **Revelation 5:9**, it says, "Christ bought them with his blood and out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, they were bought." And so Jesus has paid the price for us.

Barclay says that, "The Christian, by the right of purchase, belongs absolutely to Christ. And that a life which costs so much cannot be squandered on sin or on cheap things." And this is the background that Peter writes in this second chapter. He says, "You have known Christ." And at the end of this chapter, he says, "Since you have known Christ, don't go back to what you were doing before." For You to Know It and to go back to it is, in many ways, worse than if you hadn't known. So Peter is saying, "You've known the truth of Christ."

But here's where his emphasis comes from. It begins in the first part. It says, "There were false prophets among the people, just so there are false teachers among you today." We now have the Word of God. And hopefully you all have a copy of a Bible. If you don't, please come and talk to me and I will get you one. Because when you have the Word of God, you should be able to read it for yourself and see what truth says. In today's world, there are many people who take this Word and they change it just a little bit.

The author of Robinson Caruso, Dan Defoe wrote this, "Wherever God erects a house of prayer, the devil always builds a chapel there. And to us to be found upon examination, the latter has the largest congregation." When we look at the word of truth, there are many ways in which the devil, since the beginning of time, has tried to sway it just slightly. This isn't new. We see this again in Genesis 3. where Satan says to Eve, "Did God really say...?" Let's take the truth and just adjust it slightly.

And Peter here is saying, "People of God, be diligent. Examine scripture and see if what is being said by whoever is saying it, fits with what the Word of God says. Because if it doesn't fit, then you need to be wary because God has said, "This is the way it goes." And just like there were prophets in the Old Testament who prophesied things that weren't accurate, God said, "I will hold them accountable."

In fact, in **2 Peter 2:4-10**, he gives three examples in which people are held accountable for going different ways. He begins with the angels and he says, "The angels that have fallen have been sent from heaven, and they are on their way to hell." And they are held in chains, which means they can move around somewhat, but there will come a time of judgment for them. And there is no delivery for them.

You will notice that the next two examples with Noah in Sodom and Gomorrah, the people are destroyed, but in that we see God's mercy as well. And that God saves Noah. And it calls Noah a righteous preacher. There's something interesting about that. Just like with Sodom and Gomorrah, when it talks about Lot, it says in **2 Peter 2:8, 8** "(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard.)"

Noah and Lot both lived in a world which went wild on their own and did not live out what God had called them to do. Noah, it says, was a righteous preacher. People knew that Noah loved God and the people knew that Noah followed God and Noah made himself distinct in that space. Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah, they knew who Lot was and Lot made himself distinct in the space of a wicked world. And we understand that in both of those cases, not only were those men saying, "I am going to hold myself separate." But they also had a deep sorrow for the people around them.

As a preacher of righteousness, Lot longed for the people around him to know God as well. And to be able to see the truth in Scripture, and to know that that truth brings life. Because as we read in **2 Peter 2**, when it talks about the false teachers, it talks about how they go off and do their own thing. In verse **2 Peter 2:12**, in the middle there, it says, **12** "They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish." Peter is saying that we have a natural instinct within us. When we live only by that natural instinct instead of the way God has called us to live, we are going to live in a way which will be animalistic.

In many ways today, that's what the world is saying. "Do as you feel. Whatever feels good, go do it." And God is saying, "If you live by your fleshly nature, you will live in a way which sends you to destruction, and you will die." In fact, those things that we live for and we think will give us happiness. In the end, we find that they are empty. And as it says, "They will become our master." And instead of Jesus being our Master, we will be mastered by them.

I want to give an example of an Old Testament prophet. He uses the story of Balaam in **2 Peter 2:15**. For those of you who don't know the story, Balaam was a prophet of God. And he was called on by a neighboring country to curse the people of Israel. And Balaam said, "Well actually, I can't do that because those are God's people and I can't curse God's people." So the king said to Balaam, "Balaam, I'll make it worth your while. I will give you a sufficient amount of money to come and do this for me." To which Balaam hmm'd and haww'd and finally he said, "Okay." So on the way there, he's riding his donkey and suddenly his donkey stops.

Balaam gets all mad and he's hitting the donkey. "Come on, you stupid animal! Move it!" And the donkey doesn't move because the donkey sees that there is an angel standing in front of him, not allowing them to go any further. Finally, the donkey turns around to Balaam and tells him in a human voice, "God is stopping you from going. Quit beating me." Now the sad thing is, Balaam still went. But here's a case in which Balaam decided that the love of money was more important than the love of God. And if we think about things within our lives, are there things within our lives which we say, "This is more important than the love of God." And God is saying to us today, "We need to look at this."

Proverbs 14:12 says, **12** "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." God says we need to make sure that we follow what is true and right. **2 Timothy 4:1-5** (NASB 1995) says, **1** "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God..." so this is Paul talking to Timothy... "and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, **4** and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. **5** But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." Peter is saying to us, "We need to live in the Word and no matter what is going on around you, live in the Word.

Let's go back to the story of Noah and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those stories are both of mass destruction but those stories are also of great grace and mercy because God in those stories, saved Noah and his family. God in that story of Sodom and Gomorrah, after Abraham prayed, "Lord, if there's only five people there, will you save the city?" And God saved Lot. But do you remember what happened to Lot's wife as they were leaving? Lot was willing to break from it. He said, "I have to follow God and I will go." And Lot's wife said, "I'm going with you, Lot but I'm gonna kind of miss that back there." And she turned into a pillar of salt.

So today, Jesus invites us to a place where he says, "I invite you. Because of the price that I paid for you on the cross, I invite you to break away from whatever is holding you mastery. I invite you to live solely in the presence of God and with God. And there will be freedom."

Spurgeon, a great preacher, in his last sermon says this, "If you carry a burden, God will carry you." So today, Peter invites us to this place where he says, "Wherever you are, in God's grace, because of the price that he paid on the cross for you, He says to you, "Be careful. Listen discernly to what you hear. Does it fit with Scripture? And if not, don't go there." Dig deep into Scripture to see what God's Word says. And what it says, do. And God will carry you.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank You for Your Word. We thank you, Lord, for the promise that You will carry us. Lord, today we ask that you will help us to see the truth, that you will help us to remind each other of the truth of Scripture and Lord, that you will give us the courage to live in that way. Lord, we pray for freedom for anyone who is bound to another master.

Lord, we ask that you will break those chains and that you will deliver us in Your name. And we say this Lord, because of your great love for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Transcribed by: *Liza Perry*