**June 4, 2023 1 Peter 1:13-25**

***Christlike***

**Scripture:** *1 Peter 1:13-25 NRSV*

*(13)Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. (14)Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. (15)Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; (16)for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (17)If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. (18)You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, (19)but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. (20)He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. (21)Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. (22)Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. (23)You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. (24)For "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, (25)but the word of the Lord endures forever." That word is the good news that was announced to you.*

**Notes:**

1. Holiness is ***required*** in God's people.
   1. Holiness is both the ***goal*** and the ***example***.
   2. "…be holy, because ***I*** ***am*** holy."
   3. Our ***transformed*** life begins to look like Jesus's life.
   4. Holiness requires ***obedience***, and ***obedience*** is our yes.
2. Say yes to focusing our ***minds***.
   1. "…*with* ***minds*** *that are alert and fully sober.* "
   2. Our ***minds*** must be holy if our ***behavior*** is to be holy.
   3. Outlook ***determines*** outcome.
   4. Do not let your mind and thoughts deviate from the ***cross***.
3. Say yes to believing in ***hope***.
   1. Be ***hope***-***filled*** people rather than hopeful people.
   2. We live in the already but not yet ***kingdom*** of God.
4. Say yes to being ***different***.
   1. "…*live out your time as* ***foreigners*** *here in reverent fear*."
   2. Finish living our lives as if we don't ***belong*** here.
   3. We are ***strangers*** here in the world, mere ***travelers***.
5. Holiness is a ***lifestyle*** and not a moment.
   1. Holiness is a lifestyle that is headed toward the ***cross***.
   2. ***Lock*** eyes on Jesus, ***trust*** him and ***love*** others like He did.

**Script:**

Today we are going to be reading in the book of 1 Peter, one of my favorite passages in all of scripture, because it was this passage that stood out to me when I was feeling a call into ministry. This passage spurred me on, it gave me the determination to do what was necessary to fulfill God’s plan for my life and His church.

We all get lethargic from time to time in our Christian walk; we stay back and wait for people to come to us and we seem to be hesitant to share what the Lord is done in our lives. I don’t mean to say we do this all of the time, but there are times when we just get tired of feeling we are doing this work all by yourself and why bother.

1 Peter is one of the letters that Peter wrote to Jewish Christians who were driven out of Jerusalem. The Jewish followers of Christ had scattered throughout Asia Minor. Many were afraid to speak of what they had seen because of the fear of what the Jewish religious leaders and Romans might do to them. Today's text is 1 Peter 1:13-25 and it addresses a rallying cry for those who knew the WAY. If you are able, would you stand for the reading of God's Word?

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Today's text is one of my favorites! It's a simple instruction that takes some unpacking, because the command to "be holy, because I am holy" (v. 16) is overwhelming, intimidating, terrifying, and anxiety-producing. It's really easy to justify ignoring this command, after all, I am merely a sinner, there's no way that I, an imperfect, mistake-making human can be holy. That's craziness! But it can't be too crazy, because God is originally the one who commanded it in Leviticus, actually, multiple times in the book of Leviticus. This started as a law for the people of God, and today, we can see how holiness is actually a byproduct of Jesus's two greatest commandments: to love the Lord your God and to love others as yourself. When love is the foundation, holiness is the blueprint, Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "*Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God buildeth up His temple*," that is to say, holiness is required in God's people, Holiness is the Goal and Example, just as blueprints are required in building a house. Without this idea of holiness, without the pursuit of holiness, and ultimately without God, we could end up like a house without plans—wrong size wood, screws, shingles, and uneven flooring. You see, holiness is both the goal and the example. God says, "be holy, because I am holy." The goal is to be holy. The example is God, God incarnate to be more precise—that is, Jesus.

For the Israelites before the birth and life of Jesus, this law would have seemed incredibly overwhelming, especially if you count and consider how many other little laws were put into this. If you're ever bored, read Leviticus and count how many rules there are. Kids and teens, I can guarantee you that if you do this, you will never think your parents have ridiculous rules ever again. But on this side of the resurrection, we have a little bit more hope of what holiness can actually look like because we have Jesus’ example to follow. And the examples of other people who follow Jesus as well.

When we say yes to God and to letting God transform us from the inside out, our transformed life begins to look like Jesus's life. And what did Jesus's life look like? Jesus' life was: passionate, centered, calm, chaotic, lonely, social, joyous, grief-ridden, angry, content, sad, and confident. We're going to explore this a little bit more in a few minutes and in the weeks to come, but what are we supposed to do right now in order to fulfill this command to be holy? Holiness requires obedience, and our obedience is our yes. Our perhaps doubt filled but nonetheless honest yes. But "yes" to what?

Today's text tells us, first, say yes to focusing our minds. Look at the first part of verse 13, "*with minds that are alert and fully sober.* " Holiness begins with preparation. Holiness does not happen by happenstance, it happens on purpose and with effort. The King James Version uses the phrase "gird up the loins of your mind." This phraseology made a lot of sense to its original readers because the dresses that men and women wore were robes, long and flowy. To do anything besides walk, the extra material had to be gathered and tied and dealt with. It's the same with our minds.

Behavioral scientists have spent a great deal of research on the power of thinking. Thinking and envisioning a future or goal helps one in achieving that goal. So, when we think and envision ourselves being holy as God is holy, the idea becomes less unusual, it becomes more reflective for us. Our minds must be holy if our behavior is going to be holy. We can do good deeds until the cows come home, but if we are doing those deeds for applause instead of a transformed heart, our deeds aren't holy, they're prideful. But if we are doing those deeds because it is in line with God's character, our deeds are holy because our intention or mind is holy. To a large extent, outlook determines outcome. Our pursuit of holiness is determined and focused solely on looking and acting more like Jesus. We have to work at not letting our mind and our thoughts deviate from the cross, because on the journey toward the cross is where we meet Jesus.

Second, holiness requires us to say yes to believing in hope. If there is one thing I have learned in my life, it is that hope is reckless and dangerous and essential. I am a firm believer that we are to be hope-filled people rather than hopeful people. A hopeful person has trust in their and other people's abilities, a hope-filled person has faith regardless of ability or circumstance. A hopeful person fills themselves whereas a hope-filled person is filled by God. With that in mind, we are being asked to say yes to being hope-filled people. The rest of verse 13 says, "*set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming*." This hope we have, that fills us, is anticipatory. This hope is because we are the bride of Christ, and we live in the already but not yet kingdom of God.

I have friends who began planning their wedding before they were engaged. In fact, hours before they were engaged, they bought their wedding invitations because they were on sale. I tell you this because this is the type of hope, we have in the grace that will be brought to us when Jesus returns. The type of hope that says, "I'm gonna say yes because he's gonna ask." The type of hope a newly engaged couple has when they book venues and vendors for their wedding, and talk with banks and landlords for their new life. They aren't making decision based on their current reality of being "not married," they are making decisions based on their future of "being married." That's the hope we have in Christ's return. We make decisions today based on the fact that Jesus is coming, not on the fact that he hasn't come back yet. This type of hope is bold! And saying yes to being filled with this type of hope is life transformative. Because, when we live with the assurance that we're not destitute and alone and forgotten about, everything we do changes. And why we do everything changes.

The last yes that we say to in our pursuit of holiness (well, for today's sermon) is the yes to being different. Listen to verse 17, "*live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear*. " This sounds like an archaic verse, until you do some digging. So, let me share the fruits of my digging, because I sure didn't get it when I read it.

Time = Life

Here = World

Foreigners = Not originally from there (or here, as in world)

Reverent fear = consciousness or respect (of God)

Peter is telling us that we need to finish living our lives as if we don't belong here, as if we are strangers here in the world—here isn't the end result—our goal isn't to live so that we can be buried, our goal is to travel through this life participating in bringing God's kingdom here. Life is too short to get caught up in keeping up with the Joneses, especially when God's got kingdom work to do. I don't know about y'all, but I want to spend my time saying yes to God and what God is doing instead of trying to be an influencer on Instagram or competing for "most credible."

So, ultimately, if we say yes to holiness and become Christlike disciples, we are recognizing that HOLINESS IS A LIFESTYLE AND NOT A MOMENT. Sure, there are moments of holiness, and moments of sanctification, but the real work is done in how we live that out. Jesus has done his part, the Holy Spirit is doing their part, and we have a responsibility to do ours. Holiness is a lifestyle of yes after yes after yes to God. Every day we will have opportunities to act in a way that is pleasing to God, or to act differently. Every day we have the choice: yes or no. For some of us in this room, God is asking us to trust and say yes to some big and scary new adventures. For others of us, God is asking us to trust and say yes to less busyness instead of more. And still, there are some of us in the room whom God is asking us to trust and say yes to total surrender.

You see, holiness is a lifestyle that is headed toward the cross.

That sounds intimidating and not very fun. After all, who wants to live a life of self-sacrifice and denial, right? Well, no one. No one wants to live a life of no. Instead, a life headed toward the cross is actually a life of yes. It's a life that with every step we become a little bit more transformed. And when we bump up against something we don't know or we sin or make a mistake, we repent.

Walking toward the cross means we need to learn to identify with the disciples and Jesus. Those first steps toward the cross didn't happen on holy week, they happened approximately three years before, when Jesus called his disciples and they said yes. From even then, Jesus knew where he was headed, although the disciples didn't. They chose to follow Jesus in faith, and in faith they interacted with those Jesus interacted with. They ate with those Jesus ate with. They learned that there is no person or group or situation that is too terrible for the presence of the Messiah to invade. And ultimately, they learned that even the presence of death wasn't too "out of reach" for the Messiah.

In the years leading up to the cross, the disciples had their eyes fixed on Jesus, and Jesus had his eyes fixed on God the Father. We need to be fixing our eyes on the same place. In this life, where we are only travelers because this is not our final resting place, we need to lock eyes on Jesus and trust him like the disciples did and love others like Jesus did. Doing so might cause us to wander into some situations that aren't our usual stomping ground. Doing so might make us pause when we hear certain things. Doing so might break our hearts at injustice and fuel us with passion for righteousness. Doing so will change our life, our church, our city, our state, our country, our continent, and our world. And it's going to take our whole life for all of our life. And I want to be a part of that. I want to say yes to that. I want to say yes to watching lives be changed. To hear chains fall and freedom found.

It all starts with a yes.

Yes, to focusing our mind on Jesus and where we want to go with him.

Yes, to believing and having hope. Not just for today, but for tomorrow and tomorrow's tomorrow.

Yes, to being different and no longer trying to fit into this world and realizing that our time here is short.

Yes, to a life that is headed toward the cross—where we walk with Jesus and meet others along the way.

Yes, to becoming a Christlike disciple.