

Sermon 18-6-23 (PK)
A Holy Call

1 Peter 1: 13-21

Good morning. It's so good to be with you all this morning.

Father God, Spirit of God, as we reflect on your word, we ask that you would lead us into your way of life. Amen.

So, what do we have here? A letter from Peter, who himself witnessed the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the outpouring of his Spirit. It's quite extraordinary isn't it! That we should have in our hands a letter from the one who was called from his nets by Jesus, travelled with him, ate with him, heard his preaching, saw the miracles, shared with him the last supper, witnessed his arrest, crucifixion and resurrection. In this letter we are just one step away from Jesus himself.

So here we have this letter, from Peter, in Rome. To all the Christian congregations across a huge area, essentially modern-day Turkey. He writes to them in dark times, facing persecution in a hostile society, living in an area prone to war, famine and earthquake.

So what is on his heart? Let's turn to our passage for today.

Our passage begins, 'THEREFORE'. So we need to track back a bit to what we heard last week. Last week we saw that God, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, has given us new birth into a living hope. And an inheritance that can never perish or spoil or fade. So THEREFORE because of these things, because we have this living hope, because we have this inheritance - What?

Two things:

Firstly and briefly, here in verse 13, '*set your hope fully on the grace – the gift – to be given you when Jesus the true king is revealed*'. Don't set your hope on anything else. Set it fully on the gift to be given you when Jesus is revealed. We might be tempted to set our hope on other things, or perhaps in the coming darker times we might despair of hope. Set your hope fully on the gift to be given you when Jesus the true king is revealed

Secondly

'be holy in all you do'

What does 'being holy' mean?

Is this some kind of super-spirituality? The life of a hair-shirt saint?

What does Peter have in mind when he says 'be holy in all you do'?

Peter helps us to understand what he means in 3 ways:

Firstly, it is in contrast to *'the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance'*.

Peter's quite blunt isn't he?! He spells these out a little later in the first verse of chapter 2. *'Rid yourselves' he says, 'of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind'*. Do not conform to these evil desires.

But 'be holy'. So, firstly we see what it is to be holy, as a contrast:

do not conform to these evil desires but 'be holy'.

And secondly, to help us understand what it means to be holy, Peter, here in verse 16, refers us back to the Old Testament, to the book of Leviticus.

For it is written (he says) 'Be holy, because I am holy.' This doesn't immediately help us, does it? But looking back at where he's quoting from really does.

Now, the word holy in the Old Testament means 'set apart' or perhaps 'different'. And it carries the meaning of living rightly as God's people.

And here in Leviticus chapter 19 verse 2 it comes as an introduction to a series of commands.

'Be holy because I the Lord your God am holy.'

'Be different because I the Lord you God am different.'

And then the series of commands. They cover the whole of life: some general principles, others for the community as a whole, others for business, others for family relationships. Some familiar: do not steal, do not lie, through to some less familiar: do not harvest to the edge of the field, leave it for the poor, love the migrant as yourself, and includes the one which Jesus said is the second most important: 'love your neighbour as yourself'. Here in Leviticus, being holy means living God's way in all of life, and that's just what Peter is saying: Being holy means living God's way in all of life. Be holy, live God's way in all of life.

So Peter helps us understand what it means to be holy, firstly by a contrast to evil desires, secondly by pointing us to live God's way on God's earth. And thirdly, Peter in verse 15, points us to Jesus. He says *'just as he who called you is holy, be holy in all you do'*

Just as Jesus who called you

Perhaps Peter has in mind that day when Jesus called him. 'Peter, leave your nets, come and follow me'. Just as he who called you. Perhaps you too hear Jesus calling you to follow him. If that's you today, hear his call and answer

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Just as he – Jesus – who called you is different, be different in all you do. Jesus is the very personification of being holy, being different. But Jesus is also the most human human. His way runs with the grain of the universe, how things really are. So, when we live this way of Jesus the true king, we may be different from the way the world is today but we are deeply in tune with the world as it should be and one day will be.

Just as Jesus is holy, be holy in all you do
Just as Jesus is different, be different in all you do
Just as he came not to be served but to serve
Just as he loves the one lying injured in the ditch
Just as he seeks the good of his neighbour as much as his own
Just as he washes his disciples' feet
Just as he loves them so far as to give his life for them
Peter here is saying being holy means being like Jesus in all you do.
Being holy means being like Jesus in all you do.

In all you do

- It is about how you are in work. How do you serve others in your workplace? How does your work serve your neighbour? Is truthfulness an issue at your workplace? What is the Lord laying on your heart at work?
- It is about how you are at home. What difficult issue do you need to bring up? How might you speak a kind word? Men: how do you serve the interests of others in your home?
- It is about how we are in your local community. How might we serve those injured in the ditch? How might we love the migrant as ourselves? How might we live in such a way as to keep the Earth?

All of these Peter goes on to address later in his letter. Work, community, politics and home. Being holy is about how we are in all of life. It's about being like Jesus in all we do.

Just as the one who called you is holy, be holy. In all you do.

And then Peter returns to the THEREFORE. What reason does Peter give us to be holy? Not 'be holy' so that you may be saved, nor because you 'ought to'. But here in vs 17-21:

- 'be holy' because you have been redeemed from the 'empty way of life' you used to live.
- 'be holy' because you are a slave set free, and set free not by gold or silver but by something much more precious: the blood of the true king, the lamb of God given for you.

Be holy, like Jesus, therefore, not because you ought to, nor because you may earn salvation, but because you have been set free to be like him.

If we lose sight of the true king, the lamb of God, all this talk of being different, being holy seems terribly hard. If we take our eyes off him, it becomes a matter of doing this, doing that.

So, as we close I invite you to look again, or perhaps for the first time, on the true centre of all things. To look again on the true king of all the Earth, God himself, who is also the sacrificial lamb, to look again on the One who sheds his blood on the cross to set you free.

In easier times and in darker times set your hope fully on the gift to be given you when Jesus the true king is revealed. As Jesus who calls you is holy, be holy, like him, in all you do, for he has set you free.

AMEN