

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Between Two Worlds

PART

1

TITLE

Strengthening One Another

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:1-2



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If you have in your hand a Bible or near you, if you want to turn with me to first Peter chapter 1 as we start a new series that we'll actually work through all the way until near the end of August simply called to live between two worlds. How do we do this? If you have in your life, if you know what it's like to travel overseas, if you've been someplace where it's not Westernized, it's not like America and you see what you see and you smell what you smell, you have most likely felt the feelings that give rise to the words I am a long way from home.

When we say that, we don't necessarily mean that we're a long way in terms of the number of miles, what we're really saying when we say that when we're in another culture and we feel so different is we're saying, do we fit here? Is this my place? Am I welcome here? It feels so different, it feels so foreign. It feels like a fish out of water. Do I belong? The sights and the sounds, if you go to another place, you hear things you never hear here.

You smell things, frankly, that you never smell here. You hear language in words that are so different than ours. You experience worship in such different ways. You see festivals and you eat foods that are so different from what you normally enjoy and what you normally celebrate. There's different laws and there's different leaders. And then there's different customs and morals and even in some places, different standards of what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong. When you get there, it feels so foreign, it feels so far from home.

We're told in the Bible a bunch of amazing things. And one of those things is that for those of us who are in Christ, we're actually far from home. When you are in another place, it's really difficult to live in another place when you're a citizen of this place. And the Bible says that when we trust Christ as savior and Lord, he says that our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What that means is that for those of us who are Christians, we're dual citizens, we're citizens of heaven and we are citizens here on the earth. And that can be confusing, that can be challenging. It can cause all kinds of different questions, and this is why. We are citizens of heaven where there's a king and yet we're citizens on earth and in America where we have a president.

We are citizens of a place where there is a divine lawmaker, a Lord over all things and yet we live in a place physically right now in America where there's elected lawmakers. We have a home in heaven. Jesus said, "I am going to prepare a place for you." And yet we all have a home here on the earth. And that begs a question, in fact, many questions such as well, which do I pursue, where do I invest my life?

Where would a citizen of heaven engage in the public sphere here on the earth, in the marketplace, in politics, in relationships? And what makes it even more difficult is that these lands in particular in America today is that these two kingdoms more and more are at odds with each other. We have leaders and we have laws that are in opposition to the leadership and to the authority that we have in heaven.

And that makes it very difficult because the longer we continue to live here in America, for those of us who are alive now is it every day we see more and more people antagonistic towards Christ and towards his rule. They scoff at the idea that he's the king of the world and they scoff at people who would believe that he is. And what this does is it creates the question that Peter seeks to answer, and that is how do we live between these two worlds as citizens of heaven and citizens on the earth?

God's grace, he loves to instruct us and to help us. And so it's amazing you have all these books of the Bible and there's one, one that is specifically written to help people manage that divide and to figure out how to invest their life, what to pursue here on the earth, how to live between these two worlds, and it's the book first Peter. So we're going to spend several months looking at it.

What we do here this morning is we're going to try to make it through the first two verses just his introduction, which sets sort of the categories that he's going to build upon for the next five chapters. So let me pray for us as we get started. Father in heaven, we love you and we thank you that you love us. We thank you that you tell us in this book specifically who we are and how to live in your world. And we long to take our place at your feet.

We don't want to hear from a man, we want to hear from you our maker. And so I pray for those who are here who were considering trusting Christ. I pray father that you would incline their hearts and their eyes to look to Jesus and to see in him a savior. And I pray for those of us who are Christians who are concerned about the path that the kingdom here on the earth here in America, it's taking and what it means for even our future as believers on this earth.

I pray for those who are anxious, for those who are worried, for those who complain a lot about this world, God, that you would teach us, each one of us, incline our hearts, God, to rest in you. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So first Peter chapter 1 starting in verse 1, it says, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God, the father and the sanctification of the spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Now, the first thing that I want you to see here, he's dealing with identity. Peter knows that our behavior flows out of who we believe that we are and so he begins with identity. And the first thing that we learn here is that we are exiles in a foreign land. We're all exiles in a foreign land. Now this is only true of a Christian. If you have yet to trust Christ, I want you to know you are at home.

But if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are citizens primarily of another world, and that means that you're an exile in this one. In AD64, Rome, the city of Rome burned to the ground. And there's a lot of speculation as to the cause of that event. A lot of people believed that it was Nero himself who was just thirsty for expansion and glory and so he thought something that he thought that if we burned down the parts of the

city that aren't as pleasant, as beautiful and majestic as they could be, then we would have a fresh footprint upon which we could build something that would glorify us forever and ever.

And so the city was burned and lo and behold, people didn't like it because their homes burned down and their marketplaces burned down and their businesses burned down and their shrines and temples where they worshiped burned down. And so Nero knew he had a problem and he needed a scapegoat. And he looked around and he saw within his own empire a people that was already marginalized, already misunderstood.

You see Caesar claim to be God and yet there were these people that were saying there's only one true God, not many gods and that one true God is this guy that grew up in Nazareth, his name is Jesus. And so there was already a measure of animosity and misunderstanding towards Christians and so they became the ultimate scapegoat. And then so as they were blamed for Rome's catastrophe, the persecution against believers began to explode and expand to the ends of the empire as far as Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

Now that doesn't say Raleigh, Durham, Apex. And so we might need a little bit of geography help just for those who don't know what those places are. And so Rome was the place that was burned. Peter, the guy who's writing this was a pastor in Jerusalem. And yet chapter 5 tells us, at least it alludes to the real possibility that he was writing this letter from Rome. But then all of a sudden, there's all these believers in these five regions in modern day Turkey, you can see them, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia.

They're all there, all in modern day Turkey. And the fact is, is that Peter knew that all these believers were vulnerable. You see, some of these Christians were already living here. They had already moved there. There were already churches there. And now they were being persecuted and Peter felt the weight of their vulnerability, their risk.

But then there was also this expansion of believers, Jews, and Gentiles who had to flee for their life. And so they fled as far as they could go. And some of them ended there, landed there. And Peter, he's got this big heart for these people. He feels how vulnerable they are, how at risk they are. And so he wants to write them a letter and the reason is because he never forgot his calling. In the last several weeks we've been looking at the last days of Christ right before the cross. I'll get there.

I'm not emotional. I'm thankful, but I'm not crying. And there was one piece of that story that we didn't look at. And that was, there was a moment at the upper room where Jesus, he looked at Peter and he said, "Peter, Satan has asked to have you. But I've prayed. I've prayed for you that your faith will endure." And then he said to Peter, "When you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." And Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."

Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me." And so Jesus said, "Peter, three things are going to happen." He said, "First, you are going to deny me three times, that is going to happen and it's going to happen before you see the light of the sun. Another thing is going to happen is that there's going to come a day when you recognize that that's the worst mistake you've ever made.

And you're going to turn, you're going to repent and you are going to turn again. And when you do turn again, you're going to know that there's a lot of people just like you who are prone to make big mistakes. And so your calling for the rest of your life from me is to strengthen the brothers and sisters in Christ." And for the next 30 years of Peter's life, that's exactly what he did. He strengthened believers. He encouraged believers. He pastored believers. He protected believers. He sought to instruct believers and he wrote letters to believers. And that's what first Peter is.

Now, the first thing that he writes them, he says to those who are exiles. We'll get back to this word, elect, we'll come to that later. Exiles, what is an exile? An exile is a person who lives in a foreign land. And yet many of us, we go, "Wait a minute. We live in a foreign land and you're telling me I'm an exile in a foreign land, I was born here." I recognize that most of us were born in America. Most of us who are in this room were born in America, most of us in this room are citizens of America.

But when you trusted Christ, you became a citizen of heaven and the Bible says you became an exile on the earth. What that means is this world, the closer you get to heaven and the closer you get to growing in Christ image, the less like home it's going to feel, the more risk you're going to feel, the more out of place you're going to feel, the more like a fish out of water you are going to feel. We should all ask the question, how comfortable are we? Because if you are comfortable as a believer in this world, there's a problem.

There's a fundamental spiritual problem of the heart. You see, identity shapes behavior, and this is why Peter leads with identity. There's a question you need to ask yourself, I'm going to ask it many times, do you see yourself as an exile? Do you see yourself as an exile or do you feel like you're at home? You see, the change of citizenship, what it does is it means that there's a transfer of loyalty and allegiance.

Peter, in his letter, we're going to see it many times over in the weeks to come, but he's going to explicitly talk about Jesus being the king over all things and his word being the authority over all things. And he simply eludes to this reality in his introduction. You see it in how he even describes himself. He could tell us all kinds of things about him, where he grew up or what he is, what he's good at and he goes, "Here's my resume. I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ."

When says of Jesus Christ what he's saying is this, is that I am writing to you, but there is someone over me. There's an authority over me, there's a person over me, and that someone is Jesus and Jesus is the king of heaven and the king of earth. There was a day when two groups of people, one Pharisees, they were anti Rome.

And then there was another group of people who were sympathizers of Herod, sympathizers of Rome.

And so you have two people, two political parties. They don't get along, they don't like each other, they don't even like their other color but they both hate Jesus. And so they come together in order to test him and they ask him a question, it was a test. He said, "Let me ask you something, Jesus." They said, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Now that might look to you like, "Well, why is that a test? Just say yes or no, who cares?"

This is why it was so important. Had Jesus said, "No, you shouldn't pay taxes," well, the sympathizers of Herod in Rome, they could easily accuse him of rebellion and take him to court, their court, for it. And if Jesus in that moment would have said, "Yes, you should. We're the Pharisees," could yell and accused him of idolatry because Caesar claimed to be God. And so what did Jesus do? He goes, "Hey, does anyone in the crowd have a coin? Anyone have a coin?" Said, "I got a coin." Can I have that coin just for a second? Sure.

Throws the coin to him and catches it and he goes, "Huh? It's interesting. There's an image on this, whose image is this?" And everyone knows. Well, it Caesar of course, his image was stamped on the coin. And so Jesus, he ends the test and he says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." So what does he mean by that? This is what he means. He goes, "You see this coin right here, well, Caesar's face is stamped on the coin. So in a sense, it belongs to him so you should give him some coins.

But he says, "But now, where is my image stamped?" Oh, that's right, you're created in my image. And what that means is this, is that you should give to Caesar some coins because they belong to him and you should give to Jesus your entire life, love, loyalty and allegiance because you belong to him. He's the king. And that's what Jesus said. Peter was referring to Jesus, the authority over his life, the king of heaven and earth when he says, "This is who I'm writing on his behalf."

And then he moves on and he says apostle. Apostle alludes to the fact that we're going to look at over time, is that Jesus' word is our constitution, his word. You see, apostles, they were eye witnesses of Jesus, they were commissioned by Jesus and inspired by the spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit to speak and write on their behalf. What that means is when they wrote, they were writing down the word of God, they were writing the word of Christ.

And we're going to see, Peter's going to go back over and over and he says, "Look, you see everything, flowers, the fields, all this stuff, all is going to die." He goes, "But there's one thing that's going to remain forever." And he says it's the word of God, it is the constitution of our life. And what I want you to know here this morning is this, is that the goodness and nobility and accuracy and truthfulness of any human constitution is measured exclusively by this one.

Jesus Christ is the king and his word is the constitution. And so we should consider and even identify, let me encourage you to identify therefore, the dominant loyalty of your heart. I encourage you to take a few moments and to identify right now what is the dominant loyalty in my own heart? Let me ask it this way. What home do you love the most? Which kingdom do you love the most? You say, “Well, how would I know that?”

Which one do you pray about the most? Which one do you talk about the most? Which one do you post about the most? Which one do you complain about the most? That’s where your heart is. To which leader are you most loyal, Jesus or leader or political party? Your social media friends, your neighbors, your family, do they know who carries your allegiance? Are they confused about who that is?

Which document in the world is the ultimate authority of your life? Which document, is it this constitution or is it the one up in Washington today that gives you the authority to know who should be allowed into this country? Which race is beloved by God? Which constitution is the authority of your life? Many people, even, especially in our church that leans one color maybe more than another, I’m absolutely convinced that we take our cues on social issues more from a particular news source than this book.

Are you an exile or are you at home? Who is your king? What is your constitution? You see, our citizenship in America is absolutely real, which is why Peter’s going to say wherever you’re a citizen on the earth, you should honor those leaders and you should vote if you have the opportunity and you should serve those people and that community, and you should protect that community. But you need to remember this, that citizenship on the earth plays second fiddle to your citizenship in heaven. One king and one constitution will rule all the others.

Just a few months ago my son, he came to me and he said, “Dad, I want to talk.” And I said say, “Okay.” We started talking and he goes, “So here’s the deal.” He goes, “I know, not just from you. I know, I’ve read the whole Bible through, I know that Jesus is the point of life.” I said, “We’re in agreement.” And he said, “But.” Not but, he goes, “And I want to be a Marine.” Here goes, “What would the Bible tell me about a citizen of the kingdom of heaven and yet I want to protect a particular nation here on the earth. What should I do with that kind of desire? Does the Bible have anything to say?” And I said, “Let’s look at Jeremiah 29.”

This is what it says there. It says, seek the welfare of the city, where I have sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord on its behalf for in its welfare, you will find your welfare. In other words, what that means is this, is that we all have a responsibility, wherever it is that we live, it’s this country or another country, we’re a citizen on the earth, to pursue is good, to protect our people, to care for those people.

And so I told them, I said, “Listen, son, I want you to know something.” I said, “Jesus is the point.” I said, “But when you follow Jesus as the point, one of the things he tells you to do is to engage in this world because there is not a sphere, there’s not an occupation, there’s not a place in the world that doesn’t need a godly man like you. And so you go.” So he’s there now. He’s in bootcamp right now. I’m sure he’s getting worked over.



What is your dominant loyalty? Who holds your allegiance? Which king and constitution rules over the others? We are all exiles of a foreign land. The second thing that I want you to see is that we were made to be exiles by Christ. We were made to be exiles by Christ. You see, it's really important that you understand that when you're in a storm and that's where these people were, they were being persecuted.

First Peter is the book in the new testament that speaks more about Christian suffering than any other book in the whole Bible, suffering for being a believer that Peter himself would literally be crucified upside down just a few years after he wrote this letter. So they're in a storm. If America continues on its current pace, we as believers, if we're not already, we will be in one. Your allegiance will be tested. I absolutely believe that. Your loyalty will be tested.

The source of authority will be, if it hasn't already, it will be tested. And therefore, when you're in a storm, you look for a place to anchor. You need a safe place. You need something you're going to hold onto. And what's remarkable to me is for Peter, one safe anchor that he wanted to bring to their attention and he does so first and he connects it to their identity is a doctrine that has divided the church for 2000 years, and it's called divine election.

That's why he says they're not just exiles, he goes to those who are elect exiles. Some of your Bible translations will separate the two and they'll say to those exiles, and then a list of those five places who are chosen. It's the same Greek word, chosen, elect. It's fascinating that this is divided for so long. But what Peter is saying is this, is that when you get into that place to where it feels like everything is falling apart and it feels like the world under you is falling apart, there is something that gives you hope, it's an anchor and it is this, is that we are exiles in this world because God chose us to be his own, enabling us to choose him to be our own, elect exiles.

And then what he does is he wants to highlight how each member of the Trinity, the father, the son, and the spirit, they all contribute to this movement in our life to carry it out to completion. And so he begins, look, you're elect exiles according to the foreknowledge of God, the father, foreknowledge, right? It's to know beforehand. And so part of foreknowledge means that God is aware of who will believe in him over time. That's what sovereignty is. He knows all things beginning from the end, he knows.

But you read through the scriptures and what you find is the foreknowledge actually expands beyond that. And what foreknowledge actually does is it's also, it's not not that it in addition to his knowledge of what we're going to do beforehand, it is the evidence of what God must do in our life and does do in our life before anyone can believe in him. One of the things that we're told in the book of Revelation chapter 13 and 17, the first thing he has to do in order for us to be saved, it says this, I know this is going to boggle your mind.

It says, but he literally writes the names down. He's not created anybody. He says before he created anyone he actually wrote people's names down in the book of life of everyone who would eventually be in heaven. You say, "Well, I don't like that." Well, you may not like the fact that the sun is hot, but it's true and it's just hot.



And God actually did write down people's names before we were here. He said he did so.

It's not conditioned on whether we approve of it, whether it passes our self-pleasure meter, it makes me feel good. He just says, "I'm God and this is how it went down." And then after that, he had to create us, he actually had to weave us and knit us together in our mothers' womb. We weren't there yet, we weren't here yet and so he was able to create us. And then at a moment in time, he sent Jesus Christ to this earth to die on a cross and be buried in a grave. He died for our sin to pay the penalty of our sin. And he rose from the dead.

And then the Bible says that he has to draw... the father draws us to Jesus. He welcomed us, he brings us to the place to where we are inclined to want to believe in Jesus. This is why Jesus himself when he was on the earth in John 6, he says, "No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him." It's why first Peter chapter 1 verse 3 says that according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again. We're going to be here next week.

Verse three, he's caused us, there is an ultimate cause of salvation, and it's not you. He's caused us to be born again. You say, "Well, how does he do all this?" Well, that's the next one, reelect exiles in the sanctification of the spirit. One of the scary things about being an unbeliever, you open up the Bible and you see things that are true about yourself. And when we now trust Christ and we look back and we see just how perilous our condition was, well, the Bible says that not only are we blind, it says that the God of this age, Satan has blinded the eyes of unbelievers to keep them from seeing how relevant and consequential and amazing Jesus is, blinded.

And there's no human being that can remove those hands. But it says that the Holy Spirit in his lobby comes and he opens our eyes, he removes the veil, he awakens our hearts, he quickens our conscience to repent to believing we can save ourselves and he leads us to trust in Jesus. The Holy Spirit does this in our life. Now, why does he do this? He says for obedience to Jesus. Now, isn't this the point?

Jesus is the king. He has a constitution or a word that we need to obey, but we can't obey because we don't even see him as relevant until this happens. This is why it happens. God's caused us to be born again on to a living hope for obedience so we can obey Jesus Christ. And then what he does is he adds something that frankly is a little confusing to me. I get it, I think I understand because I've studied a lot this week about what does this phrase mean?

But it says, and for sprinkling with his blood. It's actually a really good translation, we just don't talk like that. And we think, "Okay, what does that mean?" Well, sprinkling with blood was a metaphor within the Bible that actually was done in such a way so that people that would observe it would be reminded of the huge cost that had to be paid in order for them to be redeemed.

Peter is going to say in chapter 1 verse 18 and 19, he's going to say, "Look, you as Christians, you were ransomed. And you weren't ransomed with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ." This is what he's saying. He's saying that God almighty moves in such a way, not only so that you will obey Jesus, but that you will be overwhelmed with gratitude and awareness of the cost that Jesus paid in order that you would be saved. This is what Jesus did.

He died on a cross and he rose from the dead. And so the invitation that he gives to us is to believe in him. And let me just encourage those of you who are considering Christ, let's trust Jesus and become an exile. You say, "Well, why would I want to become an exile?" Because being an exile with Jesus is better than being anywhere without him. He is the king. He's the Lord. He's the protector and defender. He's the sovereign one. He's the careful one. He's the shepherd of our souls. He's the rock and he's the refuge.

He's the one who cares for you more than anyone else. He's the pearl of great price. He's the treasure in the field. And when you see him, you say, "You know what? Even if I lose my standing on this earth, even if I lose my comfort level on this earth, to be with Jesus is better still." You could trust him right now. You do so simply by looking to him in faith and saying, "Jesus, I know I need a savior." You talk to him, not to me or anyone else. You talk to him. Jesus, I know you can hear me. I believe you came. I need a savior, I cannot save myself. I know I'm a sinner.

I believe you came and you died on the cross for my sin and you rose from the dead and I confess you as Lord. That's what you are, that's what you are. And not only does he make you an exile of earth, the primary thing he makes you is a citizen of heaven. You get to be a part of his family. He adopts you into his family, his kingdom. And the second application for the second point I think is so important for us as a church family is let's take comfort in a doctrine that often divides.

Some of you I know, I just went through that second point you've had... Man, I knew it. I knew he was Calvinist. I knew this was a Calvinist church. I said I was never going to come to another one of those Calvinist churches again and now I landed on. Let me tell you something. We are a Christian Church period. That's it. We don't teach systems of doctrines that were made by men trying to explain things that are bigger than our brain.

What that means is that when we come to scriptures like this one that teach God's sovereign work, his kind work, his loving work, we simply trust and believe, we say thank you. And then when we come to passages of the Bible, which we will over and over and over again, that teach personal responsibility such as everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, what do we do then? Well, we trust and believe. We look and we say, "God, I needed you to call me because that gave me an opportunity to call upon you." They work together.

You look around the world today, you look around America today and even our city and I can show you churches that are divided over this doctrine. This wasn't supposed to divide us, it was supposed to comfort us. You see, oftentimes what we think of this doctrine is it's like a rope, it's like two ropes, right? It's like they hang down and just kind of hanging from the ceiling like two ropes. And one of them is God's sovereignty, the other is personal responsibility.

And we look at it and we think, "Oh, which one am I going to choose? Okay. Man, this verse kind of makes me think about this. No, no. This one is more to my liking or this is the one I believe that the Bible really teaches." And so we hold onto one and unbeknownst to us, what we find is that these are not two ropes, they're one. And there's one road that goes up and hangs over a beam and it comes down the other side. What I'm trying to say is this, as you hold on to either one of them and let go of the other, you fall to the ground.

It is God almighty who loves us and it is God almighty who gives us an opportunity to respond in love for him. We believe both here and we tamper with neither. And this same pattern continues throughout the entire Christian life. I want you to think about this, right? Who wrote first Peter? Who? Really? You sure about that? Who wrote first Peter? I just heard a God and I heard Peter. Well, which one's, its got to be one, right? Peter. Yeah, Peter wrote, right?

Here's the reality. What we find is that Peter himself was going to say it was God almighty that inspired me to write and yet he used my own word bank where I grew up in the schools that I grew up, my language, my vocabulary in order to accomplish it. And that word bank is different than Paul's and John's and everybody else who wrote. How does a believer grow? How do we bear fruit?

Well, Peter is going to say make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and he's going to remember and remind us that Jesus is the vine and we're the branches and apart from him, we can do nothing. How do we sustain ourselves? Who sustains us to the end? Well, the Bible says, Peter's going to say, "Listen, we persevere to the end, but holding fast to the things that God has given us to push to persevere to the end."

And then he's going to remind us of Jude who says, "You know what I just want you to know is that God almighty is going to keep you to the end." He's going to keep you to the end. This is the point. God does not tell us that he is sovereign to cause us to lean on a shovel and pray for a hole. He tells us that he's sovereign to give us hope when all hell breaks loose because of our faith in Jesus Christ. And so we're not going to relinquish one of God's kind anchors over our soul even if we don't understand every part of it, and we don't.

The third thing I want you to see, we'll close here, is that we are sustained as exiles by Christ. It should absolutely comfort each one of us to study anything that was written by Peter because anything written by Peter is basically preceded with this idea, sinner's welcome. If you've failed, he's not done on you. That's what Peter, his example is to all of us. That's why he made such a great shepherd for people, a great strengthener of the brothers and sisters.

You see, if God had not worked in his life and sustained him to the end. Instead of this letter beginning Peter, an apostle of Jesus, it would have begun Simon, a fisherman of Galilee. He was proudly Jewish, blue collar, calloused hands. He was impulsive. He had a big heart and a huge mouth. One day Jesus comes up to him, first interaction with Jesus, he comes up and he goes, "Hey, your mom when she held you and you're a little baby. Oh, what should name him? Now this looks like a Simon. But let me tell you something, I'm not going to call you Simon, I'm going to call you Peter."

What a thing to do. What if I did that to you? What if we met today and said, "Hey, my name is Mike." And I said, "Well, I'm going to call you Bruce." You'd be like, "Well, who gives you the authority to do that?" Well, I don't have it, but the son of God does. And this is why he did so. You think, "Why would he do this?" This is why. He says, "You know what? I want you to know something, Peter, I love you and I'm going to take you to places and I'm going to help you grow in such a way that one day you're going to be a rock of a man." And Peter means rock.

He goes, "So this is what we're going to do. I'm just going to call you what I'm going to make you, that's what I'm going to do." And so he named him Peter. Well, some time passes not long and Peter's been fishing all night and he's caught nothing. He's back on the shore and he's washing out his nets and he's like, "Man, what a terrible night of fishing." Jesus is teaching, he's walking along a great big crowd and he goes, "Hey, is it okay if I get in your boat, we pull back a little bit so that everyone can hear?" Whatever.

He's tired, he backs up and you can see Peter's like, "When's this sermon about to be over? I got things to do. I'm exhausted. I've worked all night long, no sleep." And suddenly, do you know what happens? Jesus finishes his sermon and he goes, "Hey, Peter, toss that net that you just cleaned, put it back in the water." He's like, "You got to be kidding me." And he throws it in there and there's so many fish that he's so ecstatic that he's trying to pull it in.

He forgets who's in the boat until he remembers who's in the boat and he stops and he goes... he looks right up and he goes, "I need you to get out of the boat because I am not a good man. It's clear that you have authority and you're someone that I'm not and so we should separate." Jesus says, "Oh, I'm not going anywhere. But this is true from now on you're not going to be catching fish anymore, you're going to be catching men." And it says in that moment, Peter left everything and followed him.

Well, years later, just two years later Jesus wants to do a heat check and he said, "Where are these guys?" And so he goes, "All right disciples, listen, let me ask you something." And he goes, "A lot of people say all kinds of things about me, but let me ask you, who do you think that I am?" And Peter's the one in Matthew chapter 16, who says, "Well, you are the Christ. You are the son of the living God." And then all of a sudden, it comes to that tragic night where Peter in a breach of allegiance denies his king. He says, "I don't know him," the first time, "I don't know him," the second time.

The third time it says that he denied him with curses and oaths. That means he said, “May God strike me dead if I knew that man.” Jesus saw it and then Jesus went and died for it. He rose from the dead. Last week, we looked at the Easter passage from Matthew when Jesus rose from the dead and two women were at the tomb and the angel said, “Go tell his disciples.” Well, Mark’s gospel adds two extra words to that sentence, they didn’t have to. Peter was one of the disciples. No, but God wanted to make it clear, “I’m not done with Peter so make sure he gets to Galilee.”

50 days later, Peter full of the Holy Spirit preaches without fear, 3000 people come to trust Christ. And now Peter, 30 years later is still strengthening others before he is martyred by reminding them of the truth in an entire letter and then a second letter to come and by praying for them. You say, “What did he pray for them?” May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Grace because we all stumble and peace because when we stumble, it breaks fellowship with God and each other.

But we need both and Jesus came to give both. It is Jesus who forgives us to the end and heals us to the end, keeps us to the end, sustains us to the end, that connects us to others, other believers just like Peter who will support us to the end. So let me encourage you to strengthen the hearts of fellow believers. We all have a calling, we all have a need and the people who are around you right now, they need a Peter in their life, and it can be you.

You don’t just put it off on somebody else because you have a calling just like Peter had a calling. Hebrews 10 says let us consider how to stir up one another to love in good works, not neglecting meeting together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Here at Providence we have these things called life groups that are designed to do just what Peter was doing, supporting and praying, teaching and giving hope and reminding of the mission.

And for our last year, we all know that our life groups and they’ve been interrupted in a number of ways. Some have been engaged and some have not. I want to just say it’s time to reengage. Whether it’s here in person or whether it’s online, you need people and people need you. And so let’s be faithful to do just what Peter’s doing to us and let’s strengthen one another for the glory of our king. Let me pray.

Father, we love you. We thank you that you love us. We thank you that you have kept us, you sustain us, you call us, you give us the ability to be able to call upon you. And there’s a lot that we don’t understand but what we do understand is that Jesus loves us and we’re thankful. And so I pray God, now that as we sing to you, that you would receive it just as it is. It’s an offering, an offering that’s intended to tell you God, we love you and we’re so thankful. We’re so thankful for what you’ve done in our lives. I pray father over the next several months that you would inspire us with wisdom and clarity on how to live in this world even as we’re citizens of another. Help us to be faithful and loyal to you, we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.



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