

## WELCOME 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 – 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY IN EASTER '23 A

1 Peter 1:13-25

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

**As we move into this week** Dr Albert Einstein noted: "In theory, theory & practice should be the same. In practice, they are not." We get that...& we don't like it. We want words & deeds to match. "If you're gonna talk the talk, walk the walk." Don't say it if you don't mean it or if you're not going to do it. What'd your mum say? "Actions speak louder than **words**." Yeah "words."

**So** prepare your minds for **action & exercise** self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must **live** as God's **obedient** children...

It's one thing to know that Jesus has died/risen/lives for you...that he calls the shots for the whole creation both now & eternally **AND** that you're part of his eternal love & purposes. But if the people around you can't see that in your life...if all anyone ever knows is that now/again we create happy little religious huddles...if we know the theory but don't practice...talk but don't walk...something's wrong. So Peter continues...

**Don't** slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. **Holy**...for us = not perfection, but focus...not morality, but character...it's diligence & discipline, built around the assurance: **For** you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.

Every word Peter writes is grounded in the certainty of the risen Jesus...our "new normal" that began the day Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus promises to fill us with his presence so that all we are & all we do is shaped & guided to living **AS** him here & **WITH** him forever. Holiness is living intentionally to demonstrate & declare our living hope in Christ.

We'll experience & share that today...Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Lord God, heavenly Father, in raising your Son Jesus from the grave and in sending your Spirit to live in us, you open the way to eternal life & bring your new creation to life through our lives. As we grow in relationship with & resemblance to Jesus, let your life burst forth so that each step we take & each word we speak reflects the certainty we have in you. We ask this in Jesus' mighty Name. Amen.*

*Let's sing Only A Holy God...*

## **FAITH CHAT:**

1. When you hear the word "holy," what comes to mind? Why do you think that is?  
Now let's have some fun...
2. If 21st century Australia wrote a new 10 Commandments, what would the 1st Commandment be?

### 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN EASTER '23 A – THE NEW NORMAL: LIVING IN HOLINESS

About 20 or so years ago one of the largest churches in the US made a startling admission...they came right out & said it: "We made a mistake." They'd spent @ year interviewing & studying their enormous expanding membership & then took their research to a wide sweep of churches w/ whom they interacted...& then hat in hand admitted they'd messed up. They'd created a ministry that was "mile wide/inch deep." To their dismay & sadness, their avg worshiper didn't look, act, think, value, live, all that differently from the avg US non-Xn. They'd fallen prey to the shift in Western culture toward materialism, consumerism, & individualism. The big takeaway for them was a stunner that seems obvious: "People **are** not consumers who need to be satisfied. We're sinners who need to be justified & disciples who need to be sanctified." They'd invested 35 years in "bigger better more awesome" & very little in **So prepare your minds for action & exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must live as God's obedient children...** They were the first of many "wake up calls" to the church at large.

Remember...Peter writes to followers of Jesus...who live in a world that doesn't. Not only that...the world that doesn't acknowledge Jesus is increasingly hostile to Christ's church. 1<sup>st</sup> cent/21<sup>st</sup> cent are not that different...**we** need to hear this. I know *some* of you (like me) have folks you love dearly who simply don't want to hear the name of Jesus...they just shut it out or shout you out. *Most* of us have people we love dearly who have consciously chosen a way of life that bears no resemblance to the path laid out in Scriptures. *All* of us live immersed in a culture that views Xn faith as some form of character flaw...weakness...threat to be suppressed.

Peter's readers/hearers are being crushed under that sort of social/physical pressure (some are being killed for their faith) & his letters of encouragement are to let them know they're not alone, God hasn't forgotten or abandoned them, God isn't angry w/ 'em. He's as close to them in their suffering as he's ever been. So don't give up, quit or simply go along to get along...

Peter began by reminding them they were loved/chosen by God & set apart for him through Jesus Christ crucified/risen & their identity is found in the living hope of sharing life in & w/ Christ now/forever, even though right now it means they live as strangers, aliens, weirdos in the world. Peter writes w/ great urgency & intensity because the stakes are huge. **If** the church is no different...if **WE** are not bearers of hope in Christ in an increasingly dark/distressed world driven by distrust/fear – if **WE** don't make the gospel real in our lives in this world every day...if **WE** don't live love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, restoration, & reconciliation among folks who don't believe those things have

meaning – are possible - **who** will? **If** we're a mile wide & an inch deep...how is the world any the better? So...what do we do as strangers, aliens & weirdos...so the world might see & be drawn to trust...?

**So prepare your minds for action & exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must live as God's obedient children.** Start every day prepared, ready, engaged not just surviving but living as obedient children of God responsive to his word for his world. "I am baptized" Father, I am yours...what's your agenda for me **today**? Is that how you get out of bed in the morning? Hey God...what's your plan for me today? Who do you want me to talk to? Who needs encouragement – challenged? The older I get the more I am convinced being a disciple of Jesus is less complicated than we think. It's not easy, it's a daily death to my wants/desires/self-investment & a daily pursuit of God's agenda schedule & values but it's not rocket surgery/brain science

I shared on our website the other day...I just re-read Jn 21...Jn 21:15-25 is Jesus' final conversation w/ Peter...final encounter b/t the risen Jesus & the disciples before Jesus returns to the Father at his Ascension. It's a crucial part of the narrative; Jesus reclaims Peter from his denials & restores him to a lead role among the early followers. It's compelling...Jesus' final commands to Peter **are** "feed" & "follow"... 3x Jesus tells Peter to "feed" his sheep. The last command is "Follow me." Jesus isn't just speaking to Peter...He's talking to us. Being a disciple, follower of Jesus, a Christian isn't all that complicated. It involves sharing what you receive from Jesus (that's the "feed") & staying close to Jesus so you are always able to do what he directs & go where he guides. (that's the "follow") Father, I am yours ... what's your agenda for me today? Hey God...what's your plan for me today?

Your \$\$\$ adviser will tell you to **NOT** put all your eggs in one basket - diversify your portfolio - spread your risk - hedge your bets...Peter says go all in on Jesus...you know the grave can't hold you, sin can't bind you, evil can't control you...live like there is **NO RISK** because any risk for the sake of Jesus carries the power of his abundant life & love. **Ps 55:22** - *Cast your burden on the LORD, & He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.* Simply allow your living hope your certainty in the resurrected Jesus alive & living working in you to equip you to live through difficulty, thrive through suffering, & endure hardship w/ conviction because the good news of the resurrection strengthens & transforms everything about you. You know what lies ahead so now...Father, I am yours ... what's your agenda for me today? Hey God...what's your plan for me today? Who do you want me to feed? Where do you want me to follow?

**Don't** slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be **holy** in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." Most of us spoke about the word, "holy," in terms of behaviour/morality...Acc to Bible 'holy' implies **set** apart for God's purpose. The language there in the Gk is less command & more stmt of fact. You **are** holy because you are chosen by God for his purposes & love. You are **becoming** holy because the Spirit is at work in you. You **will be** holy because that's what the Father intends for all who trust in the work of His Son.

The One who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day Christ returns – Php 1:6

Holy...not perfection, but focus...not morality, but character that mirrors the character of the Father...it's diligence & discipline...devotion & responsiveness to God's word...It's remembering that for many people you are the only Bible they see ...the only sermon they hear...the only Jesus they know. To be too closely in sync w/ the world is the opposite of holy. Jesus ate w/ sinners. Jesus did not sin w/ sinners. He cared compassionately & forgave abundantly but he did not bless tolerantly or look on passively. Hearts that were mis-aligned he drew toward the Father. Lives that were rebellious he retrieved. Sick met the physician. **God** who made you for himself & his purposes wants nothing less than you for **him**. – Php 1:6

**For** you know that **God paid a ransom** to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. It was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the **precious blood of Christ**, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. Through Christ you have come to trust in God. You have placed your faith & hope in God because **he raised Christ from the dead & gave him great glory**. You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers & sisters. **Love** each other deeply with all your heart. For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. How did we learn to say it? 'Jesus rescued me when I was lost & sentenced to death. He set me free from sin & death & the power of the devil. It cost him more than silver or gold; it cost him his holy, precious blood & his innocent suffering & death...so I can be his & he can be my king & I can live under him in his kingdom...' *Luther's Small Cat*...But more than a simple doctrinal memory...Peter says...

You were redeemed **BY** love for the purpose **OF** love. God paid the life of his Son to drag you out of empty self-satisfaction which never satisfies & frees you into the lives of those around you so that your heart can express the depth of the love you have received. Feed & follow.

Every word Peter writes is grounded in the certainty of the risen Jesus...our "new normal" that began the day Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus promises to fill us with his presence so that all we are & all we do is shaped & guided to living **AS** him here & **WITH** him forever. Holiness is living intentionally to demonstrate & declare our living hope in Christ.

**TAKE IT HOME** – Where will you ask God to reveal his holiness in you this week?

Will you commit to start each day asking,  
"Father, I am yours ... what's your agenda for me today?"

Let's pray with that in mind...

*Lord Jesus let our hope in you grow in all that we are & in all that we do. Make every word & deed an expression of your life & love given to us. Draw us closer to you & then nearer to those around us so your presence may be shared & your joy multiplied so that your power makes all things new. In your name we pray... Amen*