

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

September 27, 2020

Grace and Peace

*I Peter 1:1-2*

Pastor Nathan Nymeyer

[music: "How Deep the Father's Love for Us"]

*Erik Buchterkirchen:*

Let's give them a round of applause; that was good.

Well, good morning everyone. It is great to see all of you here today. Hello, everyone joining us online. My name is Erik, and I'm the director of young adult ministries here at Glenwood. We're so excited and glad that you have joined us here today as we continue in the mission of challenging, encouraging, and equipping one another to become more like Jesus.

The only announcement I have today is a really happy and exciting announcement. But our very own Christa Abraham, now Christa Davis, got married on August 23rd. So round of applause for Christa and Nick. We are so excited for them and the journey that God is going to bring them on.

And now without further ado, we're going to go ahead and pray, just for our service and for our time together, so if you would bow with me.

Heavenly Father, we're thankful that You've brought us here today. We're thankful for the great love that You have for us. May this service be an act of response and of joy expressed to You. Jesus, as we walk into service today and we sit down in our chairs, we're reminded of not just this weekly ritual that we do, but of the grace

and the mercy that You freely give us. We're reminded that we are sprinkled with Your blood and cleansed from all of our sin and unrighteousness. And Father, as Nathan comes up here to preach today from I Peter, we ask that You give him the words to speak to us and that we may benefit from that. We ask that You teach us what it looks like to be a people who work together and who strives towards holiness and righteousness as we learn what it means to become more like You. Bless our time here today, Father. In Your name I pray. Amen.

*Ben Rico:*

Amen. Would you stand this morning as we sing the highest praise of our God who has extended His hand of mercy and grace to us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[music: "Immortal, Invisible"]

[music: "In Christ Alone"]

Amen. Praise the Lord. Please be seated.

*Pastor Nathan:*

Good morning. I want to begin this morning with a word of thanks on behalf of our leadership team at Glenwood. Thank you for your support and your willingness to make adjustments during this Covid season. There's a lot that our Sunday morning volunteers and leaders do to keep this place safe and to keep it clean, but this really is a team effort. Everybody has a part to play. Right? Keeping a mask on, even when it feels confining. Giving others space, even though it feels awkward and you have a hard time hearing; hopefully you can hear me right now. Staying home when you're feeling sick, even if you're sure you don't have Covid. These are all things that we can do, each one, to help. In the changes that our leadership team

has made, our heart has been to honor the Lord by practicing love and sacrifice for others, and by submitting to the authority that God has placed in our lives. I Peter 2:13 says, "*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution,*" or every human authority. And hand-in-hand with the idea of submitting for the sake of the Lord, for the sake of His reputation, His Gospel, is putting the needs and interests of others ahead of our own. Right? In that moment when I feel disappointment because I can't come to church, in that moment when I feel sick and tired of tasting my breath in my mask all morning, in that moment when I deny my God-given desire to be close to others, that's putting the interests of others ahead of our own, as Paul says in Phillipians 2:3.

The pandemic has really forced us to do things differently over the past months. The ways that we gather have changed, and they continue to change as we evaluate and make adjustments to be more effective and provide a safe place to worship together. There have also been changes in our gatherings that we've made based on updated guidance from the state. One thing that many of you noticed was, back in August, poor Ben Rico huffing and puffing through a mask. When people have shared that with me--I mean, I think generally we feel very sorry for him and other singers on stage--and I think, aren't you huffing and puffing out there? We should feel sorry for all of ourselves! Well, what happened was, when we first received the guidance from the state back in June, the rule was that everyone would wear a mask for the whole gathering. We reached out for clarification from the state on a number of things, and the person that we talked with gave us an exception for people who were speaking into a microphone or singing into a microphone. Well, on August 10th, the state changed course, and so that's when we began masking on stage. For those who had a medical exemption from wearing a mask, there was an accommodation that was provided, and that's a three-sided plexiglass shield. You probably have assumed now, or some of you know, that Pastor Paul has a medical exemption from wearing a mask, an exemption that he has chosen not to exercise except on Sunday mornings when he preaches.

As you can probably imagine, I enjoy wearing a mask as much as anyone. And if you were here before the pandemic, you know that Pastor Paul preaches over here, he preaches over here and-- But if that's what it takes to be here together on Sunday mornings, we're in. And we know that we're not the only ones making sacrifices to be here. No one is here today because you love distance or masks or hand sanitizer. Folks that are staying home are not staying home because online worship is amazing. Some are staying home because of conscience, and some are staying home to protect themselves or protect others who are vulnerable to Covid-19. To all, those of us gathered here in the room, those who are at home this morning, thank you for taking on these difficulties and inconveniences out of love for others and out of love and reverence for the Lord.

Now, this morning, we are starting a new series in the book of I Peter. I Peter is really an amazing book in the New Testament. It's packed full of rich theology. And it doesn't just stick with theology; it goes to practical instruction for what it looks like to live the Christian life in a world that does not feel like home. That's something I think we can all relate to right now. It's likely that Peter wrote this letter from Rome, but we're not sure when he wrote. It's possible it was as early as the 40's or the 50's, but it would be no later than AD 64-68 when Emperor Nero began persecuting Christians and ultimately ended Peter's life. Peter was one of the twelve disciples. He was an apostle who knew Jesus; he knew the truth about why Jesus came, though it did take some work for him to figure that out. He was a strong leader in the early church, and God used him to bring many people to faith, including non-Jews.

In I Peter 1:1, Peter introduces himself - if you haven't turned there yet, turn with me to I Peter 1:1 - "*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen.*" We see here that Peter writes this letter to Christians who are scattered all over. The regions of Asia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Galatia, and Pontus, cover a large area of Asia Minor, or what we know as modern-day Turkey. They covered over 130,000 square miles - I take it the map's up there. Good, I can see you all

looking. This is a big space. In the western region of Asia, this is where Ephesus is. This was more heavily Roman-ized. There was trade; there was travel. But the farther you went east, the fewer and smaller the cities became. There were lots of different people living there: indigenous peoples, Greek settlers, and Roman colonists. Many different religions were practiced, and languages were spoken.

A question that many have tried to figure out is how Peter came to be writing this letter to these Christians who were so spread out. This is a huge space; this is over almost more than twice the size of Washington state. 130,000 square miles, a little bit less than twice the size of Washington state. How did Peter come to know all these believers? How did they become followers of Jesus? It's possible that they came to follow Jesus because of Peter's preaching at Pentecost in Acts 2. There were Jews from some of these regions who were living in Jerusalem at the time. It's possible that eventually they returned to these regions and shared the Gospel. Another possibility is that the recipients had lived at one time in Rome, and knew Peter there, but then eventually were kicked out and sent away by Emperor Claudius to these regions in Asia Minor. Claudius was Emperor before Nero, in AD 41-54, and he had a special interest in Roman expansion and colonization. In fact, Claudius established Roman colonies in all five of the regions Peter references in verse 1. And in classic Roman Emperor style, he gave the colonies names like *Claudiopolis* and--yes, well, it gets better--*Neoclaudiopolis* in another area, and *Claudiconium*, and *Claudileodicea*. Apparently he liked the sound of the word *Claudius*.

Peter calls these Christians who are scattered throughout this region "aliens." That could be because they are Jews away from Jerusalem. It could be because they were people who were living in Rome who had been scattered throughout Asia Minor in these Roman colonies. But at the end of verse 1, we see that their status as aliens does not merely relate to their geographic location. We see that it has to do with something about them and their identity as followers of Jesus. Look at verse 1 with me again. *"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who*

*are chosen.*" Peter begins this letter by pointing out who these believers are. In relationship to the world around them, they're aliens; they're scattered. But in relationship to God, he says, you are chosen.

In verse 2, Peter begins to share more about the plan and purpose behind being chosen and how it happens. Look with me at verse 2. "*Chosen according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: may grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*" The first clause, "*according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father,*" speaks of God's initiative towards His people. The Father's fore-knowledge points us to a time long before the present moment. In I Peter 1:20, look there with me, Peter writes, "*For He,*" speaking of Christ Jesus, "*was fore-known before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.*" Even before the foundation of the world, God knew the people that He would set His love on, and He knew how He would do it, through Jesus Christ. Now, who is Peter writing to? He's writing to people who are chosen by the Father long before they ever heard the name Jesus. They're a part of something much bigger than themselves. This truth is foundational, and it's an incredible comfort in the face of disappointment. And we're going to see that in I Peter.

One theme that makes its way through I Peter is suffering for the Gospel. Peter shows us that God's fore-knowledge, and His sovereignty help us make sense of and respond well to suffering. You remember back in Acts 4 when Peter and John were hauled before the Sanhedrin. They were arrested for preaching Christ. This religious council commands them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. Stakes were high, and they had a choice to make. Were they willing to suffer for Jesus? I imagine something that brought them great comfort in that moment was remembering that Jesus told them it would come. Just before His own suffering, He told His disciples that they would experience the same thing, and that they would stand before rulers because of Him. In a similar way, the suffering that Peter's audience face, in I Peter, and the suffering that we may face for the Gospel--that suffering is fore-known by God, long before the world was made. He knew all that

would come to pass. God is not surprised; He is sovereign over it; and it is a part of His good plan.

We'll see this theme of suffering work its way throughout the book as we look at it in the coming weeks. But in chapter 4:12, Peter very clearly makes this connection between suffering and God's plan. Look there with me for just a moment. I Peter 4:12 says, "*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you were reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*" Then jump down to verse 19. "*Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*" The world that we live in can be hostile to the Gospel of God. The message of the Gospel is looked down on. It's considered arrogant; it's considered exclusive, and we shouldn't be surprised when that translates to aggression, when it translates to lies and slander.

How do we live the Christian life well in this world? In a world that is not our home? Well here Peter reminds us that we can trust our all-knowing and sovereign Lord, the One who knew us and chose us long before the foundation of the world. Throughout our study of I Peter, we're going to find needed wisdom for how to respond well in the face of suffering. Peter helps us get the right perspective, that suffering for the Gospel should be expected, that God uses it for our good, that He is in control. As he says in chapter 1:2, first clause. "*We are chosen according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father.*"

The next clause in verse 2 gives us some definition for what it means to be chosen by the Father and how that status comes about. Back to chapter 1, he says, "*who are chosen by the sanctifying work of the Spirit.*" The word "sanctifying" here is the idea that God is setting believers apart. Being chosen by God means that we are set apart by the Spirit. The Spirit of God works in us in conversion, He opens our eyes

to the truth of the Gospel. We are changed; we are consecrated; the Spirit sets us apart as God's own people. This is really about the Spirit, the Spirit's work in giving us a new identity. Identity is a huge part of I Peter. Peter talks about it in a variety of ways.

Check out verse 3--not going to get into this and steal someone else's text--but we're going to look at I Peter. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of the dead."* Peter says that we have been born again to a living hope, the resurrection of the dead, or *"through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* We have a new identity. He says we've been born again; we have a new family; and we have a new Father.

Look at verse 14 in chapter 1. He writes, *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance."* This new identity as obedient children of the Father means that we bear His resemblance. And so Peter continues in verse 15, *"But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"* Just as he is holy, so Peter says, we are to be holy as His set-apart, His sanctified people.

In chapter 2 verse 5, Peter goes on to describe our new identity. He writes, *"You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* By the Spirit's sanctifying work, Peter says that God is making us into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood. What's that sound like? It sounds like a temple. We are the place where God's presence dwells. We are the place where God's goodness can be made known to the world.

And then in verse 9, Peter continues. *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous*



*light; for you were once not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*" There are so many good texts in I Peter. Just working through this, I think, this is going to be so fun to dive in together in the coming months.

Consider how these words would have felt to Peter's original audience, spread out across Asia Minor, perhaps away from their homeland, perhaps separated from family, as people feeling alienated and alone in their culture because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Peter tells them, "This is who you really are. It doesn't matter who your biological family is. You have a new family, a spiritual family; you've been born again. It doesn't matter where you're from; it doesn't matter your nationality or country, because you are God's people now. You are a part of His holy nation. You're a part of what God has been doing for thousands of years through His people Israel, that ultimately found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ." This is a timely message for us. The world we live in is deeply divided, and that shouldn't surprise us because of what the Bible teaches about sin and the human heart. If you know the Bible, you know that pride and self-interest, arrogance and selfishness--these things pervade the human heart, and they pervade our own hearts. Daily we are faced with decisions about how to navigate division throughout our world.

How do we live the Christian life well in this world? Well here Peter calls us to remember that the Lord has set us apart as His own people. In our study of I Peter, we're going to experience these timely reminders of who we truly are, which is what binds us together as one people. We are family; we are God's children; we are His holy people. We're chosen as Peter says by the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

The third clause in chapter 1 verse 2, goes on to give the purpose of why we are chosen. Look there with me. Peter writes, "*who are chosen...to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.*" What does that mean? I think obedience is pretty straight forward, but what does it mean to be sprinkled with His blood? Obedience and sprinkling are about the New Covenant that Jesus established through His death and resurrection. This phrase actually points us back to when God established

a prior Covenant with the nation of Israel in Exodus 24. Turn with me to Exodus 24, I think you'll find it helpful.

The story of Exodus is a story of salvation, like the story that Peter is sharing in I Peter. It is a story of God establishing a people for Himself, and making Covenant with them. He saved them from the bondage of Egyptian slavery. He gave them His laws and His requirements. And then in Exodus 24 the nation gathered before Mount Sinai and the people of Israel entered into a Covenant with God. Look with me at Exodus 24, we'll start in verse 3. *"Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!' Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. Then he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in the basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!' So Moses took the blood and he sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.'"*

When Peter says that Christians are chosen to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood, he's talking about a covenant. But it isn't the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai in Exodus 24, where Israel would go on to fail in their obedience, where Israel would go on to be unfaithful to the Covenant God made with them. Jesus proved to be faithful and true, and He has brought about the promised New Covenant, not through the blood of animals, but through His own blood shed on the cross. He has provided true freedom to obey God. Freedom from the bondage of sin through the power of the Spirit. By using this language in I Peter 1:2, Peter is saying that believers have been chosen to be a part of God's covenant people.

Now, as we work our way through I Peter, we're going to see this theme of New Covenant obedience come up over and over again. We already saw it in chapter 1:14, when Peter says, "*As obedience children, do not be conformed to your former lusts.*" Obedience is a hallmark of this New Covenant community. Look in chapter 1:22. Peter writes, "*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for sincere love for the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.*" Do you see how the Gospel not only changes and transforms our identity, but it affects our attitudes and our actions? Obedience isn't a bad word. Peter devotes ample space to this change in believers in this letter. Beginning in chapter 2:11, Peter calls believers to have excellent behavior before a watching world in order to bring glory to God. Following in the example of Jesus, he calls believers to submit to governing authorities, he calls servants to submit to their masters, wives to husbands, and husbands to honor their wives.

Listen to how compelling this life of obedience sounds in chapter 3:8. Peter says, "*To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, and humble in Spirit, not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, 'The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ear attends to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'*" This is God's heart for His people. This is what excellent behavior before the Gentiles looks like. It pleases the Lord, and it points those around us to the power of the Gospel and the goodness of our God.

Something that's amazing to me about this is that Peter is telling his readers to have this good behavior before the Gentiles, to return good for evil, and these Gentiles, these people around them, are the ones causing their suffering. The world tells us that when somebody hits us, we need to hit back harder. The world's economy keeps a record of wrongs, and repays evil for evil; it repays insult for

insult. We are told that we should hate our enemies. But this isn't us. This isn't the way of Jesus. This isn't the identity that God has secured for us in Christ. Peter actually reminds his suffering readers who their true enemy is in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5:8 we read, "*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*" The devil is doing everything he possibly can to get us to turn away from Jesus and follow instead in his footsteps of disobedience and sin. The world that we live in thinks little of obedience. The spirit of the world says to do what you think is right for you. The devil is actively at work against God's people, seeking to draw them into the world's way of thinking.

How do we live the Christian life well in a world like that? Well, here Peter calls us to grow in our obedience to the Lord. In our study of I Peter, we will see what obedience to Jesus looks like in a world that is in rebellion against its Creator. What an opportunity we have right now, as the people of God, to keep our behavior excellent as we declare the excellencies of the one who brought us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

The final line of verse 2, back in chapter 1, is Peter's greeting. He says, "*May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*" Grace sums up well what God has done for us in the Gospel. Peter tells his readers at the end of the book that what he has written is the true grace of God. This new identity - being a part of God's family, being a part of God's people and the Spirit of God working in us, giving us freedom from sin, freedom to obey God - this is God's grace to us, His unmerited favor. The peace Peter refers to here is something that can be ours right now from knowing that God is in control, that He knows what is around the next corner, and that He's bringing about his good purposes even in the face of suffering. In chapter 5 verse 7, Peter will invite us to cast our anxiety, to cast our cares on Him, because He is trustworthy, because He cares for us. Peter's wish is that this grace and peace would be experienced by these believers, by us, in great abundance. He says, "*to the fullest measure.*"

These past six months, we have been through a lot, and with the Lord's help, we have made it this far. God has provided His grace and His peace for us in rich abundance. He is the one who knows the beginning from the end. He has set His love on us. He has called us His own people. He's given us His spirit and provided freedom to live as He intended, to obey. Together, this morning, let's give thanks to Him. Will you pray with me?

Father, thank You for working through the apostle Peter 2000 years ago to share Your truth and wisdom with believers scattered throughout Asia Minor. Father, just as You provided for them, for their encouragement, for their growth, so You are providing for us. Thank You, Father, for the opportunity we have to grow together as a community and listen to Your word. We ask that You would encourage our hearts and bring about Your transformation today and in the weeks to come. We ask in Christ's name. Amen.

*Ben Rico:*

Amen. Would you stand with me as we sing together, as we respond, as we look at Christ and see His glory as He gives us the mercy and grace we need to live as He lives, to live in obedience, to live in joy that the Father Himself gives us life.

[music: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"]

Grace and peace has been given for you to live in the name of Jesus. Go in peace.