

SERMON TEXT: I Peter 3:15-22

Vs. 15 - But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Vs. 16 - keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Vs. 17 - It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

Vs. 18 – For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous, for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

Vs. 19 – through Whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison

Vs. 20 – who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

Vs. 21 – and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. **It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,**

Vs. 22 – Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.

GREETING: Jesus says: heaven & Earth will pass away, but My Words will never pass away. . (Matt. 24:35)

My wife Vivien and I had completed the year when I served as Vicar (Student Preacher) at St. John's in Pardeeville, Wisconsin. After completing that year in Pardeeville, Wisconsin I had the opportunity to serve a second year as a Vicar at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Horsham, Australia.

After flying into Sydney, Australia, we had the blessing of being able to spend a few days in Sydney before continuing on to our post in Horsham, Australia.

It was during that time, that as Vivien and I sat on the pier in Sydney, Australia, by the Sydney Opera house enjoying the view, that a lady with a microphone in her hand followed by a man carrying a TV Camera on his shoulder approached us and the lady then put the microphone up to me and asked, "*What is it that gives you purpose and meaning in life?*"

Without hesitation I said, "To serve my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Immediately the lady said to the camera man, "Cut, Cut, Cut".

I had given the wrong answer. The reporter thought that Vivien and I had come into Sydney from the Outback for a holiday, and she wanted hear how someone from the Outback would respond to that question.

And so that conversation quickly ended.

In this text today, the Apostle Peter is writing to "God's Elect," Those believers who are scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." (I Peter 1:1)

These believers are scattered because of the persecution during the time of Nero.

Even though these believers in Christ Jesus are running for their lives, God through the Apostle Peter is telling them to:

Vs. 15 - Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

In other words, always be ready to tell everyone and anyone about the hope that you have and the reason for that hope.

What is the hope of a Christian? That hope is that we will live with God forever in heaven one day.

We know that we have heaven because of Jesus, The Christ.

We know how it was that Jesus won heaven for us as we are reminded of in later verses of this text where the Inspired writer Peter writes: **Vs. 18 – For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous, for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,**

Notice how the Apostle Peter points out that Jesus died only ONCE, and the death of Jesus was for ALL. Not just one, not just one million, but for ALL people.

That would be all people from the time of Adam and Eve until the end of time, when the Lord Jesus comes again with all His Holy Ones. (I Thess. 3:13)

The Lord Jesus Christ Who was put to death, also rose from the dead. He is alive.

And so God, tells us through the Apostle Peter to ALWAYS be prepared to tell everyone.

God through the Apostle Peter also tells us how we are to tell others about their salvation in Jesus Christ our Risen Lord and Savior. For it is written:

Vs. 15b - But do this with gentleness and respect,

Vs. 16 - keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

In other words, there is no need to get in someone's face or to be rude, but rather to simply lay out the facts of Scripture which the Lord has graciously revealed to us in the Holy Bible.

As we hear these words of God given in verse 16, we are given some insight that we need to be prepared for. There will be those who "**speak maliciously against your good behavior.**"

As Christians living in this world, there will be those who say and do things that hurt our, your feelings. But regardless of how others treat you or speak to you we are to: "**keep a clear conscience**"

Remember, this letter was first written to those scattered, due to persecution at the time of Nero. The believers at that time may not have always been so eager to tell other about Jesus their Savior.

It is interesting to note that in this same section of Scripture where God through the Apostle Peter tells us to always be prepared to give and answer for the hope that we have, that we are also told of Noah.

Yet the mention of Noah should not surprise us as we look at Hebrews 11:7 we see that Noah was clearly making a confession of his faith in God, by building the Ark.

"By faith, Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." (Heb. 11:7)

We do not know for certain, but we can ask, were there people making fun of Noah as he built The Ark?

We do know from II Peter 2:5 told that *Noah was a preacher of Righteousness.*

And so not only did Noah demonstrate his trust in God by his actions, but Noah also "preached" using his mouth as he proclaimed God's truth. (κηρυκα).

Noah would have needed to be courageous as he built the Ark.

There would have been a lot of work involved, as well as emotional stress knowing that God was going to destroy the entire earth by a worldwide flood, and that would include all the unbelievers.

One might wonder: How many friends did Noah have who were unbelievers? How many of those unbelieving friends did Noah speak to and try to convince them of the truth of God. Imagine the emotional stress that it could involve as Noah spoke with unbelieving friends, and regardless of how much he preached, they rejected the message???

This past week on Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at 2:30 a.m. as I woke up to work on this sermon, I saw the Last Quarter of the Moon as it was coming up in the East. It was a brilliant reddish orange as it came up and I thought to myself, "This is the same Moon that was in the sky as Noah was building the Ark." "This is the same Moon that that was in the sky during that year that Noah was in the ark."

The same God that created the heavens and the earth was watching over Noah approximately 4,478 years ago. It is the same God who is watching over us here and now in the year 2020.

The same God Who watched over Noah and is watching over us now, is the same God Who promised to send a Savior, and that Savior of Mankind is Jesus Christ.

It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Mary's son Who is our Lord and Savior and Who demonstrated His victory of death by rising from the dead.

It is Jesus Christ Who made His victory walk through hell, and left again

Vs. 18 – For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous, for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

Vs. 19 – through Whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison (Descended into hell)

Vs. 20 – who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

After Jesus descended into hell and made His victory walk, he walked right out.

All the demons of hell could not hold Him there.

Jesus then: Ascended into heaven as the Lord tells us through the Apostle Peter in verse 22:

Vs. 22 – Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.

As Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, Jesus rules all things.

Jesus is in control of all things. He knows how you are feeling right now.

We also learn from this section of First Peter that baptism is not just some empty symbol or ritual that we go through, but that God has connected His promise to the simple waters of baptism as we learn:

Vs. 21 – and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

This power to save is because in the waters of baptism we become connected to Christ Jesus Who has risen from the dead!

It is because of Christ's successful and victorious battle over sin – death and the devil that you can live your life here and now in the peace of the forgiveness of sins and the guarantee of heaven where there is no more sin, or death or sorrow or pain or sickness (Rev. 21:1-7) and you can look forward to those new glorified bodies (Philippians 3:20-21) all because of Jesus your risen Savior. Amen.