

This morning, we are in the seventh week of our sermon series through the New Testament book of 1 Peter, a letter written by the apostle Peter, one of the early church leaders, to a group of Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. I have entitled this sermon series “Stranger,” because one of the main themes throughout this letter is that those of us who believe in Jesus are citizens of heaven, living here as strangers or resident aliens. Our primary identity, values, and hope are not given to us by the culture in which we live but are found in heaven. This morning, we will be in 1 Peter 4:

*1 Peter 4:1-19 - Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do-- living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge **the living and the dead**. ⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit. ⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking **the very words of God**. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. ¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or **even as a meddler**. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" ¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*

Look again at the first 2 verses:

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

Peter encourages his listeners to adopt the same attitude that Jesus had towards suffering, to “arm themselves” or to prepare for the battle. He makes a bold claim, that the one who adopts Jesus’ attitude towards suffering is “done with sin,” because they no longer live for earthly desires but for God’s will. So what is the attitude, the mindset, that Jesus had which we are to take? I think it is best captured by Hebrews 12:1-4. Hebrews 12 follows chapter 11, which is a listing of the great people of faith in the Old Testament:

Hebrews 12:1-4 - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*

What was Jesus’ attitude towards suffering? **His primary concern was not whether or not a decision would lead to suffering.** Jesus was single-minded in focus. He trusted in God and walked in perfect faithfulness to Him, and he was sure of His purpose and motivation. It says that “for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame.” What was the joy set before him? It was you and me. The joy set before Him was to rescue us and restore us to a right relationship with the Father. This focus allowed him to endure the cross, scorn its shame, and endure fierce opposition from sinful men without growing weary and losing heart. He was willing to resist all sin, rebellion against God, self-centeredness, all the way to shedding his blood, as verse 4 says, to dying an unjust death on the cross. Again – what was Jesus’ attitude towards suffering? His primary concern was not about suffering, his own comfort or discomfort, or the approval or disapproval of others. His primary concern was glorifying God and bringing others back to the Father. And knowing His love for us transforms our attitude towards Him and towards this life we live:

*2 Corinthians 5:14-15 - For Christ's love **compels** us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

Back to 1 Peter 4. Peter tells us to have the same attitude towards suffering. He encourages us not to make the question of whether or not we will suffer our primary motivation. Instead of being primarily concerned about our own comfort or gaining the approval of others, he tells us to be primarily concerned about faithfulness to God, trusting Him, and being a part of His purpose, His mission, to restore this world to a right relationship with the Father. If that is our goal, then, as Peter says in v.1-2, we are done with sin, because we are no longer living for human desires, for the things of this world, but we are living for God's will. As our church's mission states: *To join God in his mission of transforming lives, transforming our community, and transforming our world, by the gospel of Christ, to the glory of God*

To be done with sin does not mean that we are somehow sinless and perfect in our conduct, but it means that sin no longer captivates us because it keeps us from our heart's purpose.

What would it look like to be so motivated by glorifying God and bringing others to Him that we are not concerned with suffering? To not make decisions based upon whether the crowd will approve of us but based upon whether or not it is God's will? To trust that there is nothing that we can not give up in this life that God will not replace with a thousand times more, with His presence? This is the exhortation in this passage!

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

He was single-minded in his focus to save you, and he was willing to endure anything to rescue you and to glorify His Father. Arm yourself with the same attitude. As we continue reading to verse 11, we see five ways this mindset will manifest itself, five hallmarks of Christ's mindset.

1) Obedience

The first manifestation of this attitude according to 1 Peter is in living wholeheartedly for God, just as Jesus did.

² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do-- living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Peter tells them to put away the things they used to do, the things that people around them still do, even if they make fun of you or think that you are weird. Live for God. In the end, it is His judgment that will matter the most.

*¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or **even as a meddler**. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*

It makes me think of middle school and my preoccupation with the approval of others. In some ways, life is still like that. In the end, choose faithfulness to God over worldly comfort or desires, that God might be glorified and others might be saved. Choose to suffer for doing what is right rather than receive praise for doing what is wrong. Keep your eye on eternity, not this life. This is why the gospel is preached, so that we will live our lives for what truly matters.

***1 Corinthians 15:58** - Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

2) Prayer

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

The end of all things is near means that since Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, we are in the final stages of God's redemptive plan, and so we live knowing the end could come at any time.

2 Peter 3:9 - *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Peter exhorts us to be clear-minded, to be fully in control of your thoughts. Recognize your deep need for God, that we desperately need Him to intervene, because the end is near and eternity matters so much more than the things of this world. The more you comprehend the gravity of the situation, the eternal consequences of people's acceptance or rejection of Christ, and the more you recognize your inability to save anyone, the more you will pray! What would it look like if you truly believed these words?

1 Peter 4:17-18 - *For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*

John 3:36 - *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*

Pray as if the lives of everyone around you depended upon it.

3) Love

⁸*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

How does love cover over a multitude of sins? When you forgive others and show them grace that they do not deserve, you are covering over their sins with your love. It is a sacrifice of rights to entrust yourself to God when you are hurt. Instead of using the wrongs of others as justification to attack them, we cover them over with grace and forgiveness. If we want people to be saved, our witness of love will be critical.

John 13:34-35 - *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

If you have a lack of love for people, go and be with the Lord and ask Him to show you the depths of His love for you. We love because He first loved us. And it is our love for each other that will magnify our God.

4) Hospitality

⁹ *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

Welcome others into your home and your lives. Open your home for worship, for missions. It is inviting people into relationship with you, into family with you. It is a sacrifice of comfort and personal time in order to benefit and bless others. The world may reject you, but embrace and welcome each other.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 - *We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.*

This is not drive-by evangelism but relationship, costly relationship, loving others in tangible ways as He has loved us and brought us into His family.

5) Service

¹⁰ *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

Use the gifts God has given to you to serve others. They are gifts, given by God so that you might have something with which to bless other people. It is a sacrifice of self-interest to serve others. This is the consistent witness of the New Testament:

Romans 12:4-8 - *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is **prophesying**, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is **servicing**, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is **encouraging**, let him encourage; if it is **contributing to the needs of***

*others, let him give generously; if it is **leadership**, let him govern diligently; if it is **showing mercy**, let him do it cheerfully.*

*1 Corinthians 12:4-11 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ⁷ **Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.** ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit the message of **wisdom**, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another **speaking in different kinds of tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation of tongues**. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.*

Think of SHAPE:

Spiritual gifts – where has God gifted you in such a way that people experience God when you exercise that gift?

Heart – What are you passionate about? If money were no obstacle, what would you do with your time?

Abilities – What are you good at? What are you able to do that could bless the church?

Personality – What are you like as a person? What might that make you a good fit for in terms of ministry?

Experience – What is your experience? What have you experienced in your life that has shaped who you are and what you might have to offer the church?

Prayer. Outreach. Administrative needs. Writing. Ministry to children. Cleaning. Graphic design. Financial expertise. Cooking. Service to others.

The one who has the same attitude as Christ towards suffering is motivated not by a desire for comfort or the opinion of others but by a desire to glorify God and see others reconciled to God. This will manifest itself in a life marked by obedience, prayer, love, hospitality, and service to others. Give yourself fully to the work of the Lord!