

Future Church ...our Proclamation!

1 Peter 2:2-10

May 21 & 22

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of God's dream for the world and this is what we declare and celebrate.

The author of 1 Peter is writing to two different groups of people or churches who shared some very important common experiences.

- They were Jewish converts to Christianity and pagan or Greek speaking gentile converts who, most likely lived further inland in Asia Minor.
- The letter describes their alien status to be similar to the Jewish Diaspora and the alien status the Jews in exile would experience.
- Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the Roman Empire was cycling through varying degrees of persecution of the Jews, this new sect of Jewish Christians (Messianic Jews) and Gentile converts to Christianity.
- The animosity between Jewish people and the early Christians was great but because this letter was sent to the inland rural population it may have been easier for Jews to convert to Christianity as the major Jewish populations were concentrated in the coastal cities.
- 1 Peter includes references to Old Testament texts that would have been familiar to the Jewish converts and also assured the Gentile converts that they were also heirs of God's promise to Israel.
- The main thrust of the letter was to keep those congregations strong in the face of harassment from the local community.
- The date 1 Peter was written ranges from 60 CE to 90 CE or maybe even in the early part of the 2nd century. It was probably not written by Peter (not a big deal as many letters were written under a famous or influential person's name) but quite possibly was written by fellow missionaries that traveled with Peter or Paul However 1 Peter was considered to be highly apostolic in its influence on the early church.

1 Peter 2:1 – 10 is part of a larger piece of 1 Peter that first declares the community to be named as holy people of God and our text in particular speaks to how the newly converted begin to live as holy people of God.

^{NRS} 1 Peter 2:1 Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." ⁷ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," ⁸ and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1Pe 2:1-10 NRS)

The reading begins with naming 5 sins that are major roadblocks to the Christian life. Malice (wickedness), guile (deceit), hypocrisy (outward show), envy (ill will), slander (evil speech) are all sins that deal with things that are untrue. The new Christian begins by rejecting untruth (Satan) and by realizing the truth (God). And it is in moving ever closer to Christ where we come to live more and more in truth which gives us a fullness of life. Moving ever closer to Christ is analogous of a new born drinking nourishing milk. The new Christian

drinks spiritual milk which leads to salvation. Salvation in our context has been twisted to point to a time after death. Salvation in this instance would lean heavily into “deliverance” or “preservation” as they live in the midst of pagan harassment.

As a baby cries for life giving milk so should the new Christian cry for pure milk. So what is the pure milk that they should drink? There is some fraying of thought in our bible translation community. Most translations will interpret the Greek word λογικὸν (logikos) as spiritual. However the word is rooted in logos and is better translated as logical or reasonable or even simply as “of the word” as “of the logos”. Logikos is a link back to 1 Peter 1: 23. Many translate logikos as “spiritual” as does our NRSV. Other texts will translate this phrase as “pure milk of the word”. The problem our translators have is what is this word? Since the author uses many Old Testament phrases in this letter, are we talking about the Hebrew Scriptures? That doesn’t seem to work. How about that this word is pointing to the later NT? That doesn’t seem to work as 1 Peter was specific to this communities current needs. Is the word Jesus? Does the author of 1 Peter think of Jesus as the Word of God? In 1 Peter 1:23 the word caused the people to be born again and it would seem the logical that this same word then would be their sustenance, their pure milk. This word was the word about Jesus. At that time the word may have not been completely understood as we read it in John 1 but again the word that was spoken about Jesus was strong enough to bring about conversions.

Then if we bring in 2:3 we see that to experience the word was to experience the kindness of God or that the word of God was goodness. This then could lead us to put the puzzle back together. “If you really have tasted the goodness of the word of God then you should long to respond by living in truthful ways.”

And living in truthful ways we allow ourselves to be used as building material for the new temple of which the corner stone is Jesus or the word. It is belief in that word that leads to proclaim that word that leads to light and mercy.

Preaching Theme:

What we believe and tell others really makes a difference in our world as we have the power to bring light and mercy to a world that is in darkness and in pain. Our proclamation is made through our words and also our actions. We daily give ourselves over as building material trusting in the strength of the cornerstone. We daily seek out the pure milk, Jesus the word and it is God who transforms us, not because we are good but because God is good. That is our future and what it means to be a future church.