

September 15, 2013 Temple Baptist Church, Jamestown, ND

TITLE: EVERYDAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, 1 Peter 1:13-21 (*Everyday Church #2*)

(Play, *It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* video) A sweater and slippers or tennies. How many of you remember this program? It's been over 10 years since Mr. Rogers checked into his new neighborhood in heaven.

Fred Rogers' mission was to use television as a medium to teach and provide a safe place for children, a wholesome influence . . . and he did. But Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood reflects a different era, perhaps more fictional than real. Does your neighborhood look like this? Mine doesn't. Could it? Should it?

A month ago we passed our 23rd year in Jamestown, our 30th year in North Dakota. In some ways the time seems to have gone by so quickly, yet in other ways it seems like we've always lived here. Jamestown is our home . . . and yet it isn't. What do I mean?

How many of you have ever been on a short-term mission trip? What did you notice that was different about where you went? (Audience) **How many of you picked up on the fact that it was you who was different?**

If you and I are going to be faithful as followers and effective as bearers of the good news of Jesus Christ . . . we must adopt the mindset and methods of missionaries. We are in a foreign culture. We are guests. We are to honor our hosts, even though we may not agree with all their practices. Missionaries carefully study and learn the language in order to communicate the message, a message that is as much or more about how I live as it is what I say. I believe Jesus is asking us to be missionaries when He says we are to live as kingdom citizens [cf. apostle Paul (*citizenship in heaven*, Philippians 3:20-21), writer of Hebrews (*better country*, Hebrews 11:13-16)].

Missions is not limited to people like Chris and Jackie Kramlich (Uganda), Debbie Kitchel (Kenya), Shan Reed (Japan), Lance and Debi Rundus (Cameroon) or Ryan and Laura Jensen (CRU). We, too, live in a culture that serves different gods. But if our world doesn't understand us, the reverse is also true. We don't understand our world. The authors of *Everyday Church* point out, *We can no longer assume that the church understands the culture . . . We need to get to know our neighborhood, its people, and their stories, values, worldview, and culture. (Everyday Church, 42)* **You and I not only must begin to think like missionaries, we must recognize the fact that we are . . . missionaries.** Read 1 Peter 1:13-21. As I was reading 1 Peter 1:1-12, spending time in our *Everyday* study guide, reading the *Everyday Church* book, thinking about Peter's words and what I would share with you this morning, I got excited.

This makes so much sense . . . the idea of being a missionary where we live.

That's exactly what we are. A year ago when our committee was visiting with Randy Brown before we asked and he agreed to come, I said to him, *You must approach your*

ministry here as a missionary. Although you've traveled some and even lived abroad, your life has been in the South. This will be different for you and your family.

But it's not just the Browns who are missionaries. **So are you and I. Recognizing that changes the way we think, the way we live.** God, through His word, says as missionaries we must . . .

- Recalibrate our thinking and our radar.

You are strangers in a strange land (*exiles of the Dispersion*, ESV) in the provinces of Asia Minor, whose faith is being tested in suffering. But you are *God's elect . . . chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood* (1:2). You are born anew to a living hope. You have an undestructable, unspoilable, unfading inheritance that is kept safe for you in heaven. You have a faith that is guarded by God's power, more valuable than the most precious metal. You have a salvation both coveted by the prophets and marveled at by the angels.

So . . . you've got to change your thinking. You've got to gird up the loins of your mind (KJV). It's a picture of someone pulling up the robe, wrapping the folds under one's belt . . . because they're fixin to run. And this is no time to be running while intoxicated.

Occasionally I get to fly with my father, who is a private pilot, a hobby pilot. He goes through a checklist, including making sure his radios are on the right frequencies, controls are set, instruments are working and altimeter adjusted to the proper elevation. If one doesn't adjust the altimeter accordingly, one could literally fly into the ground, especially during night or instrument flying.

I wonder sometimes if we who name the name of Jesus aren't in danger of flying into the ground, because we haven't recalibrated our thinking or our radar. We aren't even picking up what is there. **I am not talking about changing our values or the claims of the gospel. I am talking about understanding our surroundings.** Peter says, *In light of the culture in which you live and to Whom you belong, get your minds ready to run . . . and focus!*

It's not like where you came from . . . and it's not like what it is going to be. But you live where you live now. You're like God's people of old, who were exiled. Once you get over your shock and the mourning . . . and those are OK for awhile, you've got to begin to get a sense of where you are. Even though it isn't and never will be home, it's going to be your home for awhile.

One of the much-loved scripture passages is Jeremiah 29:11-13. *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."* This is a note Jeremiah sent to the exiles carried off by the Babylonians in the first or

second wave of deportations from Jerusalem. Good news. He says that the people back in Jerusalem are going to die by famine, plague and sword. Bad news.

But there's more. We often ignore the first part of the letter. Read 29:5-9. Then 29:10 . . . "for I know the plan I have for you. . ." Wait a minute. Do you mean to tell me the plans and the future are not for me, but for others, those who come after me? Yep.

A missionary lives with the mindset that the work they do may not be seen for generations. (Patience, consistency) **Reaping may come, but always one cultivates and plants. It's God who produces the harvest.** As missionaries we must . . .

- Rely fully on our hope in Christ.

Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1:13b
When will Jesus Christ be revealed? When He comes again. When will that be? When the Father determines according to His plan. When will that be? We don't know.

Is it possible that *when Jesus Christ is revealed* will be after we die? Quite possibly. But what about His promise? What about His previous promises? He fulfilled every one . . . and will fulfill each one. *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.* 2 Peter 3:9

Our hope, Peter says, is not in ourselves, our world or our situation. Our hope is to be fully on His grace. It is enough. **When we learn to hope fully, it is more than enough.** That doesn't mean it's easy now, because we are still aliens, foreigners, in a strange land. We aren't home yet.

We go back to Iowa occasionally . . . to my "home" church, but it's not the same. We see my father and my sisters and their families . . . and it is all good, but it's not the same. It's not supposed to be. Our hope is not based on a physical location or even a people, but on a Person, Who died and is now raised from the dead, a Person Whose death paid the penalty I deserve for my sin, a Person Who gives His grace . . . and will give even more when He returns. **I'm not home yet, but I hope fully in the One Who is coming. I'm a missionary.** As missionaries we must . . .

- Reflect the character of our Daddy . . . and not our culture.

Read 1:14-21. Who are our faith and hope in? God! Jesus redeemed you from the life you once lived, handed down to you by your fathers. Verse 18 Peter describes it as empty, futile, useless.

God redeemed you from that life, not with money, but with something even more precious (vss. 19-21), the blood of His Son Jesus.

Redeemed means that we are not only bought FROM this life, this empty life, but we are bought FOR Someone and for some thing. You are children. You have a Father, Who judges all we do impartially, but He does know what we do. He isn't an absent Father. We can't fool Him. He doesn't deal with us rashly, or show favoritism to one over another. We aren't to be afraid of people. It's Dad to Whom we will answer.

So how are we to live? *Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."* 1:15-16 These verses come from Leviticus, everyone's favorite book of the Bible. Right?

What does *holy* mean? To live separately from what is common. To be different, distinctive. To be set apart to and for God. Leviticus is God's instruction to His people about how to live a life of worship privately and corporately. **Leviticus reminds us that worship is about everyday life.**

When God says we are to be holy, it means He is calling us to live like our Father, to live like we are His children. We can't live like His children if aren't born anew and place our hope in the risen Christ. Verse 2 reminds us that it is the Spirit Who does His sanctifying, His holing work in us. We can't stand before God and say, "Hey, I'm holy. Now you can accept me." We kneel before God and say, "I'm a sinner. Please forgive me because of Jesus." Then we can be obedient children, not **conforming** to the evil desires which used to hold sway. Paul uses the same word when he tells the Romans not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world (1:14; Roman 12:2), but rather to be transformed by renewing the mind, our thinking, which is like preparing the mind for action and being self-controlled as Peter says in verse 13.

Living as missionaries doesn't mean we adopt the customs and values of this culture. It means we learn to live in this culture with genuine compassion, gentleness and care for others. Respect. Kind of like Mr. Rogers and his TV show. But this isn't just for show or entertainment. It's for our Father. We live for Him, not the culture. Yet when we love Him, we begin to love what He loves . . . this world. We share His love with this world. *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16

Chester and Timmis describe being holy this way. *Holiness knows no boundaries. It defines our friendships, marriages, work, leisure, finances, and politics. Holiness is as much about what you do on Monday morning on the factory floor as it is about what you do on a Sunday morning in a church gathering. Holiness is as much about the kind of neighbor you are as it is about the kind of church member you are. Holiness is as much about who you are when you are holding a steering wheel as it is about who you are when you are holding a Bible. Like Leviticus, Peter is going to spell out what it means for the church to be distinctive in every area of life, but the headline is: "Be holy because I am holy." "Be distinctive because I am distinctive." (Everyday Church, 48, cf. Leviticus 11:44, 45: 19:2; 20:7 for the "headlines")*

God says, *“Stand up. My Spirit makes you mine. You now have a new Father. Learn from Me how to live, not the way your earthly father taught you, that empty, futile, useless life. You’re Mine now. I give you My Spirit, so you can live like My child.”* As missionaries we must . . .

- Remember that we are sojourners here . . . on mission.

Peter reminds us to live set apart for our Father, remembering we are sojourners here (1:17, *strangers*, NIV, *in exile*, ESV). It’s not just God’s people exiled from Judah in Babylon who are sojourners.

Sojourner is an expression used in the OT. It means one who lives for a time in a place that is not really home. Can you think of examples in the Bible of sojourners? (Audience) Paul, Jesus, Abraham, the father of many. Abram sojourned in Egypt during a famine (Genesis 12:10), later in the Negev (south) between Kadesh and Shur (Genesis 20:1; 21:23). After that he sojourns in the land of the Philistines (west) for a long time (Genesis 21:34). Following Abraham’s death during another famine, the LORD tells Isaac not to go to Egypt. *“Stay (sojourn) in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants (seed) I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.”* Genesis 26:3

Abraham lived all his life as a sojourner, a temporary resident of a land that would eventually belong to his descendants, his seed . . . but not for another four to six centuries after his death.

Missionaries are sojourners. They live for a time in a land not theirs. That temporary dwelling can be for months, years, even the rest of their lives like Abraham. It often becomes home. It may become the place where God calls us to put down our roots and pray for His blessing.

Peter identifies these exiles as *called, chosen*. Why? *The LORD said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”* Genesis 12:1-3

The reason God calls Abram, chooses him, is for His purposes and glory, YES, but there is another reason, a missional reason. **God calls and chooses so that those called and chosen will be vessels through whom God blesses others, i.e. so others also come to faith in God and become His possession. To separate calling and election from mission misses the entire point.**

Peter recognized this 30 years earlier when he witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on people from other nations, visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost. *“You are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring (seed) all peoples on earth will be blessed.’* When God raised

up his servant (Jesus), he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.” Acts 3:25-26 But even Peter misses the broader implications and doesn't recognize the true significance until God gets his attention through the vision of the sheet and the inquiry of Cornelius. He gets it now. He uses all the words that God previously uses with Israel to apply to all who are followers of Jesus, including Gentiles.

You and I who respond to faith in Jesus are sojourners here, but sojourners with a mission. We have a future home, a future place, an inheritance, a new birth, a hope, a salvation . . . that we are to share. Are you a sojourner? Are you a sojourner here on mission with God?

Conclusion. So where are we to be missionaries? Where God has placed each of us . . . everyday in our neighborhood. How are we to be missionaries? Let's watch a video to get a few ideas. (Watch video, *Definition of a Trader*) (Pray)

NEXT STEPS: Mark the point above that best reflects where God is working in/on you . . . and where you need to join Him in His good work. Spend some time thinking about God's call/election and mission. What are the implications of being God's missionary? Do you welcome or resist? What needs to change in you?