

Everyday Church

Reflection

Take time together to read Colossians 1v15-23.

As you read reflect on who Christ is and the salvation we have received through him. Respond by praising and giving thanks to God.

Everyday Community

Read 1 Peter 1v13-2v8

Clash of Cultures

'Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.' 1v13

Peter reminded us that we are 'strangers in the world' 1v1, 1v17, and 'aliens' 2v11. We are people who do not fit in, we feel marginalised and ostracised, pushed out from the society we are in. The reality is, as God's people we are in one culture and the world is in another and so we clash. In fact we should not be surprised. Peter has warned us that this will be the case. We will face opposition and trials and life as a Christian in the world will be hard (1v6).

With that in mind Peter says: *'Therefore, prepare your minds for action...'*

It's a call to get ready to live life in a world that is different to you, that does not live like you or think like you. Be prepared for the reaction and the opposition.

What happened to Jesus will happen to us.

The way people responded to Jesus is how people will respond to us.

2v4 – Jesus was chosen by God and precious to him, but rejected by men.

2v7 – Jesus is the stone (foundation) but rejected by the builders (people)

2v8 – Jesus is a stone that causes people to stumble.

As Christians we are living stones who are built on Jesus our foundation.

'As you come to him, the living Stone...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood....' 2v4-5

So by coming to Jesus we are aligned to Jesus. Therefore what happens to Jesus happens to us. So we can expect rejection and opposition. Christians will always clash with the world in which we live.

Questions:

In what way do we feel a clash of culture?

How are our beliefs and doctrines different?

Responding to our culture.

How we respond to this 'clash of culture' is crucial.

There are two typical responses.

First we can retreat. We can pull ranks and gather round each other. Hide from the enemy. We can view ourselves as under siege and therefore we need to put up barriers.

Question:

What might this look like in practise and what attitudes would it foster?

Behaviour: No mixing with 'pagans'. Don't go into their 'territory'.

Attitudes: Pride, Intolerance, Arrogance.

Second we can attack. We can go out into the world fully armed. Take no prisoners.

We can view ourselves as God's Army fighting the enemy with a responsibility to attack every moral or social wrong.

Question:

What might that look like in practise and what attitudes would it foster?

Behaviour: Verbal Bullying, Hate speech.

Attitudes: Critical, Judgemental, Superior, Anger.

Both responses are negative, and do little to proclaim and demonstrate the love and truth about Jesus Christ.

Peter however has a third way.

"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But 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'" 1v14-16

Rather than retreat or attack he calls for Holy Living.

'..live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.' 1v17. We are not to retreat but live among, we are not to attack but be holy. It's a call to live distinctly in the context of everyday life.

A Distinctive Culture

Everyday life

Peter's response to the world is to live a holy life *in* the world:

'Be holy because I am holy' v16

This is a quote from the book of Leviticus (c.f.19v2)

Leviticus for many is to be avoided with its lists of strange rules and regulations. However Leviticus is all about God creating a new kind of community through his word which is distinctive in every way. In other words it is a new kind of culture.

Holy means to be 'set apart' to be 'distinct'. So when God calls us to be holy he is urging us to live differently from the culture around us. We are to create a community that is holy, a community that reflects what it is to live under God and for God. So as people watch us, as we interact with people they will see something of God's awesome character. This holy living will be seen in everyday life situations.

'This holiness knows no boundaries. It defines our friendships, marriages, work, leisure, finances, politics. Holiness is as much about what you do on a 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 neighbour you are as it is about the kind of church member you are. It is as much about who you are when you are holding a steering wheel as who you are when you are holding a bible' Chester & Timmis

Everyday community

Now everyday holy living is not an individual exercise but a communal exercise.

Holy living in every day life was done as a community.

We are reminded that through Christ we *'..were redeemed from the empty way of life..' 1v18*. Living as the world is 'empty' it gives us nothing of any substance. Christ however has rescued us from this emptiness and given us something very precious – a community of love. *'Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers love one another deeply from the heart. 1v22*

God has rescued us for a purpose. We have been rescued from the empty way of the world to belong to a community marked by love for each other. In other words we have been redeemed from one community, the world marked by evil, to a new community, the church marked by love.

'Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.' 2v1-3

Timmis and Chester comment: *'These are sins we do against each other, but in a community of love instead of malice we are to love one another deeply, instead of deceit and hypocrisy we are to show sincere love and instead of envy and slander we are to love from the heart'.*

This is something we work out as a community. We can't love on our own. God has redeemed us for a new community where each day we have opportunity to express sincere love.

Mission in our culture

We are now in a position to engage with our world. Instead of retreating and attacking we can now live in the world as a distinct community marked by love. This is God's mission strategy, to establish communities of love that demonstrates the good news of Jesus Christ who redeems us from the *'empty way of life'*.

As we live holy lives together 'We are living proof that the gospel is not an empty word, but a powerful Word that takes men and women who are lovers of self and transforms them by grace through the spirit into people who love God and love others. We are living proof that the death of Jesus was not just a vain expression of God's love, but an effective death that achieved the salvation of a people who now love one another sincerely from a pure heart.'
Timmis & Chester

As our culture sees us in action some will react but others will also be attracted. Very often people are first attracted to the Christian Community before they are attracted to the Christian message.

Question:

What will pursuing a holy life marked by love mean for us?

Response.

Pray through what we have learned and pray that our friends and community will come to Christ.