

Week 24

1 Peter / Petroj A / 1 Peter

I have always been drawn to this letter. It may be because my favorite professor, John Alsup, was focused on this NT doc while I was a student in seminary. Or, it may be because when I first read 1 Peter I was very aware of my own painful days, being a lot closer to them at that time than I am today (1 Peter speaks a lot to issues of suffering). But today, I love 1 Peter, because Peter opened my eyes to my identity in Christ. From the very first verse, he has challenged what I believe about myself and how I view myself. ***It's a particularly good book to study when you feel under fire, or on the anvil.***

It is important to note, especially with this book, that something very difficult going on in the lives of these believers. Some suffering or persecution. Peter refers to “various trials”, “suffering unjustly”; “Sharing Christ sufferings”, “suffering for a little while”, and a “fiery ordeal”. The word suffer/suffering comes up 20 times in the book. This is teaching for a church near the extremity, they likely weren’t worried about personal rights as we are, they were worried about survival. To this Church Peter says: Remember Who you Are! Remember When you Suffer You Are Sharing Christ’s Sufferings! The Call Eclipses All Else! Be Holy as I (God) am Holy! Be Self-Controlled and Alert!

And so... with each of this week’s readings it makes sense to ask, “What does this passage tell me about my identity in Christ? and “What does this passage tell me about adversity?” If I were to entitle this letter it would be something like, *At the Corner of Faith and Adversity.*

Sunday, Apr 3 1 Peter 1:1-12 – A Familiar Refrain¹ – and then again not

For Reflection: The word translated as “exile”² (NRSV) in 1:1 is more literally (and I think helpfully) translated sojourner, or resident alien (the legal version of illegal alien). *In what sense are you a sojourner in this world? What else is communicated about the believer’s identity? (1-2) What blessings do you have in your sojourners backpack because of Jesus Christ (3-9)? What has been your most recent test of faith? (6-7) What did you learn?*

Lagniappe: Isaiah 48:10

¹ When writing an epistle, it was usual to include a thanksgiving (εὐχαριστέω – eucharist – when we call communion the eucharist we are calling it a cause for thanksgiving). Sometimes this thanksgiving is expressed as prayer of thanks, (Colossians) sometimes as a benediction/blessing (2 Corinthians), sometimes both (Ephesians). It would be fascinating to have a class in theology just comparing these epistolary thanksgivings

² Παρεπίδημος – This word is only used 3x in the NT, (twice in 1 Peter twice and once in Hebrews). it is not a common expression for followers of Christ. Hebrews 11:13 helps me to get a sense of how the word is used.

Monday, Apr 4

1 Peter 1:13-2:3³ – Aspiring to Infancy?

For Reflection: *How is holiness part of your identity (13-16)? In your experience how is the Word of God living and enduring, like milk that nourishes (23, 2-3)? In Peter's view, are infants our role models?*

Observations:

- Many out there think that guile, insincerity, envy and slander (2:1) are synonymous with the church. They don't seem like really bad poisonous sins but they are surely effective at keeping the hungry and thirsty away.
- For Peter salvation is not just a gift bound in history it is also a state into which we are constantly growing (compare vs 5, 9, and 2:2)

Lagniappe: Psalm 42:1 - If the call to infancy feels demeaning, maybe you prefer this. It's poetry so you don't have to aspire to deer-ish-ness., just drink up some of God's word today, hungrily.

Tuesday, Apr 5

1 Peter 2:4-10

For Reflection: *Again - ton's on identity! What about Jesus - or his message or his call - causes you concern, or is a cause for stumbling? What part of faith is beneath you? I don't like his love your enemy teachings – but I don't think he isn't counting votes on the issue.*

Lagniappe: Isaiah 8:13-15

Wednesday, Apr 6

1 Peter 2:11-3-7⁴ WARNING like 1 Timothy, we enter the offending material known as the Household Code⁵

For Reflection: Vss. 16-17 seem to me to be the organizing themes of this section. These believers are free, but their freedom is bound by the call of God and the circumstances in which they find themselves. The conclusion of verse 17 makes it clear that honor and love are core to this ethical code. Just as important, this half verse makes it clear that in times of persecution, and if then, then any times, believers are to fear no-

³ Vs 17 more sojourner exile language

⁴ Vs 11 more sojourner exile language. I'm beginning to think Peter thinks this world is not our home.

⁵ I often hear people dismiss Paul/Peter, or sometimes the whole Bible for passages like this – assuming they legitimize all sorts of evil. But by that standard, we would dismiss anything written before the 1800's. Household Codes began to be seen in writings with Aristotle (4th century BCE), followed by Xenophon, Cato (the elder), Philo, and Seneca. The uniqueness of the Household Codes in the NT is that they spoke both parties in the relationship, assuming something close to mutuality. I don't know if I'd call this radical, but certainly a new, and more egalitarian chapter in the teaching of ethics.

one but God. They honor others, they love others, but they only fear/worship God. *How does following of Christ observably influence your other human relationships? What makes submission (of any kind) so very hard? Who or what do you most fear?*

Lagniappe: Philippians 2:1-4

Thursday, Apr 7

1 Peter 3:8-22

For Reflection: verse 15 is a commonly quoted verse from this section of 1 Peter.⁶ *If you were asked, what reason would you give for the hope that is within you? Why do you believe (and act) differently?*

Lagniappe Matthew 5:10

Friday, Apr 8

1 Peter 4⁷

For Reflection: In vs 7, it seems Peter did not see life as sustainable very long – it must have been a heart-breaking time for him. Interestingly, the end-of-all things exhortations (7-11) are rather ordinary – focus on loving one another, on hospitality, and on sharing your gifts faithfully. No command to engage in all-night discussions about end of the world conspiracy theories... Hmmm. No mandate to quit you job or school, and sell everything you have. (That was a bit of snarkiness on my part – I own it.) The fiery ordeal (vs 12) may remind us of when Nero lit his precious gardens with cruel and grotesque living torches (lest you feel like Nero was left unaccountable for his actions - remember vs 5). But this was written before that time and probably should be taken as “purify trials” as in 1:6-7. *When have you felt you were living in an unsustainable environment/situation? What did you do? What did God do? Did it affect the way you chose to live your life?*

Lagniappe: 2 Peter 3:9 - It's likely that Peter took a little grief about his anxiety about the end being near. In this verse in his only other letter he deals with God's delay in coming.

⁶ Again, it is helpful to remember these believers were facing opposition. When they are told to “Set apart Christ as Lord”, Peter is calling them to remember Jesus, alone, is Lord – not Caesar. Jews were regularly accused of disloyalty (at this time it appears that Christians were considered Jews (Acts 18:2). Not until Nero (Tacitus) do we find Christians singled out in secular writing. Peter likely, wants them to know the faith, or the gospel, well enough to be a faithful witness to Jesus in any setting.

⁷ It seems like Peter almost ended his letter with vs 11. I'll bet you know a pastor who almost finished a sermon, but kept going. Just know that when that happens the pastor in question could legitimately say, “Almost finishing is the Biblical model.” :)

Saturday, Apr 9

1 Peter 5

For Reflection: Final Exhortations: Peter encourages humble obedience, but this world rewards pride and confidence, so humble obedience takes a good bit of trust that the promise in vs 6 is sincere. *With what relationships or responsibilities is the call to humble trust, truly difficult, almost impossible?*

Lagniappe: Philippians 4:13