

Dear Friends in Christ,

I have six Christian young people in what is called the Monday night Youth Confirmation class. We study the teachings of the Bible together.

The group this as much as any other wants to spend time discussing everything related to heaven. We have talked about traveling there, what Judgment is all about and what it will be like to live there forever.

The class also spends time talking about our earthly journey. The Lord God has much to say about how our lives got started and how the Lord has us walking as Christians. Sometimes I think talking about heaven is a little more exciting and interesting, but talking about how we live our life here on earth is important.

I want to say that the young people are not alone in this. The adults in our church are very interested in Heaven and last things. Bible classes on the book of Revelation are packed. If I am using up my Bible material a little too quickly in our weekly classes, all I have to do is raise the subject of Heaven, angels and eternity and there will be enough discussion to fill up the extra time. This is not a criticism. I saw this happen in my last parish with people of all ages and I am confident that this is true in other congregations.

Why am I bringing this up? It is interesting to talk about our resurrection. We are only a couple of Sundays removed from Easter. St. Peter has talked about the resurrection here in chapter one. He mentions that it is through Jesus' resurrection from the dead that we have a Living Hope. We heard about that last Sunday.

The First Century Christians in Asia Minor were facing difficulties in their everyday life. One of those difficulties may have been persecution. They may have been wondering, "It is nice to have the hope of Heaven, but how do I live now?" In verses 17-21 he has an answer. Since they have a Living Hope in Jesus they are to live holy lives. As he writes he pictures their life as a journey. He wants disciples then and now to **Conduct Your Earthly Journey in Reverent Fear**. Let's learn more from St. Peter about holy living.

1. You call on a holy Father.

These Christians prayed to God as they were in trouble. You and I do the same. But who are we calling on? St. Peter wants us to think about this for a minute. God is different from us. He is our holy Father.

A. What does this mean? He is a Father who is also an impartial judge.

1. Fathers have responsibility to love and take care of their children. God is our Father. St. Paul assures us in Galatians 3:26 **“You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”** Our Lord Jesus told his disciples after Easter, **“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”** Because of Jesus God is a Father who loves and takes care of us.

2. Our heavenly Father takes an interest in our growth and development. So Peter writes, **“you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially.”** God is holy, that is without sin or any other stain. Our Father is interested that we grow up and be like him.

B. He even tells us how we can do about this. It is in the command, **“Live in reverent fear.”** What does that mean?

1. Three times in the book of Leviticus says, “Be holy because I am holy.” (11:45, 19:2, 20:26) As pastor stated it this way, *“The people of a holy God need to set the highest standards for their own behavior.”* (Sermon Studies:Gospels ILCW A, page 179)

If we take this lightly, Peter warns that God judges people impartially. He will not overlook sins because people are cute or because they are rich. He is impartial.

There is a call to repentance here. Even the most serious Christians fail to live up to God’s holy standards. The truth is that we often ignore God’s holy standards to live life our way. We need to repent and ask our Father for forgiveness. We believe with the author of Psalm 130 that there is forgiveness with God.

2. In fact it is through God’s grace that we can do what Peter suggests which is to: **“live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.”** With faith in God’s grace we fear God. What it means is we respect God and do everything in our power to live a holy life. Our guide is Scripture and the 10 Commandments. There we have his holy will. If we are ever tempted to live ourselves, we can be afraid of God’s judgement. However, our Father would rather that we respect him and humbly do what he wants.

2. You were redeemed with Christ’s holy blood.

Years ago many churches were starting up in Surprise, I would get postcards in the mail. Sermon series would be featured. They were all similar. “Eight ways to have a better marriage.” “Six sermons on how to manage your money.” “Four ways to deal with conflict.” In most of those post cards there was no mention of Jesus.

It is not wrong for the church to teach practical ways on how to live a holy life. However, if you don’t point to Jesus, as the one who changes us and empowers us to live a holy life, you just end up with despairing people.

A. Peter points to Jesus in verses 18-19. **“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”**

Pastor Bruce Ahlers of Sun City told an interesting story about there worship center where he was a missionary. I think it was Albania. He said that next to their place was a store or butcher shop. When they came to the place there would be live lambs out front. When they came out of church later, the lambs would be hanging and they were dead. I would assume they were waiting to be sold. I can imagine that there was the smell of lamb and of lamb’s blood. What a reminder, for the people worshiping, of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

We can think of sight and the smell of Jesus, God’s Son hanging on the cross. Peter reminds us that we were not bought with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of the lamb who is the holy Son of God. We were bought, that is Jesus paid for our sins with his blood and life. We are changed. We are strangers to the sinful ways of the world. We want to love our Father and do good. Through Jesus we can.

B. Someone might question, “How can God sacrifice his Son? That is nonsense.” Perhaps they think this because they don’t see how they could ever do it. However, Peter tells us that God chose Jesus to do this before the creation of the world. He spoke of his plans in the Old Testament. The picture and the message of Christ dying for our sins is sprinkled through the Old Testament.

Peter says this was done for our sake. Do you doubt God’s love? Do you doubt God’s ability to do the impossible? Do you doubt that God can work in you to live a holy life? Turn to the Scriptures. There is page after page of motivation and direction. We can live for God. We struggle at times, but by grace we keep working at it.

3. You have holy faith and hope.

Living a holy life has its challenges. One of the biggest is that we have to trust God that he does forgive us when we fail. Broken trust, broken promises are a regular part of the human experience. This makes it hard to trust God. Besides that our sinful nature is already hostile to God.

Listen to what Peter says. **“Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.” (21)** He points to Jesus’ Easter resurrection and his glory. Can we trust God? Yes, the resurrection tells us! Yes, the Jesus’ Ascension tells us! We may not always understand what God is trying to do. This is especially true when we struggle and go through hard times. The empty tomb stands as a lasting monument to the fact that God keeps his word. He said Jesus would rise and he did! As Jesus lives all of our beliefs and hopes live in him!

Conclusion: A favorite hymn of this congregation and many Christians is CW:417 **“I’m But a Stranger Here”** which goes on *“Heav’n is my home. Earth is a desert drear; Heav’n is my home. Danger and sorrow stand Round me on ev’ry hand. Heav’n is my fatherland; Heav’n is my home.”* I hope the thought of seeing Heaven is dear in your heart. And you look forward to reaching the end of your earthly journey and crossing the finish line into that most blessed place.

Today Peter reminds us that we have not finished the journey, we have not reached the goal. We are strangers here because the blood of Jesus, spotless and blameless, has made us children of the heavenly Father. We can at times gaze in the direction of heaven, perhaps when we sing the hymn.

However, our attention also needs to be on the journey. We have direction. Live a holy life and do that by living in respectful fear of your Holy Father. It may seem at times like a difficult task, but Jesus has made us holy. He reminds us in his word that he has forgiven our sins. In that word he teaches us to live as the Children of the Father. So I say in all seriousness, but also with all confidence **Conduct Your Earthly Journey in Reverent Fear.**
Amen.