

# Blessed to be a Blessing

New Castle Bible Church

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Text: 1 Peter 3:13-17

## INTRODUCTION

Friends, it's wonderful to worship our Lord. Today is Palm Sunday, which looks back on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, riding upon a donkey as the crowds hailed Him as a political savior. Only five days later would the same crowds that praised Jesus turn to condemn Him.

Five days later, that's Good Friday. This year we will live stream our Good Friday service, this coming Friday at 7pm. And next Sunday is Easter. Join us from your homes, but please encourage everyone you know to tune in as well. Send a link to your friends, neighbors, family members so they can worship with us and hear of the hope we have in our risen Lord.

The Outreach Team encouraged me to preach to you this morning, and I am grateful for this opportunity. I think we're all in same boat... it's difficult to see people, isn't it? For me...

I used to meet up with many of you for lunch or a coffee any day of the week...  
now I don't.

I used to take my kids to school every morning and wave hello at the crossing guard...  
now I can't.

I used to visit Hopedale or one of the hospitals to encourage someone sick...  
now I'm not allowed.

So much changed for us so fast, didn't it? It's a bit disorienting. I think it's easy to forget in times like this who you are and what you're all about. First Peter has been an excellent reminder and challenge to me, because Peter reminds us who we are as Christians and what we're all about.

Let me give you some context...

**1 Peter 2:9-10** — “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 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.”

“chosen people”

“royal priesthood”

“a people for Christ’s own possession”

We are a people united to Jesus who are living in a fallen world. Things are changing all the time in this life, but we are citizens of another kingdom. All in this life may be turned upside down, may fall apart, but you still are chosen,

you still have a royal calling,

you still belong to Jesus

Peter’s audience was fearful. He was writing to Christians during the first great wave of persecution. They were fearful. They were tired. And Peter says, no matter what happens, my friends, there are truths that cannot be shaken. Both now and forever, you are God’s child... and He has saved you for a purpose, “that you may proclaim His excellencies.”

Whatever happens, Peter tells us not to react... don’t react.

Regarding civil authority □ 2:13: “Be subject”

Regarding commercial authority □ 2:18: “Be subject”

Regarding family authority □ 3:1: “Be subject”

Don’t react, don’t do as you feel... rather, strive to be at peace with secular authority, strive to serve as far as you can, even elevate others. Rather than fighting for your rights, relinquish your rights to God.

**1 Peter 3:9** — “Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing.”

Who are you? A chosen and royal son of God.

What are you to do? Strive to live peacefully, strive to be a blessing that others may see Christ.

Our text for this morning is 1 Peter 3:13-17. The Word of God says...

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good

behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Main Point: How can I be a blessing that others may see Christ? First, know that you are blessed.

## **I. Know You are Blessed**

Does fear prevent you from blessing others at times? I think all of us can agree. Peter's readers were afraid of persecution—*Peter, if we reach out, we might be thrown in jail*. Peter says, that's possible. It could happen... but it isn't likely.

Don't let fear cripple you from doing good. I think you and I need the same encouragement. COVID-19 has ground our economy to a halt, will it also grind the church to a halt?

We need to be sensible and take precaution during this crisis, but may we not give way to fear, withdraw, and stop doing good in this world.

Friends, what if every physician in America looked at COVID-19 and said, "I can't risk getting that. No way I'm getting involved to help."

What if every police officer followed suit and every first responder? Everyone who could help suddenly pulled back to protect himself. The devastation would be unimaginable, but praise God, that hasn't happened.

These people may become sick—and some will. Yet, they put themselves on the front lines of this crisis, because there is good to be done in this world, and they can do it. Shouldn't we as a church have the same attitude?

Be zealous for doing good, church. Don't be afraid to be a blessing to others... don't withdraw. Don't become isolated. You don't need to be a doctor to be a blessing.

Some of you have picked up some groceries for others in the church.

Some of you have made scores of phone calls to regularly check on our seniors.

Some of you have donated medical supplies.

Some have wrote encouraging cards or prayed with others online this past week.

Peter says that regardless of what happens, "you will be blessed." Literally, "you blessed." The foundation for blessing others lies in knowing that you have been blessed by God. He is a fount that overflows with blessings onto us that we, like Him, would overflow blessing upon blessing onto others.

You have been counted righteous. You have been chosen by Him, you belong to Him. Friends, we are sinners who can't even earn our next breath of fresh air. I want you to see how blessed we are...

When Paul wrote of the “immeasurable greatness of God’s power” in Ephesians 1:19, he could have said, “Let’s look at creation!” Awesome power to stretch out the universe, to hang the stars, and keep it all in motion. Yet, the apostle draws our attention to the power God exercised when He reconciled you to Himself.

Ephesians 2 tells us that God’s power was able to “make alive” in Christ “you who were dead” in sin.

Paul is saying, “Do you want to know the immeasurable greatness of God’s power?” Well, let’s take out a measuring stick... one long enough to span the depths of sin and death... to the glories of righteousness and new life in Jesus Christ. However long that stick must be—that is immeasurable greatness of God’s power.

And if that doesn’t strike you as very much it’s only because you don’t understand the chasm that once existed you and God. To not understand God’s power in reconciling you to Himself, you can’t possibly think He’s blessed you very much.

“You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”, so near through Christ as to enjoy God’s love and His care.

Friends, I want you to make a list this week with two columns. In the first column, answer the question: “What has God given me?” And in the second, “What does God owe me?” Whereas each of us could fill the Library of Congress with all we might write in the first column... there is nothing you could possibly write in the second.

Has God blessed you? There is a world all around us in need. Now go out and be a blessing to others.

## **II. Worship Your Lord**

So, verse 15 tells us not to be fearful: “...nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.”

Fearful of what, troubled by what? Persecution... *Peter, if I bless others, I might be persecuted for it.*  
Whatever happens....

First, know you are blessed

Second, worship your Lord

In your heart, “honor Christ the Lord as holy.” This phrase gets to the motivation that drives us to be a blessing. It focuses our minds upon a core truth.

Just because I receive doesn't mean I will automatically give. Just because your home receives water doesn't mean any of your spickets are on to let it flow.

Just because we've been blessed by God doesn't mean we automatically go and bless others. When we withhold blessing, pull back from loving others we fail to "honor Christ the Lord as holy." Interesting phrase... what does it mean?

We need to unearth the meaning of holiness. Unearth, excavate the meaning... a Hebrew study on the word "holy" was published in the late 1800s. This study claimed for the first time that the basic meaning of holiness is separation.

Our time is so short, but a key passage is Exodus 19:5-6 where God declares that Israel will be a holy nation.

**Exodus 19:5-6** — "...if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Israel would be God's "treasured possession" out of all other peoples. Israel "shall be to Me." A holy nation is a nation that belongs to God. A holy people are a people who belong to God.

And as a result of belonging to God...

Israel operated under a set of laws that were very distinct from the world.

If you view holiness as a matter of separation from the world, then it's possible to look very separate or different from the world while not at all belonging to God. Just because you're separate from the world doesn't mean you're devoted to Jesus or even saved.

Throughout the 1800s into the early 1900s, the thrust of evangelical Christianity was to forge American into a righteous empire. Following WWI, they fought to make America different than Germany. An anti-German fury swept through our nation at that time, and countless preachers poured gasoline upon that fury.

The German people were behind the Great War.

German schools had embraced evolution.

German seminaries were attacking the Bible

German immigrants owned most of the breweries.

So, becoming a holy nation meant ridding America of all things German. From Billy Sunday to William Jennings Bryan, they were altogether wrong.

Holiness isn't a matter of finding an enemy and saying, "I'm not going to be like 'that'."

## **Holiness isn't a matter of separating myself from the world, but devoting myself to God.**

We are not holy, because we don't act like the world. We are holy because we are devoted to God as His own possessions in Jesus Christ.

“Honor the Lord as holy” is a phrase that comes from Isaiah 8. Isaiah was speaking of the coming Assyrian invasion that would engulf Israel—very terrifying event. Yet, Isaiah urged the people to fear God and not their invaders.

**Isaiah 8:13** – “But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let Him be your fear...”

Isaiah: As opposed to being afraid of Assyria, fear God.

Peter: As opposed to being afraid of persecution, fear God.

If you honor the Lord as holy... if devote yourself to Him, then He will be your fear.

If you honor the Lord as holy... if that is true, then you will not be afraid of people and persecution, situations and circumstances.

Honor Christ the Lord as holy means we honor Christ by devoting ourselves wholly to Him... wholly consecrated to His service, wholly given to His kingdom.

We acknowledge we have no other lords—Christ alone is our king. He alone commands our lives and controls our hearts... as we grow in our love of Him with all of our heart and mind and soul and strength.

Devote yourself to Christ, honor the Lord with your worship...

And this will keep you from becoming saturated with fear.

This will drive you to be a blessing to others.

Worshipping Christ transcends trials. You can be who God has called you to be. You can ride out the waves any storm with peace. You can be a great blessing to those around you... if you will honor Christ the Lord as holy.

Devote yourself to Christ, worship Him, and may He make you a blessing to others.

### **III. Share Your Hope**

**1 Peter 3:15-17** — “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered,

those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”

When I honor the Lord as holy, I devote myself to Him, I worship Him... I realize how much He has blessed my life, and I want to reach out in some way to bless others. And in the course of doing good, others will take notice.

I recently read a letter from the second century about Christians at the time. Very interesting. The letter says what distinguishes Christians isn't that they have their own country or language, or set of customs, no they actually “follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in... And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives.”

They look just like us, and yet, they aren't. They bless people who curse them, do good, and love. There's something other-worldly about these people... the Christians live in our world, yet long for another.

People took notice of their lives, because of their hope. That's what Peter was getting at. “The hope that is in you” = it's what we believe about things to come.

Peter's audience feared persecution for doing good, but they also knew that this world wasn't the end of all things. Whatever happens here, we know that with Christ there's something much better for us in life to come. Pain is temporary, peace is eternal.

The author of Hebrews tells us that faith is the assurance of things hoped for (11:1). Whatever you hope will happen tomorrow, you believe by faith until it happens.

We're told in Hebrews 11:10 that Abraham yearned for a “city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” He didn't settle down and relax in this world, but “sought after a homeland”, “desired a better country.”

Abraham believed that what God has for me in the future is infinitely better than anything this world could offer me in the present. There's just nothing much here, nothing that lasts, nothing that satisfies for long.

This kind of hope causes people to take notice. Rather than hoarding up for ourselves treasures on earth, hope causes us to give and sacrifice knowing there are better treasures to come.

If you live like this, be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” Think ahead, anticipate the question... people will want to know.

Making a defense (*apologia*) could be formal apologetics, making a logical and reasoned defense of the faith. The word, however, is broader than that. Peter was just saying to be ready to give an answer. Know what you will say, specifically about the gospel.

And saying, “ask my pastor” isn’t an option.

You should be ready to explain your hope. Nothing complicated, but a simple explanation that you’ve prepared for people.

I believe that God is good and righteous. I know that I’ve deeply offended Him and should be condemned for all my sins. But He sent His Son to save me from this that by believing in Jesus, I can be forgiven and made right with God and walk in newness of life. And I look forward to the day when He takes Him home to be with Him forever.

Be ready when people ask, always use Scripture! And then we’re given a few bullet points for sharing our hope, especially with unbelievers who are contentious. Always share your hope...

- 1) Gently—there’s no need to be domineering or to bludgeon with the truth.
- 2) Respectfully—there’s no need to be rude.
  - We are never called to be disrespectful to anyone or domineering.
- 3) With a good conscience—there’s no need to sin to win an argument. No matter how an unbeliever responds to you, never respond in kind.

1 Peter 2:9— “Do not repay... reviling for reviling.”

“...so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”

If you live out the hope that is in you, worshipping the Lord, doing good in this world... people will notice and some will laugh at you, others persecute.

Let them.

I’m reminded of the Bible translator, a hero of mine, William Tyndale. Tyndale was a scholar who became a fugitive in the early 1500s to ensure that England had an English Bible.

Only Latin Bibles existed—no one could read Latin, and in fact. Translations into any language were destroyed, and translators were actually executed. Tyndale, with all his education, could have enjoyed a comfortable life for himself. Rather, he chose to give England a Bible. He moved to modern-day Germany to translate in secret, and his life was one hardship after another—little food, money, clothing, or rest.

No place to ever call home, no spouse to encourage him, not even a friend. Just him and God’s Word—all day, every day for years. With each year, he translated more of the Bible and eventually, hundreds of thousands of copies flooded into England.

The story ends when one of Tyndale’s only friends betrayed him to the authorities. He spent 18 months in a jail cell before his execution. During that time, it was said he never uttered a complaint or spoke ill of his enemies. Filled with gentleness and respect, a good conscience.

Tyndale wrote asking for clothing to be warmer, a candle for a little more light, his Hebrew Bible and books so he could continue studying Scripture.

On the day of his death in 1536, Tyndale's last words were a prayer for the salvation of the king who had him executed.

Many took notice of Tyndale's hope in Christ. In fact, the man who guarded his cell during those 18 months, he saw Tyndale's hope and turned to Christ for salvation.

How can I be a blessing that others may see Christ?

Know that you are blessed by God

Now devote yourself to the Lord in worship

and then share your hope when people ask.

New Castle, may the Lord make you a blessing to all around us that they may see Christ.

[Pray]