

Clear Minds, Warm Hearts, Open Hands

1 Peter 4:7-11

Mercy Hill Church | March 1, 2026

Big Idea: *Because the end is near, believers must live with clear minds, warm hearts, and open hands so that in everything God is glorified through Christ Jesus.*

Context & Background of 1 Peter

- 1 Peter was written around 62-63 AD by the apostle Peter to predominantly gentile (non-Jewish) Christians scattered throughout what would be modern day Turkey region.
- The apostle Peter wrote this letter to encourage these Christians to persevere in their faith as outsiders. They were a, “double-minority” – they were the minority as Christians in a predominantly pagan society. And they were a minority as gentile (non-Jewish) Christians – since Christianity was considered a “Jewish” religion in its earlier stages.
- The apostle Peter writes this letter to encourage them to “persevere as faith exiles” (sermon series title) – knowing that their ultimate home, their ultimate place of belonging, their ultimate place of comfort, security and peace is with the Lord. They belong to the Kingdom of God – not the kingdom(s) of this world.
- 1 Peter 1-2:10, the Apostle Peter reminds them (as he reminds us) of who they are, who we are – our identity in Christ – of the beautiful good news that, “according to his great mercy, he (Jesus) has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” (cf. 1 Peter 1:3-9)
- 1 Peter 2:11-4:11, the Apostle Peter unpacks how the Gospel message shapes and transforms us – how one is to live out their new identity in different life circumstances and contexts as faithful exiles.
 - From 1 Peter 3:8 through this morning’s passage, Peter addresses how these faithful exiles, these Christians, are to live as the church, God’s family.

1. Clear Minds (v.7)

- (cf. James 5:8, Heb 10:25; 1 Peter 1:13, 5:8; 1 Thess 5:6, 2 Tim 4:5, Rom 12:3. Luke 8:35)
- **Having a Clear Mind on the End**
 - What is the time? Peter reminds that “the end of all this is at hand (or near)”
 - *Telos* = end, goal, purpose, aim
 - The end = Jesus’ return, God’s judgment (v.5), justice and restoration
 - They’re part of the bigger story of God, the story of the world
 - Creation => Fall => Redemption => Restoration/Consummation
 - The Bible continually reminds that we’re in the, “last days.”
 - However, no one knows – don’t believe or be deceived into anyone that would tell you otherwise (re: signs of Jesus’ return or the end of the world)
 - Matthew 24:36 *“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only*
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 *For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*
 - Peter is reminding them of the hope they have as forgiven sinners, faithful exiles that though it will be a day of Judgment, it’s also a day of hope.
 - 1 Peter 1:13 *“Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being soberminded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” – the return of Christ*

- **Having a Clear Mind in the Present**

- Knowing that the end is near, the Apostle Peter doesn't invite believers to just withdraw from society or to just gaze at the sky waiting for Jesus' return
- Rather, Peter commands us to be, "self-controlled and sober-minded" = hendiadys (two words expressing one thought) => clear mind, alert
 - 1 Peter 5:8 - Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
 - 1 Thess 5:6 - So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.
 - Contrast with a muddled mind (cf. v.3 - drunkenness, a mind and life focused on sin and self)
 - Luke 8:35 - Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and *in his right mind*, and they were afraid.
- In other words, God's Word is reminding us that as we have a clear perspective, a clear mind about the end, it ought to and does directly impacts how we live life in the here and now, the present.
 - "The immanence of the end should function as a stimulus to action in this world"
- What's intriguing is when you read the rest of the passage, there's no extraordinary actions but rather continue to pursue the faithful virtues of the Christian life that are normal part of the Christian life
 - Martin Luther: When asked what Martin Luther would do if the end would come today, he (allegedly) said: "'If I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree today.'" Emphasizing faithfully doing ordinary work as service to God (and others) and rejecting escapism.
- Personal Example: Being a Parent
- Lord the Rings Quote: "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to you."
 - "It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule"

- **Having a Clear Mind in Prayer**

- Keeping the end in mind, having a clear mind on the end and in the present affects and shapes how and what we pray.
- Greater dependence on God (in prayer), seeking God, submitting to God in the light of reality seen from God's perspective, not ours, seeking God's perspective, God's wisdom.
- Having a clear mind of the end and our place in it, guides how we pray and what we pray about...and reminds us of our great(er) need to go to God in prayer
- **Reflection**: How does knowing that Jesus will return ("the end is at hand" reshape your perspective on life, choices, priorities, how you're currently living and even what you pray about and pray for?

2. Warm Hearts (vv.8-9)

- (cf. 1:22; John 13:35, Luke 22:44, James 5:20, Proverbs 10:12)
- As we have clear minds, we ought to have warm hearts = keep loving one another earnestly
 - 1st "One Another" in this passage = referring to the family of God, the church community

- Other verses in Scripture talk about loving our enemies or others, but here the focus is having warm hearts towards those within the family of God, the church
 - John 13:35 – know you are my disciples *by your love for one another*
- **What kind of love? Earnest**
 - Earnest love not in the sense of emotional intensity (“I’m *so in love* with you!”) but a love that persists despite difficulties or challenges.
 - Dorani quote: Love includes feelings, but it is more than a feeling. Love is a resolve to do good to others...including the good of forgiving their sins.
 - It’s easy to love or be nice or do good to someone once – it’s another thing to persevere and be in earnest in continuing to love someone
 - It’s the difference between loving someone you’re dating vs loving someone you’re married to; it’s the difference between loving a friend vs. loving your sibling
- **Love which Cover Many Sins (v.8)**
 - It’s a love that “covers” sin vs. participates in sin (cf. v.3 – orgies, drinking parties),
 - Referencing Proverbs 10:12 - Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses; James 5:20 - let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
 - This idea of covering (of sins) is running theme throughout Scripture:
 - Adam and Eve after directly disobeying God in the garden of Eden and eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – in their sin, felt ashamed, guilt, became aware of their vulnerability as manifested in their awareness of their nakedness. And what does God do? *Covers* them up with animal skin – first act of redeeming grace.
 - Day of Atonement: Most holy day where once a year the high priest would enter the holy of holies and sprinkle blood from a sacrificed animal to *cover* the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant as atonement for his sins and the sins of the people
 - And of course, ultimately culminating in Jesus’s crucifixion, shedding His blood on the cross as an atonement, a sacrifice, to *cover* our sins.
 - This verse is not saying that our love has the power to atone or cover or forgive other’s sins (cf. Mark 2:7 – “who can forgive sins but God alone?”) but rather to cover in the sense of reduce or minimize the impact.
 - Jobes quote: Love that does not let wrongs done within the Christian community come to their *fullest and most virulent expression*...The downward spiral is broken when someone in loving forbearance breaks the cycle of acting on hard feelings and doing wrong ...Peter is not making a theological statement about sins being forgiven or covered by God – nor sin in the church should be ignored or denied (“covered up”)...Peter is concerned with behaviors that could destroy the Christian community, such behaviors must be extinguished if the church is to survive
 - “Covering love is how families survive. Family members know each other’s foibles, weaknesses, and failures and the bond of a family will not last long if there is constant, petty complaining in the home. The church is a family too”
 - Nothing destroys a church faster than pettiness, people picking at each over trivial things. Nothing destroys a church faster than an unwillingness to love others especially in the face of sin.
- **Love Shown Through Hospitality (v.9)**
 - 2nd “one another,” not possible without having a warm heart towards each other.
 - Hospitality could refer to hosting (housing) overnight guests
 - Not many suitable inns in those times – esp. for a Gentile Christian travelling

- Remember Peter was writing to Christians scattered throughout the region of modern-day Turkey
 - But also just general hospitality – opening up one’s home for worship, fellowship.
 - Hospitality as an expression of love
 - Rosario Butterfield Story
 - A tenured professor at Syracuse University, an activist in LGBTQ+ causes, was in a same-sex relationship as a lesbian and openly opposed and skeptical of Christianity
 - Even wrote a newspaper article criticizing the religious right and the Promise Keepers movement (men’s movement focused on being faithful husbands, fathers, in sexual purity, etc.)
 - Came to saving faith, repented of her sins, left her same-sex relationships, currently married to a pastor, a Christian author and speaker.
 - What led to this amazing change of heart? 1) God’s work in her life through His Word, and 2) Hospitality
 - Over a period of about 2 years, a pastor (Ken Smith) and his wife invited Rosario over to their home regularly (and his church) to study the Bible, to talk, to know one another – love through hospitality
 - She ended up writing a book titled, “The Gospel Comes with a House Key” emphasizing the importance of hospitality in the Christian life – in living on mission.
 - “Radically ordinary hospitality” - “Let God use your home, apartment, dorm room, front yard, community gymnasium, or garden for the purpose of making strangers into neighbors and neighbors into family. Because that is the point—building the church and living like a family, the family of God.”
 - Here, Peter is stressing the importance of hospitality not outwards towards those who don’t know Jesus, but inwards towards the community of believers, the church.
 - Notice here in this verse it doesn’t say only show hospitality IF you have a nice, spacious house or this doesn’t apply to you if you only live in a studio or just rent a room.
 - Use whatever means at your disposal!
- **“Without Grumbling”**
 - We can love other and show hospitality with grumbling (re: not a warm heart!); it’s why the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:14 – do all things without grumbling or disputing!
 - Word to introverts or more private people:
 - As an introvert, Butterfield quote: “We introverts miss out on great blessings when we excuse ourselves from practicing hospitality because it exhausts us. I often find people exhausting. But over the years I have learned how to pace myself, how to prepare for the private time necessary to recharge, and *how to grow in discomfort. Knowing your personality and your sensitivities does not excuse you from ministry. It means that you need to prepare for it differently than others might.*”
 - *Theirs is the Kingdom: Celebrating the Gospel in Urban America* by Robert Lupton
 - Lupton shares a personal story and reflection on his life and ministry in an impoverished neighborhood in Atlanta. He describes a visit from a neighbor, "Mrs. Smith," who is poor and struggles with personal hygiene. He experiences a sharp internal conflict between his ingrained middle-class value of protecting and maintaining his belongings—and the Christian value of hospitality.
 - That tension that conflict centers on his recliner: His specific fear is that Mrs. Smith will sit in his brand-new corduroy recliner. He worries that her presence (specifically potential urine stains or odors) will "soil" the chair and that it would "never be the

same again” – and how he doesn’t have too many luxuries and this recliner is that one thing where he can enjoy and relax.

- Lupton reflects on how he has subtly blended the values of self-preservation or protection (protecting property) – even under the guise of “stewardship” with the values of the Kingdom (loving people). He realizes that to truly offer hospitality, he must be willing to sacrifice the "order" and "cleanliness" of his possessions for the sake of the person in love – because of what Christ has done for Him

- **Reflection**

- What’s the temperature of your heart these days towards others? Specifically, what’s the temperature towards one another here at Mercy Hill?
 - Is it warm or do you find it getting colder these days?

- **3. Open Hands (vv.10-11a)**

- (cf. 2:9, 1 Cor 12:4, Luke 22:26, Matt 20:28, Titus 1:7, Luke 16:1-10)
- “As each has received a gift” – not “IF one has a gift...”
 - We’re all the recipients of God’s blessings (gifts)
 - Spiritual gifts: every believer, every Christian is given a spiritual gift or gifts:
 - Speaking gifts: teaching, shepherding (pastoring), exhortation/encouragement, evangelism, prophecy, tongues/interpretation of tongues, etc.
 - Proclaim and apply God’s truth
 - Serving gifts: service, giving, leading, administration, mercy, etc.
 - Demonstrate God’s grace and truth through action
 - Check out: Next Steps – Use Your Gifts booklet on the back table
 - And also general blessings (gifts)
- **Love By Serving One Another with Open Hands**
 - If you’re a Christian, you’re called to serve with open hands – not just to be served; it’s not just the job of the pastors, elders, deacons, leaders, volunteers, etc.
 - 1 Peter 2:9 - 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.
 - We are to use our gifts not for ourselves but to serve others, one another
 - The 3 “one another” (love, hospitality, serve) are difficult because it’s not about us, but about others -- it’s about being self-less, not selfish; it’s about giving, not receiving
 - The church family is the place where we get to work out our self-less muscles!
 - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Body of Christ, each part of the body doing their part to serve the whole body
 - Consider our worship service this morning – how many different people are serving (before the service, during the service and after the service) you all?
 - Serving out of a warm heart, love for the people of God, the church community, the family of God
- **Serve One Another as Faithful Stewards of God's Gifts (Blessing) to Us**
 - Steward = caretaker, manager
 - Really it’s keeping in mind that all that we have, our (spiritual) gifts, abilities, talents, home, jobs, education, possessions, stuff, etc. ultimately aren’t ours -- but God’s. God is the owner, we’re just managers, stewards.

- That's why when we serve, when we speak – we don't do so by our own strength or power but by His. It's why when we speak, we speak His words, not ours. It's why when we serve, it's not our own ability we're showing off, but God's power and strength.

4. For God's Glory (v.11b)

(cf. 5:11, Col 3:17, Matt 5:16, Rev 1:6, 5:13)

- As we have a clear mind, warm hearts and open hands, all this on one hand is for the good of one another, the church family. But ultimately it's for God's glory through Jesus Christ
 - That through our lives, it shines the spotlight not on ourselves, or even our church, but on Jesus!
 - Kevin Durant MVP Speech
 - "The odds were stacked against us. Single parent with two boys by the time you were 20 years old. Everybody told us we weren't supposed to be here, we moved from apartment to apartment by ourselves. One of the best memories I have is when we moved into our first apartment, no bed, no furniture, and we just all sat in the living room and just hugged each other because we thought we made it. When something good happens to you I don't know about you guys, but I look bad at what brought me here and you waking me up in the middle of the night in the summer time, making me run up a hill, making me do pushups. Screaming at me from the sideline of games at eight or nine years old. We weren't supposed to be here, you mad us believe, kept us off the streets, put clothes on our back, put food on the table. When you didn't eat you made sure we ate, you went to sleep hungry, you sacrificed for us. You are the real MVP."
 - After the speech, the only thing everyone talked about wasn't about Kevin Durant but his mom. He turned the spotlight to his mom because he knew that he wouldn't be where he was without his mom, her support, her love and care
- In the same way, how we treat one another as a church community, shines the spotlight not on Mercy Hill but on Jesus and the power of the gospel to redeem and transform a group of misfits like us, who have little in common outside the gospel.

Reflection Questions

- How does knowing that Jesus will return reshape your perspective on life, choices, priorities and even what you pray about and pray for?
- In the areas of love & forgiveness, hospitality and serving – how have you been blessed (i.e. been on the receiving end) by others from Mercy Hill in these areas? How have you seen our church live out these commands? Please encourage someone this week sharing how you've seen
- In which of these areas do you need to grow in: having a clear mind, a warm heart or open hands? Why? What are some specific steps you can take in this coming week?
- How does knowing and keeping in mind the Gospel and Jesus's life encourage and empower you to live this out with our church family here at Mercy Hill?
- Parent Corner: What are some ways you can encourage and help your child grow in these areas? How have -- or can you as a parent lived these out as an example to them?