

This morning, I am beginning a new sermon series I've entitled "Stranger," based on the New Testament book 1 Peter, a letter written by Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus and one of the key leaders in the early church. The title of the series comes from one of the themes of the book, that as followers of Jesus we are strangers in this world, that this world is not our true home. But before I begin, let me remind you why we take the Bible so seriously.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** - *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

We take the Bible seriously because these are the very words of God, breathed out by God. Listen, these words go to the very heart of what it means to live in this world as a human being. Think about it: **how do you know who you are or how you should be living? How do you construct an identity or discover a purpose?** Our culture will tell you to look within and follow your feelings. But what if there is a God? What if you are not just a cosmic accident, a product of a godless evolution, but you are a created being, formed intentionally, for a purpose? If you are created, then if you want to know who you are and how you are to live, you need to get to know the one who created you. You need to know what purpose you were created for. Makes sense, right? If you want to know how to use a microphone, you want to read the manual. If you want to use a car appropriately, you need to know how to drive it and how to care for it. If you try to operate something against its design, there will be problems. I mean, I can decide to use a hammer to brush my teeth, but I'm probably going to get injured in the process. In the same way, if God has created you for a purpose, to live a certain way, and you decide to go your own way, there is going to be some injury in the process.

So as we begin this letter, we need to approach it recognizing that these are the words of God, delivered through the apostle Peter, and that by understanding them and taking them to heart, they can teach us about who we are and how we should be living. Let's read 1 Peter 1 this morning:

**1 Peter 1:1-25** - *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. <sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an*

inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you,<sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.<sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.<sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.<sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,<sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.<sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,<sup>11</sup> trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.<sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.<sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;<sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."<sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.<sup>18</sup> 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 forefathers,<sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.<sup>20</sup> He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.<sup>21</sup> Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.<sup>24</sup> For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,<sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

This is God's Word.

**1 Peter 1:1-25** - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup>

*who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

Who is Peter? He is an apostle. He was one of the original twelve men who were chosen by Jesus, and after Jesus' death and resurrection, he is someone who has been sent by God to be a witness to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. He writes this letter to the Christians in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey, to encourage them during a season of persecution.

Remember that this is God's Word, and that through it we learn who we are and how we are to live in this world. So what do we learn from this passage about who are we? If I had to sum up his message, I think Peter is telling us that **We are chosen by God for obedience to Jesus as strangers in this world.**

What does this identity mean? Three things in particular:

**1) You have been justified, adopted, and regenerated by God**

You have been chosen by God. God has initiated an invitation to you through His Son Jesus and his life, death, and resurrection. He is calling you into a relationship with Him and into an eternally significant purpose that He has for you. You are chosen. There is certainly a lot of mystery to this concept of being chosen, but this language is meant to encourage you that if He has chosen you, then He has a plan for you and He will not reject you.

***John 15:12-16** - My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> **You did not choose me**, but I chose **you** and appointed **you** to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.*

God has chosen you, initiating a relationship with you. And when we respond to that invitation by trusting in Jesus, God does three things in us that are reflected in 1 Peter and throughout the New Testament:

***1 Peter 1:18-19** - 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 forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

You were redeemed, rescued, ransomed, saved, by the blood of Jesus. By His death on the cross, you were saved from sin and eternal separation from God and offered eternal life. This is **Justification**: The legal act of God in which he thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us and declares us to be righteous in his sight (God as judge). As Paul wrote:

***2 Corinthians 5:21** - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Jesus' death redeemed us, ransomed us from our captivity to sin, death, and the devil. And He chose You. You did not choose Him. In fact, you were incapable of choosing Him because of your sin. This is how LOVED you are.

***Romans 5:6-8** - You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

But that is not all he has done. After all, a judge can pardon someone without entering into relationship with them.

**Adoption** is the act of God whereby he makes us members of his family (God as Father).

***1 Peter 1:14-17** - As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." <sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

We are now children, called to imitate our holy Father. We are not just pardoned but brought into an intimate relationship, where we can come boldly to the God of the universe not as judge or king but as our loving Father, who looks upon us with the same love that he looks upon His Son Jesus.

**John 1:12-13** - Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

And as God's adopted children, we have entered into a glorious inheritance:

**1 Peter 1:3-5** - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

We are justified, and we are adopted. But that is not all.

**Regeneration**: The act of God by which he imparts spiritual (eternal) life to us (God as heart surgeon).

**1 Peter 1:3** - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

**1 Peter 1:23** - For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

God has chosen you. Not because of anything special in you, but because He loves you, because He wants you to know Him, and because He has an eternally significant purpose for you. You were spiritually dead, but in Christ, God has made you alive. You are right with God, adopted as His Son, with all the rights of an heir, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be obedient to Him. God's Holy Spirit lives inside of you. And as Peter writes, that gives us a living hope that can not die, for we know that no circumstance and no suffering can take away that treasure.

## 2) This world is not your home

**1 Peter 1:1** - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

Greek word for strangers is **parepidemois** – Those who live in a place where they do not hold citizenship. Resident aliens. Not tourists, but not citizens either. We live in the world but our citizenship is primarily in heaven.

Some of you who have moved here still talk about “home” as elsewhere – Indiana, Colombia, etc. You may live here, but your heart is somewhere else. This is how we are to be as believers. We may live in America, but our heart and our home is in heaven with the Lord.

What makes our home our home? Our home fits us. But this world does not fit us. If things don't fit, if they don't feel right, it's because you're not home. Let that make you long for heaven.

The theme of strangers, of resident aliens or exiles, is a theme throughout the Bible: Abraham, wilderness wanderings, exiles in Babylon. But in reality, it goes back to the beginning – we are exiled from paradise. This world is not our home.

As C.S. Lewis put, it, “If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.”

But one day He will return and bring us home to Him, and there will be praise, glory and honor when we have persevered through this life. Remember what Paul said when talking about the inheritance that is kept in heaven for us:

*1 Peter 1:6-7 - In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

Remember that Peter is writing to a people undergoing suffering and persecution. He writes to encourage them that Jesus also suffered, but that He overcame death, and so we have a living hope, even in the midst of suffering, because we know that this world is not our home and that the best is yet to come. After all, if anyone knew what it was like to be a resident alien, a stranger, it was Jesus, who left the sanctuary of heaven and the fellowship of the Father and Spirit to live down here. Remember what He said:

*Luke 9:57-58 - As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "**Foxes** have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*



Jesus became the exile, the resident alien, so that we might be have a home in heaven. This world is not your home, and this means:

### 3) Put your primary identity, values, and hope in Christ

*1 Peter 1:14-19 - As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." <sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. <sup>18</sup> 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 forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Peter tells the believers that because this world is not their home, that they are to be holy. They are to be set apart from the world. How do you relate to the world? Not withdrawal, but not assimilation either. We love and respect our neighbors, but we do not live like they do. Because our primary identity is in Christ, we live to please Him, not the world in which we live. The rest of the book will talk about what this looks like in the various arenas of your life.

Because this world is not your home, because your primary citizenship is in heaven, makes sure your primary identity is in Christ. Put your identity in Christ above race, ethnicity, political party, profession, or anything else. I am a believer first, and African-American or Asian-American second. I am a believer first, and a teacher or engineer or homemaker second. I am a believer first, and a Democrat or Republican second. We can't allow any other identity to separate us as believers, because this world is not our home and our primary citizenship is in heaven.

Because this world is not your home, because your primary citizenship is in heaven, live according to the values of heaven, not the values of the world, the "empty way of life" as Peter calls it here. What might that look like in this day and age?

Not living for the American Dream, believing that the goal in life is a comfortable life in the suburbs, but believe that it is more blessed to give than receive

Do not believe the lie that following your sexual desires is where joy and happiness is found, but believe that submitting yourself to God's design is best, even if the world sees that as odd or offensive.

Do not follow the values of cancel culture, looking to call out and punish people forever, but be quick to forgive those who confess and repent, just as we have been forgiven.

Do not divide people into categories based on race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, believing that this will somehow bring equity and unity, but treat all as individuals as those who are made in the image of God and possess great dignity and worth.

Do not put your hope in a political party and sell your soul to their agenda, but cast your allegiance with Christ and stand prophetically against the politics of the world.

Live according to the values of heaven. You will offend, and you will suffer. **1 Peter 1:13** - *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.* But if your joy and hope are in Christ, suffering can not take away your treasure. It will only bring you closer to Him.

**1 Peter 1:6-9** - *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

**Because this world is not your home, make sure your primary hope is in Christ.**

**1 Peter 1:3** - *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Do not look to anything in this world to give your life meaning and satisfaction above Him. Everything in this world is passing away, and if your hope is located in the things of this world, you are building your house on the sand.

As Tim Keller put it:



*“If your ultimate love and joy is found in the treasures of this world, then suffering will rob you of your joy and make you sadder and madder. But if your ultimate love and joy is found in God, then suffering will drive you deeper into the source of that joy.”*

Do not live for earthly money or possessions or relationships or success, but put your hope in Christ.

pWe are chosen by God for obedience to Jesus, strangers in this world. Put your hope and joy in Him, even if the world rejects you, for He is all you need.