

Peoples Church Small Group Questions

Date: June 18, 2017

Series: Sanctuary—Hope for Refugees

Pastor: Dale Oquist

Looking Back:

Read 1 Peter 2:11-12. Peter is writing to Christians in what is now present-day Turkey, in a “backwater” province of the Roman Empire, telling them that they are aliens and strangers on Earth. Paul is giving them God’s declarative truth about themselves.

Pastor Dale continued to discuss that who we are, or our “being”, is different than what we do in life. “Being” is our identity; “doing” is our purpose and our accomplishments. Your “being” will dictate your “doing”.

The declarative (as in God’s revealed truth about ourselves) always leads to the imperative (as in producing the fruit of being Christian.) The declarative in 1 Peter is that we are loved by God, we are born new into a living hope, we are holy, and we are living stones, a chosen people, a royal priesthood. On the other hand, the world will try to define us by what we do, especially by our successes, and not by our character. (Aristotle said that if our being informs our doing, then you are living the good life.)

1. Evaluate your life for a moment. Are you driven by success or are you cultivating your “being” first and foremost? If the latter, what are the ways you do so?

Digging Deeper:

For centuries, the Jews have not been in their own land; from the time of being in Egypt, to the captivity in Babylon, to modern times (until Israel became a country in 1948.) in Genesis 23:4, Abraham stated that he was a foreigner and stranger and was asking strangers for a piece of land for a burial site. To keep their culture alive for centuries, the Jews carefully kept their traditions and festivals.

Present-day missionaries realize they are strangers in a culture as well as needing to cross into the culture they live in to become relevant with the Gospel message; likewise, they are not surprised when rejected by their host country. In the same way, we are not at home here! We don’t condemn our culture; instead, being holy and set apart, we speak relevant truth to our culture. Unfortunately, the American church is just like the world, though it follows at a distance. In the book *Transformation of American Religion*, author Alan Wolfe says, “Democratic in their political instincts, geographically and economically mobile, attracted to popular culture more than the written Word, Americans from the earliest times have shaped religion to account for their personal needs...”

2. Are you a missionary where you live and work? What does that look like? Do you have a passion for the written Word?

Taking it Home:

The first century Christians were reviled for their faith. Since they called each other brothers and sisters in the faith, outsiders said they had incestuous relationships with each other during their “love feasts.” Outsiders also called them cannibals for eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ during Communion. Today, the church is called arrogant, intolerant, judgmental, homophobic, hypocritical and the like. Peter gives us our response: “Keep your behavior excellent among the pagans (outsiders), so for the reason they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12).

We are to be fully alive in Christ, letting our deeds testify about our good character. Malcolm Muggeridge said that it is only a dead fish that floats downstream! We need to do whatever it takes to stay vital and stay alive, or we will float downstream. Pastor Dale also quoted Muggeridge, “The first thing I remember about the world...is that I was a stranger in it. This feeling, which is at once the glory and desolation of homo sapiens, provides the only thread of consistency that I can detect in my life.” Also from Muggeridge, “St. Teresa of Avila described our life in this world as like a night at a second-class hotel” and “I can say that I never knew what joy was like until I gave up pursuing happiness, or cared to live until I chose to die. For these two discoveries, I am beholden to Jesus.” As we know, happiness can be obtained through the flesh, joy is obtained through the spirit, through the heart.

3. Have you been reviled for your faith? What did you feel then? What is to be our response?