

1 Peter 4:7-11

Serving Your Neighbor

Image Church // Love Your Neighbor: Week 5

Introduction

Well good morning Image Family, **Happy move-in Sunday!** *Can we put our hands together and celebrate the opportunity that we have to be able to be here!*

- *A big thankyou to our staff team, and our leaders and volunteers that made this happen!*

Also, we have some very special guests here today that I want to recognize... If you could **just stand up** so that we can see you and then we want to thank you!

- **Ms. Gail Brown** – who is our weekly contact here at ECMS
- We have the **Assistant Principal** here at ECMS Mr. **Andri Cooke** and his family here with us today... He is one of the main ones that's made this move possible for us!
- And if there's anyone else here that serves at ECMS

Can we put our hands together and celebrate these folks with a big Image Thank You! We want you to know we love you and we're here for you!

For those of you that are a **first-time guest** with us this morning we're a new church that just celebrated our **2nd birthday in January**, and I want you to know you picked an incredible weekend to join us as we make this transition into our new space here...

And it's a great time for you to jump in with us... And I know you may have questions about *what that looks like or how you can do that...* Well I would love to invite you to stop by our **Connection Center**... Or you can **text the word GUEST** to the number on the screen.

Hospitality is a big deal for us here, and so we want to be able to connect with you so that we know how to love and serve you- we also have a gift for you that you can pick up on your way out at the **Connection Center** if you haven't already done that...

- *We also have people with lanyards on that are here to help you in any way that they can so don't hesitate to grab one of them if you have any additional questions...*

One next step I would encourage you to take if this is your first time joining us is to check out one of our **Community Groups** that's meets closest to you, we have them all over the city on various nights of the week...

- One of the things I like to say is that you haven't really experienced **all** of Image Church until you've had a meal with one of our Community groups! So, head to the Connection center and they can help you do that!

Well, we're in a series called **Love your neighbor**, and the foundation for this series comes from **Matthew 22** where Jesus is asked what's the greatest commandment and Jesus says:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the greatest and most important command. 39 The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus says that everything else **hangs** on these **two things**... He's not saying that everything else doesn't matter, He's saying that everything else **points to these two things!**

- That these two things are at the heart of God's redemptive plan for humanity!
 - So this is a big deal!

Which is why what we're doing in this series is looking at, **what** it means, and **how** we practically live it out...

- By the ways, *if you're here and you're not a Christian* this is great opportunity to hear about who God is and His purpose for what the church should be about...

- Maybe you've been burnt by the church... I want to give you a fresh perspective based on what the Bible teaches as we seek to live this out here at Image Church!

So, if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to 1 Peter 4...

- If you don't have a Bible we have one for you...

As you're turning there let me give you a little context:

The author is of **1 Peter** is **Peter** – I love Peter, first of all he was a fisherman, you got to respect that- *I loving fishing so we connect there...*

- **But Peter gives me so much hope...**
- ***Bless your heart kind of guy-*** and yet he's exactly Jesus says on *this rock I will build my church!*

And so, Peter here is writing to a group of Christians in Asia Minor who were going through some difficult times...

They were being **ostracized** and **shunned** because of their faith... And Peter's writing them to say remember who you are and what your called to do!

Listen, we live in a culture that's not that far off from the context in **1 Peter**... A culture that combats Christianity at every turn pressing against biblical truths for the sake of **pleasure** and **personal gain** at the expense of everyone and everything else...

A culture that claims **tolerance**, yet only uses it as a tool to be **intolerant**... And granted *some of this is the churches fault* for the way that they have approached things in the past...

But regardless, we're left with a question that needs to be answered... How are we as Christians called to live in light of a pressing culture, what does it look like to love in the midst of the crazy history and chaos?? What's our role??

And that's exactly what Peter's going to be addressing in our text this morning...

And the way he's going to do that is starting by reorienting our perspective on life so that we can see our purpose more clearly and then he's going to show us **how that looks and why it's important...**

Let's jump in...

1 Peter 4:7-11

Peter's going to start with this in **verse 7** **The end of all things is near;** *Gee thanks Peter?!? What are you a fatalist?? What the heck is he talking about here?? Why does he lead in with this??*

Let me explain it to you because this is foundational as it relates to Christianity, and it's foundational to what Peter's going to lay out for us in just a little bit...

So, at the very beginning God creates everything, and it is good and perfect... A world with out sin...

But not long after that something happens... **Adam** and **Eve** who were the first created beings choose to disobey God and through them sin enters the world polluting and tainting everything separating mankind from God...

And yet in the midst of that God promises to send a deliverer to redeem mankind, bringing them back into a right relationship with Him...

And then the rest of the **OT** sets up the distinction between God and man, that God is perfect and holy and man is sinful and wicked and that God's promised deliverer is our only hope in bridging the gap of separation that been caused by sin...

Which then leads to **birth of Jesus** the promised deliverer that would rescue mankind once and for all... Jesus came to become our

perfection in his life, and our **punishment** in His death, paying the debt that we owed laying down His life in our place...

And then in His **resurrection** He provides for us the opportunity of new life through Him... Setting us setting us free from our sin and separation from God...

Then He establishes the church and then He ascends to the right hand of the Father and promising that he will once again return to **finish what He started in His resurrection...**

This is where we live right now, we are living post-resurrection just like the people Peter's talking to... But there's still something to come, and that's the **complete restoration of all things...**

See, Jesus' **resurrection** marked the beginning of God's promise to one day make all things new... Jesus dealt with our **sin** and **separation** making a way for us to be with God, but he's not yet dealt with the broken and depraved world around us...

- There's still hurt, pain, death, tragedy, natural disasters, all of which are a direct result of the brokenness that sin caused when it entered the world
- That which was once good, has now been polluted and tainted by sin causing creation to unravel...

But the Bible says that one day Jesus will return and he will make all things new... So, not only has he dealt with **the consequences of sin eliminating our separation** from God, but He'll also deal with the **residual effects** that sin caused among creation! This is incredible!

Revelation 21:3-5

Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. **5** Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new."

This is what Peter's pointing to... he's saying that **this is what's coming** next, the return of Jesus, and we have no idea when that is but we know that each day that passes by is one day closer!

Here's why all of this is so important, what Peter's doing here is *pointing to a factual reality that should shape how we live today...*

Write this down: **What you believe about the future will always shape how you live today.**

Steven Covey talks about this in his book **7 Habits of Highly Effective People**, he says:

Begin with the end in mind... And he goes on to say that *Beginning with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now, so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.*

All **Covey** did is was make a riff off a Biblical principal...

- Peter's **beginning with the end here**, in order to help us have a clear understanding of our destination, so that we can have the right perspective that shapes how we live today!

But here's the challenge: *If what you believe about the future will always shape how you live today, then if you really believe that Jesus is coming back then it should radically shape how you're living today...*

Listen, there's a reason why Jesus spends **20% of His time on earth** talking about His return...¹ Because He's pointing us to the fact that there's more than just this life here on earth- there's a future reality at-hand that far exceeds anything in this life... And Jesus makes clear that the future reality that he offers changes our perspective...

¹ Tim Keller, *Life in Christ's Body*.

Let me give you an Example to help show you how this should play out: When I take my wife to Target...

- It could be an *all-day event...* And here's the thing, I could run over to CFA and get an ice-cream cone, but if I do that and Ashley comes out of Target and I'm in the drive through line, *we're going to have a problem...* So I don't go to CFA... *Truth is I could have gone to CFA 3 times!* But I wait as if she could come out at any moment...

*See, the reality of the fact that Ashley could walk out at any moment impacts the decisions that I make while I wait...

The same is true for us as it relates to Jesus... The reality of His coming at any moment should impact the way that we're living in the meantime while we wait...

It means that in that same way I had to say **no** to CFA ice cream, and the way I had to consider the implications of my actions so that I could be ready for that which was most import, that there's going to be things that we have to say **no** to in this life in order to say **yes** to what's most important...

Life's no longer is centered around us, life's **no longer** about building a kingdom for our name, it's about living with **anticipation** for the return of **King Jesus** which means that we steward what little time that we have on this earth centering our lives around who He is and what He's done and living out the **implications** of that in everyday life...

There's going to be priority shifts, there's going to be a reorientation of how we live, it's not about indulging in our desires, soaking up this life, it's not about being consumers, **it's about being distributors!**

When you understand who Jesus is and what He's done and what that means for you, then you understand that Jesus' return is a

hopeful reality that should shape our priorities and keep our desires in check, and motivate us to live in a way that anticipates His return!

See, it's one thing to say **that you believe Jesus is going to return, it's another thing to live like this it's actually true...**

Listen, like it or not, **the way that we live today is an indication of what we believe about the future...**

- **Appeal to non-Christian... Appeal to stagnant Christian...**

Y'all, listen, this is so important for us to understand, this is massive for those that are Christ-followers, and it's the foundation of what Peter's about to lay out for us...

The radical response that Peter's about to call us to **only makes sense** in light of everything we just talked about...

Alright, now let's look at the practical application that Peter's has for us in light of this... This is how we should reorientation our lives, this is what living in light of the return of Jesus should look like... *Let's keep reading...*

7 The end of all things is near; **therefore**, [here's how you should live in light of the return of Jesus] **be alert and sober-minded for prayer.** [that's a whole nother sermon right there, but the point is that we're to stay ready understanding the reality of Jesus' return and it should motivate us to pray] **8 Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.**

9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. **10** Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. **11** If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. **Amen.**

Ok, so here's the main point that you need to see today:

Living in light of the return of Jesus means leveraging your life through love and service as a demonstration of the grace you've been shown for the glory of God!

So what does this look like for us? Let me give you at least 3 ways this text shows us...

1. Pursue love at all costs

Peter says Above all maintain **consistent** love for one another...

Literally peruse an earnest love for one another...

since **love covers a multitude of sins**. He's saying **consistent love in the face of sin preserves unity**... The heart of what Peter's saying here is our call to the preservation of unity within the church...

Perusing unity means that we have to be willing to lay down your:

- **Preferences**

- Preferences can't be primary- you can have a preference but we can't lead with that... If the goal is love, then it means we're willing to lay down preferences for the sake of being most loving toward others...
- *What if you treated our marriages like we treated the church we would be in trouble!*
 - What is the most loving thing that we can do here, fight for a preference of surrender it for the sake of love?
- Listen, we want to be a church that peruses unity with all people...
- If that's going to happen then it means there's going to be times when you're going to be a little uncomfortable... That's ok- **we want to be comfortable being uncomfortable**...

- **Prejudice**

- There are cultural blind spots that we have to be aware of... We have to lay down opinions and preconceived notions when it comes to how we view people who are different...

- White brothers and sisters... We have to be willing to listen first...
 - There's layers to everything...

- **Political affiliation**

- This is one of the most polarizing things in our culture today...
- Yes, Christians should be active in the public square seeking to make a difference for the kingdom of God fighting for justice and fighting for biblical values...
- But this can be something that divides the church...

- *We have to **assume the best of one another***

- *We have to be **quick to forgive and show grace in the midst of conflict***

Why?? Why do we do all this, because Jesus is coming back, we can lay down these things because they're not the most pressing thing, they're not the most important things... Jesus is and we want to be more about Him than we are about anything else...

And at the end of the day, the way that we do this is by remembering what Jesus has done for us and loving others in light of that...

Jesus didn't lay down part of His life down for us, He laid it all down for us... **We're to do the same for one another!**

And you better believe that if a group of people starts laying down things for the sake of love that the world around us will take notice...

Let's look at secondly what it looks like to live in light of Jesus' return...

2. Use the gift God's given you for the purpose of serving others

Peter says in **Verse 9** Be hospitable to one another without complaining. **10** Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

Let me start here with this... As a Christian, you have a gift... No "if" ...

God's grace has been poured out through gifts as a means for you to display His grace to others... So, when you serve your being *distributors* of, or *stewards* of the grace that God's given you through the gifts that you have...

- You're saying God's served me with His life, so I will serve others...
- You're saying, what I have, has been given to me by God, so I want to use it in a way that points people back to Him...

Notice here that this *isn't optional* by the way... That if you're a Christian, not only do you have a gift, but it's to be used to serve others for the purpose of displaying God's grace...

- Which means that ***if we're not serving others than we're not stewarding that which Jesus died to purchase for us...***

So, let me just stop and ask you ***how are you leveraging the gift that God's given you?*** Are you leveraging your gifts to serve others, or are you using your gifts to serve yourself??

- See ***we will always fail to serve others when we forget about the reality of Christ return...***
- Why? ***Because our focus shifts from His coming to our earthly concerns...*** It becomes about us, and not about Him...
- It's so easy for us to fall into this...

What does the way we leverage our gifts show our kids about what we believe about the future?

What does the way we leverage our gifts show the people around us about what we believe about the future??

That the future is uncertain, grab all we can now, build it all, save it all, for today... Or are we showing them that we have confidence in a future hope that goes beyond this life...

No some of you are thinking ***well, how do you know what your gift is?***

- What do you enjoy doing and how can you leverage it to serve others??
- What are you good at how can you leverage it through the church?

Some of you just need to start somewhere...

Here's something else that's tucked in here that Peter holds up for us:

Hospitality creates the opportunity to use your gifts...

- This is why hospitality is so big for us here on the weekend... This is why we prioritize Community Groups- these are places to practice hospitality and with that leverage our gifts

Let me give you some other examples for how you can leverage your gifts:

- **Start:** get in a context where you can actually use your gifts to love on other consistently...
 - **Community Groups**
 - How this play out through our rhythms
 - Hosting (hospitality), meal (generosity), clean up...
 - How this plays out in care and love
 - Random stop by's... Sharing, helping etc.
- How can you leverage what you do for vocational work or profession to intersect it with missional intentionality?
 - Leveraging your business background
 - Stay at home mom- leverage your flexibility to
 - College student – leverage your freedom and flexibility to serve
- **Weekend here:**
 - Guest services
 - Production
 - Kids
 - Set up/tear down

- **Locally and internationally**

- Serving the community
- Going on a missions trip to love and serve our partners...

This is going to cost you time... But again, when we have the right perspective it changes everything!

Let's look at the 3rd way we're to live in light of the return of Christ...

3. Be about God's glory and not your own

Verse 11: To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

At the end of the day we have to be about God's glory and not our own... I think one of the biggest reasons why we don't love one another well is because we're out for our own glory...

Life's all about us... Until we allow the gospel to shape who we are, until it becomes the barometer, the lens, the gauge... We're never going to love each other well...

Flesh out...

Conclusion [VAMP]

Family the way that we're to navigate our culture today in light of the chaos and conflict, the way that we live out our faith as the church is by:

- 1. Peruse love at all costs**
- 2. Use the gift God's given you for the purpose of serving others**
- 3. Be about God's glory and not your own**

When we do that we will be putting on display the glory of God, being a beacon of hope...

Appeal to non-Christian...

Action step for Christian... What next steps do you need to take toward loving or serving??? What is God leading you to this morning??

We're here to help you can stop by our connection center...