

LIVING HOPE: A Better Way to Live 1 Peter 3:8–12

Introduction

One of the greatest evidences that Jesus has changed a person's life is not simply what they believe about Him. It's how they begin to treat the people around them.

It is possible to attend church every Sunday while holding bitterness toward another believer. It is possible to sing about the grace of God while refusing to extend grace to the people sitting beside you.

Peter understands something we often forget: the gospel isn't meant to stop at information. It's meant to produce transformation.

Throughout our *Living Hope* series, Peter has been teaching us what resurrection life looks like. He began by reminding us that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been born again into a living hope. Our confidence is not rooted in our circumstances but in our Savior. He called us to holiness because the God who saved us is holy. He reminded us that we are living stones being built together into God's spiritual house. He showed us how living hope changes our relationship with authority, how we endure unjust treatment, and how husbands and wives reflect Christ within the home.

Now Peter gathers those conversations together with a simple phrase: "Finally, all of you."

Peter is widening the conversation. He's no longer speaking to one particular group. He is speaking to every believer in the church. Whether you are young or old, married or single, new in your faith or

have followed Christ for decades, Peter is saying, "This is what God's people should look like."

I find it interesting that he doesn't begin with programs, strategies, platforms, or methods. He begins with character.

Before God works through His people, He first works in His people.

The world tells us to protect your image. Get even with those who hurt you. Left to ourselves, our natural instinct is self-protection. Pride tells us to protect our reputation. Fear tells us to protect ourselves. And Anger tells us to get even.

We live in a culture that rewards outrage, celebrates revenge, and often mistakes loudness for courage. We have become increasingly divided, and increasingly quick to assume the worst about one another.

Sadly, those habits do not always stay outside the church. They can find their way into our homes, friendships, ministries, and conversations with other believers. But Peter says there is another way. There is a better way. Not because it is easier, But because it reflects Jesus.

These verses are not merely commands to try harder. They are a picture of the kind of people the Holy Spirit is forming. Peter is describing what resurrection life looks like when it begins reshaping ordinary relationships. This is not merely behavior modification. This is the fruit of a life that has encountered the grace of God.

As I prayed through this passage, I found myself asking a simple question: What would Light & Life Church look like if every one of us actually lived these verses?

Imagine a church where compassion consistently replaced criticism. Imagine husbands and wives who assumed the best instead of the worst. Imagine friendships where humility mattered more than being right. Imagine ministries where people served without demanding recognition. Imagine disagreements marked by gentleness instead of suspicion. Imagine people walking through our doors and immediately sensing something different—not because our music was better, our programs were bigger, or our building was more impressive, but because the character of Jesus was evident in the lives of His people.

Church, I believe that is exactly what Peter wants us to imagine. Not an idealistic dream. A Spirit-filled reality.

Throughout this letter, Peter has reminded us that we are strangers and exiles in this world. We belong to another kingdom. If that is true, then our relationships should reflect the values of that kingdom.

And that brings us to the central truth of today's message:

Living hope transforms not only where we're going one day—it transforms how we live with people today.

Peter is not merely asking us to become nicer people. He is inviting us to become more like Jesus.

[READ: 1 Peter 3:8–12]

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from

deceitful speech. ¹¹ They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

These words were first received by believers scattered throughout Asia Minor who were experiencing rejection, misunderstanding, slander, and growing social pressure because they belonged to Jesus.

Peter has been teaching them how to live faithfully in a world that does not share the values of God's kingdom. Chapter one emphasized their identity. Chapter two emphasized their witness. The beginning of chapter three addressed relationships within the home.

Now this passage serves as a bridge to what's coming.

Beginning in verse thirteen, Peter will address suffering for doing good. But before believers can endure suffering together, they must first learn how to love one another well.

Healthy churches become courageous churches. Courageous churches become powerful witnesses for Christ. Before Peter speaks about the suffering of God's people, he begins with the character of God's people.

Main Point One: Living Hope Changes How We Treat One Another

Text: 1 Peter 3:8

What we read here is not reserved for pastors, mature Christians, or people with naturally gentle personalities. This is God's design for every follower of Jesus.

One of the great dangers in the modern church is that we can become impressed by visible success while neglecting invisible character. We celebrate gifted communicators, talented musicians, growing ministries, and full calendars. Yet Peter reminds us that the true health of a church is revealed not first by what happens on the platform, but by how God's people treat one another when no one is watching.

Jesus said something similar in **John 13:34-35**. The world would recognize His disciples by their love for one another. Think about that! The greatest apologetic for Christianity has never been intellectual alone. It has always been relational. The world should be able to look at the church and see something it cannot explain apart from Jesus Christ.

So here is the question Peter places before the whole church: **What should characterize God's people?**

Peter answers that question with five qualities. Together, they form a portrait of a gospel-shaped church.

The first is **like-mindedness**.

The Greek word is *homophrones*. It means to share a common way of thinking. Peter is not calling for uniformity. He is not suggesting that every Christian must have the same personality, background, political opinion, preference, or perspective on every secondary issue. He is describing people united around a common Lord, a common gospel, and a common mission. Unity is not everyone agreeing about everything. **Unity is everyone submitting everything to Jesus.**

Paul makes the same appeal in **Philippians 2:1-5**. He calls believers to be like-minded by sharing the same love and adopting the mindset of Christ.

An orchestra provides a helpful picture. The violin does not sound like the trumpet. The cello does not sound like the flute. Every instrument has a distinct voice, yet together they create something beautiful because every musician follows the same conductor.

The church is much the same. God never intended for us all to look alike, think alike on every secondary matter, or serve in exactly the same way. But He has called us to follow the same Savior.

Christ is our Conductor. When every heart is surrendered to Him, unity becomes possible even in the midst of diversity.

Peter's second word is **sympathetic**.

The Greek word is *sympatheis*. It carries the idea of suffering with another person.

This is more than feeling sorry for someone. It is entering another person's experience. It is rejoicing when they rejoice and grieving when they grieve, as Paul teaches in **Romans 12:15**. Sympathy requires us to slow down. It requires us to notice people. It requires us to listen before speaking. One of the greatest gifts you can give another person is your presence. Job's friends ministered well during their first seven days with him because they sat beside him in silence. Their problems began when they assumed they had all the answers.

Sometimes people don't need an explanation. They need someone willing to sit beside them.

The third characteristic is **brotherly love**.

Peter uses the word *philadelphoi*. This is family language.

The church is not merely an organization. It is not merely a weekly gathering or a place we attend. Through the gospel, God has adopted us into His family.

The person sitting across the sanctuary from you is not simply another attendee. They are your brother. They are your sister. This kind of love goes beyond friendliness.

Friendliness says, "I'm glad you're here." Brotherly love says, "You belong here." Friendliness welcomes people into a building. Family welcomes people into your life.

Church, We shouldn't settle for being a friendly church when Jesus has called us to become a loving family.

Peter's fourth word is **compassionate**.

The Greek word is *eusplanchnoi*. It describes deep compassion arising from the center of a person's being. Peter is describing hearts softened by the grace of God.

Throughout the Gospels, we repeatedly see that Jesus was moved with compassion. Before He healed, taught, or fed the crowds, His heart was moved. Compassion is more than pity. Compassion moves toward people. It refuses to remain indifferent. It asks, "How can I help carry your burden?"

The church should never become so busy doing ministry that we lose compassion for people

Finally, Peter calls us to be **humble**.

The Greek word is *tapeinophrones*, meaning lowly-minded.

Humility was not widely celebrated in Roman society. Honor, status, strength, and position mattered. Christianity turned those values upside down. Jesus didn't just teach humility. He embodied it.

[READ OR SUMMARIZE: Philippians 2:5–8]

Although Jesus possessed the very nature of God, He took the nature of a servant and humbled Himself even to death on a cross.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less because your life is centered upon Christ.

- Pride asks, "How does this affect me?" Humility asks, "How can I serve?"
- Pride protects its position. Humility lays down its rights.
- Pride keeps score. Humility keeps serving.

These five characteristics are expressions of one life shaped by the gospel.

- Like-mindedness protects our unity.
- Sympathy shares another person's burden.
- Brotherly love reminds us that we belong to one family.
- Compassion moves us toward those who hurt.
- Humility places others before ourselves.

When we step back and look at this list, one reality becomes unmistakable. Peter is describing Jesus.

Jesus was perfectly united with the Father's will. Jesus entered our suffering. Jesus welcomed us into His family. Jesus was moved with compassion. Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross.

Peter is not merely giving us five moral virtues to imitate. He is pointing us toward the character of Christ Himself.

And here is the simple truth we need to remember:

When Christ changes our hearts, He changes the way we treat others.

The evidence of transformation is not only what comes out of our mouths during worship. It is what comes out of our lives when relationships become difficult.

The Christian life is not simply about trying harder. It is about becoming more like Christ through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

Imagine what would happen if every member of Light & Life asked the Holy Spirit to grow these qualities within us.

Imagine our conversations. Imagine our marriages. Imagine our Life Groups. Imagine our serving teams. Imagine the next guest who walks through our doors.

What if the first thing they encountered was a church that genuinely looked like Jesus?

But character is not truly tested when relationships are easy. Character is revealed when we are under pressure.

Main Point Two: Living Hope Changes How We Respond to Conflict

Text: 1 Peter 3:9–11

It is one thing to be compassionate when people appreciate you. It is another thing to remain compassionate when they criticize you.

It is one thing to pursue peace when everyone agrees. It is another thing to pursue peace when you have been misunderstood, overlooked, wounded, or insulted.

Peter knows that sooner or later every believer will experience conflict. The Christians receiving this letter were already facing rejection because of their faith. Some had lost relationships and influence. Many were being slandered simply because they belonged to Jesus.

Peter does not promise that following Jesus will prevent conflict. Instead, he addresses the question every disciple must eventually answer: **How do followers of Jesus respond when they are mistreated?**

Listen again to Peter's answer. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. Instead, repay evil with blessing. Those words are as countercultural today as they were two thousand years ago.

Everything in our flesh wants to repay. If someone raises their voice, we want to raise ours. If someone insults us, we begin composing our response before they finish speaking. If someone criticizes us publicly, we feel compelled to defend ourselves immediately. Our natural instinct is retaliation.

Peter says that followers of Jesus are learning a different instinct. The word translated "repay" is *apodidomi*. It means to return something or give someone what you believe they deserve.

Peter says, "Do not do it." Do not return evil. Do not return insults. Break the cycle.

Retaliation feels natural because resentment grows quickly. Someone hurts you, and you replay the conversation. You think of what you wish you had said. Then you imagine the next conversation. Before long, you have had an entire argument in your mind, and the other person does not even know it happened. Living hope interrupts that cycle.

Instead of retaliation, Peter calls us to bless.

The Greek word is *eulogeo*. It means to speak well of or invoke God's favor upon another person. He's not merely telling us not to get even. He calls us to actively desire God's good for the people who have hurt us. That sounds impossible. Apart from the grace of God, it is.

Peter's life gives credibility to these words. Remember who is writing. This is the disciple who once drew a sword in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter once believed strength meant fighting back. He attempted to defend Jesus through violence. Now, after encountering the risen Christ and being transformed by the Holy Spirit, Peter writes, "Bless instead."

What changed? Jesus changed Peter.

Peter watched Jesus live this before he wrote it. When Jesus was falsely accused, He did not retaliate. When He was mocked, He did not curse those mocking Him. When soldiers crucified Him, He prayed for their forgiveness. Peter never forgot it.

Earlier in this letter, Peter pointed directly to Christ's example.

[READ: 1 Peter 2:21–23] Jesus did not retaliate when He suffered. He entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly. Now Peter says that the pattern of Jesus should become the pattern of our lives.

Jesus doesn't only save us from sin. **He teaches us a better way to live.**

Jesus taught this in **Matthew 5:38–48**. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Paul echoes it in **Romans 12:17–21**. Do not repay evil for evil. Do not take revenge. As far as it depends upon you, live at peace with everyone. Overcome evil with good.

Jesus teaches it. Paul teaches it. Peter teaches it.

This is not advanced Christianity. This is normal Christianity.

Peter says we have been called **to blessing**, so that we may inherit a blessing.

We do not bless people in order to become God's children. We bless people because we already are God's children. Children resemble their Father.

Our heavenly Father blessed us when we deserved judgment. Now His children become conduits of that same grace to the people around them.

Peter supports his argument by drawing from **Psalms 34:12–16**. David wrote Psalm 34 after one of the most difficult seasons of his life. He was running, afraid, misunderstood, and rejected. Yet he did not teach revenge. He wrote about guarding the tongue, turning from evil, doing good, seeking peace, and pursuing it.

Peter reminds the church that God's people have always been called to this better way.

First, we must **guard our tongues.**

That is where many conflicts begin. **James 3** reminds us that the tongue is small but extraordinarily powerful. Relationships have been destroyed through words spoken in anger. Churches have been divided because people refused to govern their speech. Before conflict becomes visible in our actions, it usually appears in our words. Holy speech reflects a holy heart.

Second, Peter says to **turn from evil and do good.**

Holiness is not merely avoiding sin. Peter does not simply say, "Stop doing evil." He says, "Replace evil with good."

Christianity is never only subtraction. It is transformation. The Spirit does not merely remove old habits. He forms new ones.

Finally, Peter says to **seek peace and pursue it.**

The word translated "pursue" is *dioko*. It means to chase, run after, or relentlessly pursue something. The same word can be used elsewhere for persecution.

Peter almost reverses the image. Instead of pursuing revenge, pursue peace. Instead of chasing your rights, chase reconciliation.

Before we go any further, pursuing peace does not mean remaining in an abusive or dangerous situation. Peter is not commanding victims to remain exposed to evil. Forgiveness does not eliminate wisdom, accountability, appropriate authorities, or necessary boundaries.

We can refuse retaliation while still naming wrongdoing. We can forgive while establishing safety. We can pursue peace without pretending that trust has already been restored.

Christian forgiveness and reconciliation are related, but they are not identical. Forgiveness can begin within one surrendered heart. Reconciliation requires truth, repentance, safety, and participation from everyone involved.

Peter is not telling believers to ignore evil. He is telling us not to let evil reproduce itself inside our hearts.

Peace is rarely passive. It requires initiative. It requires humility. It requires difficult conversations. It requires forgiveness.

Sometimes we say, "I hope things eventually get better." Peter says, "Pursue peace."

Pick up the phone. Have the conversation. Extend forgiveness. Ask for forgiveness. Take the first step.

The world teaches us to protect ourselves by striking back. Jesus teaches us to entrust ourselves to the Father.

The world says winning is everything. Jesus says love is greater.

The world says get even. Jesus says bless.

That kind of life makes no sense to a watching world until they see Jesus. No one has ever absorbed more evil than Jesus Christ. He was betrayed, abandoned, falsely accused, mocked, beaten, and crucified. Yet from the cross came words of forgiveness. That is not only an example for us. It is the gospel for us.

Jesus absorbed the evil that belonged to us so that we could receive the blessing that belonged to Him.

When you understand how much mercy you have received, it becomes increasingly difficult to withhold mercy from someone else.

The cross doesn't merely forgive our retaliation. It frees us from needing it.

Is there a conversation you keep replaying? Is there bitterness you have quietly nurtured? Is there someone you have been waiting on to make the first move?

Living hope chooses a better way—not because the other person deserves it, but because Jesus has already given us what we never deserved.

But how can we keep living this way when it feels so costly? Peter gives us one final motivation.

Main Point Three: Living Hope Gives Us Confidence to Live Differently

Text: 1 Peter 3:12

Peter has called us to choose blessing instead of retaliation, peace instead of revenge, and faithfulness instead of self-protection.

But by this point, some of his readers were probably asking the same questions we ask.

- What if blessing does not change them?
- What if I forgive and they hurt me again?
- What if I pursue peace and they reject it?
- What if doing the right thing costs me?

Those are honest questions. Peter does not dismiss them or offer an easy answer. He directs our attention away from the people who have hurt us and toward the God who watches over us.

That brings us to the final question of this passage: **Why can followers of Jesus continue choosing the better way?**

Listen to Peter's answer. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. His ears are attentive to their prayers. His face is against those who do evil.

Peter concludes his quotation from Psalm 34 by pointing us toward the character of God. When Peter tells us not to retaliate, he is not asking us to pretend evil does not matter. He is not asking us to ignore injustice or become passive.

He reminds us that justice ultimately belongs to God. God's people are called to faithfulness. God reserves final judgment for Himself.

One of the heaviest burdens we carry is trying to do God's job. We want to settle every score, correct every misunderstanding, defend every accusation, win every argument, and control every outcome.

Peter gently reminds us: **You don't have to carry what God never asked you to carry.**

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous." This does not simply mean God notices us from a distance. It speaks of His attentive care, loving awareness, and covenant faithfulness.

Nothing escapes His attention. Every unseen act of kindness. Every quiet act of obedience. Every moment you chose forgiveness instead of retaliation. Every prayer whispered through tears. Every sacrifice no one else noticed. God saw it.

Parents, you keep praying for your children, because the Lord sees.

Spouses, you keep acting with faithfulness and love when it is not always returned. The Lord sees.

Employees, you choose integrity when cutting corners would be easier. The Lord sees.

Students, you refuse to compromise your faith even when it costs you socially. The Lord sees.

Some of the most encouraging words in Scripture are simply these: **God sees.**

Peter also says His ears are attentive to prayer.

The Creator of heaven and earth listens—not reluctantly or occasionally, but attentively, like a loving Father leaning toward His child.

You may feel ignored by the world. You are never ignored by your Father.

People may misunderstand your motives. God does not.

People may overlook your faithfulness. God never will.

Then Peter says the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. That is strong language. In the Old Testament, the face of God can represent His favor or His opposition. Peter reminds suffering believers that God has not lost control. Evil does not have the final word. Justice has not been forgotten. The Judge of all the earth will do what is right.

When I know God sees, I do not have to demand that everyone else see. When I know God hears, I do not have to shout louder to make my case. When I know God judges justly, I do not have to become the judge. That's freedom.

One of the greatest prisons we build for ourselves is the constant need to prove ourselves right. The gospel frees us because our identity is no longer built upon winning arguments. It is built upon belonging to Christ.

There is a beautiful progression in this passage. Peter begins with our relationships inside the church. He moves to our response toward those who hurt us. Then he lifts our eyes toward heaven.

You will never consistently live differently until you learn to see differently.

When your eyes are fixed on people, you will constantly be tempted to retaliate. When your eyes are fixed on Christ, you find strength to trust Him.

Jesus did exactly that. **Hebrews 12:2-3** tells us that for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross. Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father.

That same confidence belongs to us. Our living hope is not wishful thinking. It is confidence in a faithful God.

He sees. He hears. He knows. He is present. He is just. He is faithful. He has never abandoned His people.

Therefore, you can forgive. You can bless. You can pursue peace.

Not because people always deserve it, but because your Father is worthy of your trust.

Peter never asks believers to focus primarily on changing other people. He calls us to become the kind of people Christ is changing.

That is the better way. Not because it is easier. Not because it always produces immediate results. But because it reflects the heart of Jesus.

When the world sees humility where it expected pride, compassion where it expected indifference, blessing where it expected revenge, and peace where it expected conflict, it catches a glimpse of another kingdom—a kingdom ruled by a crucified and risen King.

By the grace of God, I believe Light & Life can be that kind of church

The Gospel Creates a Different Kind of People

As we step back from this passage, we see that Peter is doing much more than giving practical advice for healthy relationships. He is showing us what the Holy Spirit produces in people who have been transformed by the gospel.

Every command reflects the character of the God who gave it. God is compassionate. God is merciful. God blesses people who deserve judgment. God has humbled Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

The story of Scripture begins with humanity living in perfect relationship with God and with one another.

Then sin entered the world. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. Cain murdered Abel. Violence spread. Division multiplied.

Sin does not only separate us from God. It fractures human relationships. It separates husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors, nations, and even churches. Left to ourselves, we drift toward pride, division, resentment, and retaliation. But God refused to leave His creation in its brokenness. He sent His Son. Jesus entered our world not merely to forgive isolated acts of sin but to create a new humanity.

Ephesians 2:14–18 tells us that Christ Himself is our peace. Through His cross, He reconciled us to God and to one another.

The cross is vertical and horizontal.

Jesus restored our relationship with the Father and created a new family, a new people, a new kingdom, and a church.

Grace humbles us. Grace softens us. Grace teaches us to forgive because we have been forgiven. Grace teaches us to bless because we have been blessed. Grace teaches us to pursue peace because Christ made peace between us and God.

John Wesley spoke about holiness as perfect love—not sinless performance or never making another mistake, but a heart increasingly filled with love for God and love for neighbor.

That is what Peter is describing. The Christian life is not about becoming more religious. It is about becoming more like Jesus.

Romans 8:29 tells us that God is conforming us to the image of His Son.

Galatians 5:22–23 describes the fruit the Holy Spirit produces.

Philippians 1:6 promises that the God who began the work will carry it toward completion.

The Holy Spirit is not only preparing us for heaven someday. He is making us more like Jesus today.

Peter is not asking us to manufacture something that does not exist. He is calling us to live consistently with who Christ has already made us.

We no longer belong to the kingdom of retaliation. We belong to the kingdom of reconciliation.

We no longer belong to the kingdom of pride. We belong to the kingdom of humility.

We no longer belong to the kingdom of hatred. We belong to the kingdom of love.

Every time we choose forgiveness over bitterness, blessing over revenge, and compassion over indifference, we give the world a glimpse of the coming kingdom of God.

That is why this passage is bigger than good manners.

It is kingdom living. It is resurrection living. It is living hope made visible.

Challenge and Response

Church, Peter has shown us what a Spirit-filled community looks like. The question now is not simply whether we understand this passage. The question is whether we are willing to live it. So let the Holy Spirit search your heart.

Conviction

- Who in your life is the hardest person for you to bless right now?

- Where has resentment quietly taken root?
- Have you become more committed to being right than being reconciled?
- Are your words bringing healing, or are they adding fuel to conflict?
- When people spend time with you, do they experience the compassion of Christ or simply your opinions?
- Is there someone you have spoken about more than you have prayed for?

Maybe the Holy Spirit has placed a specific name in your mind.

A family member. A coworker. A former friend. Someone in this church. Someone you have quietly avoided. Do not ignore that prompting. The Holy Spirit is remarkably kind. He does not expose these places to condemn us. He exposes them so He can heal us.

Transformation

- Some of us need to repent because our words have brought harm.
- Some need to release the desire for retaliation.
- Some need to surrender the constant need to defend themselves.
- Some need to forgive while also establishing wise and necessary boundaries.
- Some need to stop trying to control the outcome and entrust the situation to the Father who sees, hears, and judges justly.
- And some of us need Jesus to give us a new heart.

You cannot live the life Peter describes through human strength alone. You need the mercy of the Father, the saving work of the Son, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The invitation today is not simply, "Try harder." The invitation is, "Surrender more fully."

Ask the Holy Spirit to make you more like Jesus. Ask Him to soften what has become hard. Ask Him to uproot bitterness. Ask Him to give you compassion where there has been indifference, humility where there has been pride, and courage where fear has kept you from doing what is right.

Praxis

But this passage cannot remain only in our hearts. It must enter our calendars, our conversations, our phones, and our relationships.

- Who do you need to call this week?
- Who do you need to apologize to?
- Who do you need to forgive?
- Who do you need to encourage?
- What conversation have you been avoiding?
- Where do you need to stop rehearsing the offense and start praying for the person?
- Where do you need to pursue peace?

For some of you, obedience may mean sending a message before the end of today. For others, it may mean asking someone to sit down with you this week. For some, it may mean confessing, "I was wrong. Will you forgive me?" For others, it may mean saying, "I forgive you, but rebuilding trust will require truth, time, and healthy boundaries." For

some, pursuing peace may mean inviting wise pastoral help, counseling, or appropriate accountability into a situation you should not try to navigate alone.

Mission

And church, this is not only about our personal relationships. This is about our witness. Peter is not merely trying to produce nicer Christians. The Holy Spirit is creating a people whose shared life makes Jesus visible to the world.

Imagine if Light & Life became known throughout North Long Beach not simply because of our worship, our preaching, or our ministries.

Imagine if people said, "Those people forgive differently."

"They handle conflict differently."

"They genuinely love one another."

"They pursue peace without compromising truth."

"They have a hope that changes the way they live."

Imagine what that kind of church would mean for Long Beach. Imagine what it would mean for the next generation watching us.

Our children and young people are not only listening to what we say about Jesus. They are watching how we treat one another when we are disappointed, offended, criticized, or hurt. The gospel becomes visible when a divided world sees a reconciled people. The gospel becomes visible when a bitter world sees a forgiving people. The gospel becomes

visible when a self-centered world sees a compassionate people. The gospel becomes visible when a retaliating world sees people who bless.

Church, what kind of church is the Holy Spirit creating? A united church. A compassionate church. A humble church. A forgiving church. A trusting church. And through all of this, a missionary church—a people whose life together points beyond itself to Jesus Christ.

That kind of church does not happen accidentally. It happens one surrendered heart at a time.

Benediction

Heavenly Father, thank You for calling us to be Your people and giving us a living hope through the resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. As we leave this place, shape us into a church marked by unity, compassion, humility, and love. When we are tempted to repay evil for evil, remind us that You first showed mercy to us. Help us pursue peace, guard our words, and reflect Your heart in every relationship.

Lord Jesus, thank You for showing us the better way. You did not return insult for insult but willingly bore our sin upon the cross so that we could receive the blessing we could never earn. May we follow in Your footsteps this week. Let Your love become our love, Your humility become our humility, and Your grace become the grace we freely extend to others.

Holy Spirit, fill us afresh as we go. Produce within us the fruit only You can grow. Make us like-minded in Christ, sympathetic toward those who suffer, devoted to one another as family, tenderhearted toward the hurting, and humble in every circumstance. Give us courage to bless

those who oppose us, wisdom to pursue peace, and faith to trust that our Father sees, hears, and cares for us.

Now may the Lord watch over your coming and going. May His eyes be upon you, His ears attentive to your prayers, and His peace guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. May your life this week become a living testimony that our hope is alive because our Savior is alive.

We ask this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.