



ROSE
HILL
CHURCH

1 Peter 2:13-17
Exiles – 1 Peter
“With Respect For All”

Rev. Brian North
October 16th, 2022

We are in the middle of a 6-week series on how to live out and share our faith, so that others might be attracted to Jesus, recognizing that the culture around us is not particularly hospitable toward what we believe. The first Sunday we talked about the fear of shame and rejection that we often have about the idea of sharing our faith, which can then cause us not to share. Last Sunday we talked about having a reverent fear of God, rather than a fear of people, and how that reverent fear and the accompanying desire to please God can help us overcome our fear of others and how they might respond to us.

But that still leaves us with the question: How *do* we relate to other people, especially when the conversation gets a little deeper than just the weather, the Mariners, and inflation? This last spring I found myself in a conversation with a guy that I only knew a little. He and I had boys on the same basketball team, and had only conversed a little about sports.

But then we ended up in an extended conversation for three hours or more that started out with common interests such as skiing and water skiing that we discovered about each other, but then when he found out I was a pastor he had all kinds of other questions as well as opinions that he wanted to share about religion, parenting, sex, sexuality, politics, and more. We were on opposite sides on a number of issues...and it was the best, most respectful conversation I've had in years (ever?) in such a situation. It was not argumentative. We've bumped into each other a couple times since then out in the neighborhood and chatted about summer vacations and our families. Our boys are on the same basketball team again right now. I saw him in the stands last week when I showed up for a game, and I went and sat next to him....and he didn't get up and find a new seat. So, the conversation did not drive a wedge between us.

So: How can we connect with people who may be completely different from us on important matters of deep conviction? How can we talk about those things, and still have a good relationship – whether it's the parent of

your kid's friend, your co-worker, your spouse, another family member? In today's world, where seemingly every topic is polarizing and wrecking relationships, this is such a needed thing to understand and get a firm grasp of. And today's passage, as well as others that we'll look at also, gives us some wisdom and insight about this. We are in **1 Peter 2:13-17** this morning. This is God's word to you and me today...

So, in a nutshell, Peter is telling these Christians – who are living under the Roman Empire rule, which is not “their government” – he tells them to be subject to them – to the emperor and to their governors. But there's a reason why he tells them this. This is the key to the whole thing. **“Be subject for the Lord's sake...” (1 Peter 2:13)**. In other words, you may disagree with government officials, you may not have voted for your officials (not that they did...but we do), you may not like the laws of the land, you may not care for other “human institutions”...but there's a higher calling upon you. There's someone else who rules over your heart and is Lord of lords and King of kings. His name is Jesus, and he is the one we are ultimately living for, who reigns over all time and space.

And because of that greater cause, because Jesus' rule and reign is for eternity, and because His good news is for all people – from the seats of power to the streets of our cities – because of all that: **Peter is telling them, and now us, to live in a way that demonstrates his Lordship in our lives.** Live as servants of God. Don't be afraid of others. Don't shut down your faith. Live for Jesus first and foremost no matter the circumstances, no matter the government, no matter the laws of the land.

And then, with Jesus as truly Lord, he tells them to honor people. Honor *all* people, even the Emperor. He also tells them to love their fellow believers. And he tells them to fear God; he writes of that elsewhere, and we talked about that theme extensively last week. Now, those last two – honor other believers and fear God – are fairly expected and unsurprising. The eye-catching stuff, the part that would shock them is to honor everyone – including the Emperor. And to honor the Emperor means to honor the rest of the government and all their officials, as well.

He's telling them that: **Furthering the cause of Christ happens best when we take the high road...** When we don't take the bait and engage in arguments and don't use our freedom as an excuse for bad behavior (v. 16) and bad mouthing of others...because that's the obvious response. That's the human-nature response. That's the natural response...the easy response. The Godly, Spirit-led, and inspired response is counter-intuitive, and it stands out from the crowd.

Yesterday, the Mariners' season came to a close with an epic 18 inning, 1-0 battle against the Houston Astros. But, at the start of this baseball season, the Mariners' centerfielder, Julio Rodriguez, a 21-year old rookie, was called out at the plate on an inordinate amount of called third strikes. Many of them, as well as a number of first and second strikes – were outside the strike zone. It was pretty obvious to anyone who watched his at-bats. It was unbelievably frustrating for him, for the Mariners Manager (Scott Servais), the other Mariners players...the whole organization – and even people outside the Mariners organization acknowledged that Julio had a lot of bad calls against him that first month. And people in the organization and outside of it as well, were pretty upset by it.

But not Julio. He never reacted in anger. He didn't stare down the umpires, didn't slam a bat to the ground. Didn't throw his helmet in disgust. Didn't argue the called strikes. All the things most batters would do in his situation, he didn't do. He just honored the umpires, honored their calls, stayed humble, and kept his cool. *And people took notice.* The announcers commented on it. Others spoke up about it...because it stood out from the crowd. He had incredible composure, patience, and respect for the umpires – as a 21-year old rookie – and the baseball world noticed. The way he handled himself got people's attention, because he was mature beyond his years.

This is how Peter is telling them to live. Live counter-culturally, counter-intuitively, and don't do what most would expect. **Surprise people with how you live. Surprise them with your kindness. Surprise them with your love. Surprise them with your patience. That's the kind of stuff that shows honor and respect.** And then he gets into some specific situations and relationships at the level of the home in the verses after what we read. He

addresses slaves, telling them to live with “reverent fear” of God and to submit themselves to their masters. Peter appeals to the suffering that Christ took for us as the example for them – how Jesus didn’t hurl back insults or get into an argument. At the start of chapter 3 he encourages wives of unbelieving husbands to win their husbands over to Jesus with their respectful and honoring behavior, words, and attitudes toward their husbands. And then he tells husbands to treat their wives with respect, as well. That, quite frankly, might have been the most shocking, and countercultural statement out of all of these directives, because in their culture, a husband’s rule in the house went unchecked and many took advantage of that. Peter is telling the husbands in these churches – like the others – to live counter-culturally and to honor and respect their wives...to set aside their cultural position of power and lift up their spouses.

All of this is so that the good news of Jesus might be shared through how they live. It’s all for the sake of Jesus. That part just can’t be emphasized enough. Live for Jesus. Speak for Jesus. Respect others for Jesus. Humble yourself for Jesus. Honor others for Jesus. Everything is about the lordship of Jesus in our lives, living like him, so that people would see him in us and be drawn to him. Rather than creating an obstacle to talking about faith, it opens doors. It surprises people. It makes them take notice.

So, how does one respect and honor others? Certainly, it’s more than just passively enduring ridicule, demeaning comments, shame, rejection, and so forth, right? Respecting and honoring others must include more active things that we can *do*.

The Apostle Paul gives some incredible insight into what this looks like in the book of Romans. Like 1 Peter, it’s a letter written to Christians who are standing against cultural norms. And in chapter 12, verses 14-21, he writes, **“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn...” (Romans 12:14).** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not

take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:14-21).

What a shocking thing in today's world of blame and attack and defensiveness. "Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them...don't lash out at them...do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil...as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge. If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink...overcome evil with good." Overcome evil with good. THAT is what Peter is telling these people. And that stands out.

All of this is God's Word, of course...but if our response is, "Well, what does Jesus have to say?"...then there are any number of teachings we could look at, but how about this from Luke's gospel: **"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Jesus, in Luke 6:27-28).**

Where do we think Paul and Peter get their ideas from? Clearly, from Jesus! So, honoring and respecting others is far more than being passive. It's not just withholding your words of frustration or anger or attack because someone else thinks different than you in matters of religion, economics, sexuality, politics, the environment, or whatever other topic can blow up in our faces.

The Biblical teaching about honoring and respecting others, rooted in what Jesus himself says, is to *actively bless* and love our neighbors...even our "enemies"...to do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. THAT stands out from the crowd. THAT catches peoples' attention. THAT is living as Jesus lived. THAT is paying people honor and respect while authentically living your faith, living like Jesus. THAT is living for the sake of the Lord. And it gets people saying, "What's up with that person? They are always so kind, gracious, hopeful, joy-filled, selfless, and they never get rattled by what's going on in the world.

I can talk with them about anything and they don't get angry or judgmental. Why?"

In the “Evangelism as Exiles” book, Elliot Clark writes in chapter 3, **“The American cultural proclivity to reject authority and put down opponents has bled into the church, staining all our attempts to win a hearing for the gospel. So, if we truly desire an open door for evangelism, we in the church can't be those who sling mud on political rivals and throw shade on their followers. We can't succumb to the rancor of the 24/7 news cycle. Perhaps most important of all, we can't dishonor our opponents by dehumanizing them.”** (Elliot Clark, *Evangelism As Exiles*, p. 75).

When I had this conversation with the other parent that I started the message with, I intentionally did not once judge him or belittle his views or anything like that. Instead: I asked questions. Praise God for his Spirit getting through to me in that moment! I tried to hear where he was coming from. I showed genuine care and concern and a desire to understand where he was coming from...and because I was open to him and his views he ended up sharing some really deep, painful things from his life that have shaped his views. That further opened doors to show compassion...even be a pastor to him in the moment. And then he reciprocated by asking questions and learning where I came from. And even though I had some starkly differing views than him on these things, he listened because I didn't belittle or judge him. And he didn't do that to me, either.

A few pages after the quote I shared and is up on the screen, Elliot Clark writes writes, **“To honor others is to have a genuine care and concern for them. So, this is what we must do—even for those who have no concern for us** (Elliot Clark, *Evangelism As Exiles*, p. 82). This is what Peter is getting at. The Emperor has no concern, a slave's master frequently had no concern, a husband – in their culture – often had no concern...and the instructions are: honor them. Bless them. Show genuine care and concern for them.

This is how you build relationships and connect with people. It's how God works through you to be the hands and feet of Jesus. It's how you live for the

sake of the Lord. That *has* to be the overriding concern. It's more important than the things that divide us. So, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, let's honor and respect people, including when their views and lifestyles are completely different than ours. We can honor and respect them by living with genuine care and concern for them – listening to them...listening to them...listening to them...loving on them, offering to pray for them, and blessing them however we can, so that the light of Christ would shine, and we might demonstrate what it really means to live with Jesus as Lord. Let's pray...Amen.