



ROSE
HILL
CHURCH

1 Peter 4:8-10
Exiles – 1 Peter
“The Good News of Home”

Rev. Brian North
November 6th, 2022

This morning is the last in a series of messages we've been in for several weeks that is titled, “Evangelism as Exiles.” A book of the same name has given us this series title, and has also helped shape the theme of each Sunday's message. The series has been about encouraging us and helping us to see how we can share our faith by living more authentically as followers of Jesus, even when we are in a culture that largely stands against our beliefs. Spiritually speaking, we are exiles in our own land. So how do we help others receive the good news of Jesus given the context in which we find ourselves? That's what this series has been all about. Next week we will return to our journey through the Gospel of John.

In this series, the New Testament letter of 1 Peter has given us our texts for each Sunday, and that continues today with a look at a few verses in 1 Peter Chapter 4. Briefly, however, let me re-cap each Sunday to remind us, and to get any of us up to speed who missed a Sunday or five in this series.

The first Sunday's message looked at how shame and the fear of exclusion by others often prevents us from being authentic about our faith in our everyday lives. That led into the next week's message where we talked about fighting fear with fear. Those whom we fear are the ones we tend to please, and our aim is to please God. So, the fear of God trumps our fear of people. Pleasing God trumps pleasing people.

In week three we looked at this idea that while we want to please God first, that doesn't mean doing so in such a way that is disrespectful or ungentle toward others. We want to live out our faith in a way that is respectful toward others. And that led to week four where we talked about how a respectful way of sharing our faith is by declaring the praises of God. We can very easily and effortlessly praise God in our daily lives rather than confining it to Sunday mornings. Praise can always be on our lips, it can be a way of life, a natural part of who we are.

And then last week we talked about living holy lives. We are called to be holy because God is holy (1 Peter and Leviticus). We are set apart for God. We want to be “visibly different.” Not “visibly the same” and not “invisibly different”...we want to be visibly different – holy, set apart for God right where we live, work, and play.

That brings us to today. Unlike the others we’ve looked at in this series, today’s theme is not a prominent one in 1 Peter, though it is prominent in Scripture, including in Jesus’ teaching. So, let’s turn to **1 Peter 4:8-10**.

So, in this passage: **There are three things Peter writes of that we Jesus-followers are to do as we live out our faith: Love each other deeply; offer hospitality to one another without grumbling; and serve others.** Love and service we see throughout Scripture, including throughout Jesus’ ministry. Anyone who’s followed Jesus for very long knows that loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves are the two great commandments that Jesus highlights. We also know that this love isn’t only for those who are already Jesus-followers but for outside the church as well. Peter emphasizes the love within the fellowship of the church here, but you can’t read the Bible without coming to the conclusion that our love has no bounds in who it reaches.

Serving others is highly valued in Scripture as well. Jesus’ statement, “For the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve” is one of many teachings about serving others, and we see all kinds of examples of this service from Jesus’ life and from others in Scripture as well. **Sandwiched in between “love” and “serve” is this command to offer hospitality.** I don’t think it’s an accident that he put it in between the other two. He wants to connect our hospitality to both our love and our service.

If you’ve ever extended yourself in hospitality, you know it can be tiring, it can be stressful, and it doesn’t always bring out the best in us. For Thanksgiving of 2019, we hosted Thanksgiving at our house for 22 people **(Photo)** including our family: my parents, my sister and her husband and

three kids, my sister's parents-in-law, Gwen's mom was there, a childhood friend of Gwen's was there with her husband and child; her friend's mom was there, one of Gwen's cousins and his wife was there, and then the six of us.



And although everyone pitched in by bringing side dishes and beverages, and so forth, it still was taxing for us. We cooked the turkey and some other things, too. It took a lot of effort to get the house ready, move furniture and bring in another table so we could all sit at one table, and so forth. Even having just one other family over can be a bit stressful. And because these things are taxing and because not all of us have Martha Stewart's hospitality genes... **Peter commands them to show hospitality "without grumbling."** Be hospitable and *be happy* about it, darn it! ☺ That's kind of the way it comes across here.

So, this all begs the question: What's the big deal about hospitality? What does it have to do with sharing our faith? What's the big deal about opening our homes up to others? Why would we go to that effort, why would we put ourselves out there like that? **Here's why: Because there are people in your life who have never darkened the door of a church (or haven't in decades), and will turn down an invitation to join you at church, but will gladly come over to your house for a meal.** And those are actually the people Peter is telling us to invite over. When he writes of "hospitality" the word is *philoxenos*. It's a compound word. **Philoxenos (hospitality): "Philo" is one of the Greek words for "love." "Xenos" is the word for "stranger".** We get our word "xenophobia" from it – "fear of the other." Fear of those who are different than us. Scripture leaves no room for that. In fact, *Philoxenos* literally means, "Love the stranger." *That's* Biblical hospitality. Love those who are different than us – isn't that what God does in his love for us? We're created in God's image, but we are wholly other and different than God. And yet, he loves us. And specifically, in the context of 1 Peter, he's writing about people who are different when it comes to

matters of faith. Be hospitable toward people who believe differently than you...people who don't cling to the name of Jesus. *That's* who we are to be hospitable toward.

Hold on to that while we shift gears for a moment. As you're probably aware, this series is connected to our new vision of what it means to be a church. And yet thus far in our series I haven't quoted our new vision even once. We're changing that this morning. Here's a one-paragraph, shortened version of our vision for what it means to be a church, and for each of us to be disciples of Jesus: **Over the next 5 years the Rose Hill family will prayerfully seek to have relationships with people not walking with the Lord. We will understand what it means to connect with those the Lord puts into our lives and be equipped to reach them with the good news of Jesus. The fruit of these efforts will be up to the Lord. Our hope is that over the next five years the way of Jesus will be shared with thousands of people where we live, work, and play. Along the way, we will serve together, share our experiences, worship, pray, weep, and rejoice in whatever the Lord desires to do in our lives, our church, and on the Eastside!** So, our vision is about our discipleship to Jesus leading us and equipping us to live out our faith authentically in a world where we are surrounded by people who don't believe as we do. We are spiritual exiles. And God's word tells us to reach out with the love of Jesus to those people. The reason for today's topic based on this passage in 1 Peter is that one of the ways we reach people and share our faith, is through our hospitality.

And when people come over, and you love them and serve them...when you ask a lot of questions and "listen, listen, listen" (remember that from a few weeks ago?)...when you do that, a couple things happen. First, you strengthen your relationship with them and create opportunities for conversation beyond the weather, inflation, the Seahawks and Taylor Swift dominating the Billboard Top 10 songs chart like no one ever has. That friendship building is super-important, and shows that you care. Second of all: by showing gracious hospitality, marked by loving and serving them...when you and I do that: **We actually give them a glimpse of what eternity in the presence of God is like.** You give them a little window – a small window, and an imperfect one with cracks and dirt smudges and

fingerprints on the glass, but a window none-the-less – you give them that glimpse of what it’s like to be welcomed into our heavenly Father’s presence. You give them a glimpse of eternity.

Remember when Jesus tells his disciples he’s leaving them (John 14), and they want to know more about this, and they’re scared about it, and Jesus says, “I’m going to my father’s *house to prepare a place for you.*” It’s a metaphor for heaven – using the language of “house.” The parable of the prodigal son is all about a father (representing God) joyfully and enthusiastically welcoming *home* this son of his who was completely lost – and throwing a huge banquet to celebrate. Hospitality is at the core. Our homes, when we offer hospitality that is wrapped in service and love unguarded by our faith in Jesus, is a picture of heaven. We are giving a glimpse our heavenly father and the eternal dwelling place Jesus brings us into through faith in him.

So, when we host with graciousness, with generosity in food and drink and ambience and caring for our guests...when we love and serve them, we actually are being Christ-like to them in that moment and giving them a glimpse of how God welcomes us in his presence. And if you want to tell your guests that, and share with them a glimpse of heaven more directly, here are two really practical things you can do. **First, pray before your meal with them, including praying for them.** *Don’t change what you do just because there are non-Christians at the table.* Just let them know that saying a brief prayer is what you do each evening before a meal, and then pray. If you don’t actually pray every evening, then...lie. Ok, I’m joking. Don’t lie.

Instead: start praying before your meals *now*, so you can authentically say that this is what you do. And look...the fact is, the way most Americans eat, Lord only knows you probably *need* to pray big-time before you eat that plate of carbs, calories, and grease anyway, right? 😊 But here’s the key: in your prayer with your guests over, pray for them. It doesn’t have to be long and it doesn’t have to be super-specific. You do want to be prepared. Don’t be like the little girl who was asked by her mom to pray at a meal with guests, and the little girl said she didn’t know what to say. And so, mom said, “Well just say what you hear mommy say.” So, the girl said, “Ok. I can do that.” She

bowed her head and everyone else did as well, and she prayed, “Dear Lord, why did I invite all these people over?” Don’t pray that. That’s grumbling in front of your guests and before God in your prayer. Peter specifically says here not to do that! **Rather, pray for your friends who are at the table with you.** Just thank God for them, for their presence at the table, for the honor of having them over, maybe pray for God’s blessing upon them...just a couple brief but genuine sentences along those lines, and then thank God for the food you’re about to eat. So that’s one thing you can do: pray for your guests.

Second, at the end of the evening, if they say something like, “Thank you, we had a lovely time. The meal was delicious and your hospitality was generous”...whatever it is that they might say that...And if they don’t say something like that, maybe the hospitality needs improving. But presuming they do... **Second: It’s an opportunity for you to simply say, “Thank you. We’re just honored to have you and do our best to share a glimpse of God’s goodness and generosity. Thank you for coming over!”** Something like that. Think about it a bit in advance – you don’t need a script, don’t make it long, because that’ll be awkward...but have an idea of what you might say, so that you can bring God glory and let them know that your hospitality and generosity are rooted in God’s hospitality and generosity...that your home is a bit of a picture of our eternal home – and that it’s really good. God’s heavenly home, where Jesus is preparing a place for us, and will lead us to, is going to be amazing, right? Let’s show that in our own hospitality.

So, I hope and pray that this series has in some way, shape, or form, encouraged you, challenged you, and equipped you to share your faith. Not by beating people over the head with a Bible, but by simply living your faith authentically. **I hope we’ve been challenged and encouraged to be genuine, authentic, disciples of Jesus, even when we’re in the presence of people who are totally different from us.** When we live our faith authentically, it’s a much more natural way of sharing the good news of Jesus with people, and God will use that in ways beyond what we could possibly imagine, to draw people to himself, and to their eternal home. Let’s pray...Amen.