

‘This world is not my home’ (1)

We are beginning a new sermon series today and we’re going to preach our way through **1+2 Peter**. The series will consist of **36 sermons** and we’re going to cover a multitude of topics as we go along. **But before we get into it let me share with you a story I heard about two mountaineers. Hungry and exhausted one mountaineer said to the other, "It almost cost us our lives climbing to the top of Mount Everest to plant the British flag. But it was worth it. Hand me the flag." The other guy replied, "Me? I thought you brought it."**

And I guess the moral of the story is when you’re going on a journey, make sure you have everything you need before you go. And that’s what I hope I’m going to do as we go through Peter’s letters. I hope to be able to share with you some words of encouragement so that you will be fully equipped to get to heaven. Yes there will be words of encouragement but there will also be words of warning.

Now I don’t know about you but when I receive any letter through the post the first thing I want to know is who wrote it. And if it’s from someone offering me free broadband I throw it in the bin. But if it’s from someone who wants paid for their services then I will take note and read it carefully.

And before we get into any letter of the Bible we need to ask ourselves a couple of questions. The first one being **who wrote the letter?** Now there is no doubt about the apostle Peter being the writer of this letter because he tells us himself in **1 Peter 1:1**. And in **1 Peter 5:1** he reminds us that he himself **was a witness of Christ's sufferings**.

The next question we need to ask ourselves is **who was he writing too?** Well again Peter gives us the answer in **1 Peter 1:1** where he addresses his letter to the **"pilgrims of the dispersion"**. The word **dispersion** simply means **scattered**. So Peter is writing to Christian **"pilgrims"** who were scattered and living in the provinces of **Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia**, which are provinces in what is now called **Turkey**. And just because Peter wrote this letter around **63-64 A.D.** to the Christians back then, we’re going to find that his words still carry as much encouragement today as they did back then.

He’s going to remind the Christians in Asia Minor of the persecution they experienced in **1 Peter 1:6**. He’s going to tell them that more persecution is on its way in **1 Peter 4:12-19**. But whilst all this persecution is taking place he is going to encourage them to remain faithful **1 Peter 1:13, 4:16** and **5:8+9**. He’s going to remind them of their duties and the blessings they have because they are God’s elect in **1 Peter 1:2**. He’s going to remind them that they are God’s special people in **1 Peter 2:9**.

Now all the way throughout the New Testament, there are various phrases used to describe those people of God who make up the Lord’s church. Individually, they are referred to as disciples, saints, believers, priests, Christians, etc. And collectively, they are called the church, the church of God, churches of Christ, the body of Christ, the temple of God, the family of God, etc. But each of these terms describe various relationships maintained by those who are Christians.

But when it comes to **1 Peter 1:1** Peter uses another phrase to describe God’s people which isn’t used so often. **1 Peter 1:1** **“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are pilgrims of the dispersion.”** Peter addresses them as **pilgrims of the dispersion**.

Have you ever been on holiday in a foreign country? You go to a hotel and relax and join in with the culture but you don’t belong there, **do you?** You’re a stranger in a strange land because you understand that, that country is not your home. Well that’s what the word **pilgrim** means, **someone who is living in one place for a while but that place isn’t there real home**.

And loved ones, Britain is not our home; it’s just the place we’re living in at the moment until we get to our real home which is heaven and is promised to all of God’s faithful children. The writer of **Hebrews** reminds us that the Old Testament people understood this concept in **Hebrews 11:13** **“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”**.

So Peter is basically saying, **‘listen Christian, you’re a stranger in this world because this world is not your home’**. He’s telling us that the Christian life really is but a **journey**. Our journey begun when we first became Christians, ending only when we reach our true destination.

And if we just think about that concept for a moment, we will soon realise that this should affect the way we live in this world. You know some of the most popular religions of the world have this concept that life is an unending circle. Where a person is born, live their life and then die and then they are born again, live their life and die again until they reach a state which they call **Nirvana**. Other religious people believe that you're born, you live your life and depending on how good or bad you've been you come back as an animal of some sort.

But the Bible clearly teaches us in **Hebrews 9:27** "That everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God". This life is not an unending journey loved ones; this life is not the end within itself. Our journey as Christians is only temporally based here on earth until we get to our final destination.

You know if you're going on holiday, you may have to catch a train to the airport, then fly to your holiday country and get a bus to you hotel. Now the train station is not your final destination. The airport is not your final destination. The bus station is not your final destination. These are all temporary places which you need to get to, to finally get to your destination which is the hotel.

Planet Earth is not our final destination; it's just a temporary place to travel through and live until we get to heaven. Everything you see around you today loved ones is temporary. Our homes, our jobs, our cars are all temporary. In fact the only thing in this room which is going to last forever is the souls of the person who's sitting next to you today.

Matthew Henry wrote a famous Bible Commentary. As a poor and unknown young man he wished to marry a girl whose father was wealthy and who did not approve of the marriage. The father argued that, although he was a good scholar and an excellent preacher, "they did not even know where he came from." The daughter had a ready answer. "But father," she said, "we know where he is going, and I want to go with him." The father agreed.

So let me ask you, **do you know where you are going?** You see our lives as Christians here on Earth may be the end of our journey here on Earth but it's not the end of our lives. It's not the end of our lives but the beginning of eternity in our true home. And whilst we're on this **journey**, we become like our spiritual father, Abraham.

Read with me **Hebrews 11:8-10** "It was faith that made Abraham obey when God called him to go out to a country which God had promised to give him. He left his own country without knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as a foreigner in the country that God had promised him. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who received the same promise from God. For Abraham was waiting for the city which God has designed and built, the city with permanent foundations."

Now go down to **Hebrews 11:13-16** "It was in faith that all these persons died. They did not receive the things God had promised, but from a long way off they saw them and welcomed them, and admitted openly that they were foreigners and refugees on earth. Those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own. They did not keep thinking about the country they had left; if they had, they would have had the chance to return. Instead, it was a better country they longed for, the heavenly country. And so God is not ashamed for them to call him their God, because he has prepared a city for them."

The **Hebrew** writer is saying, if we live like this world is not our home, then God is not going to be ashamed to be called our God.

And its then we can truly agree with **Albert E. Brumley** when he wrote,
This world is not my home, I'm just passing through.
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

O Lord you know I have no friend like you
If Heaven's not my home, then Lord what will I do?
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

John 17:15+16 "I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One. Just as I do not belong to the world, they do not belong to the world".

Jesus says you may well be in this world but you are not of this world. What a blessing it is to be reminded that this world is not our home **isn't it?** But as we know with all blessings come responsibility.

1 Peter 2:11+12 "I appeal to you, my friends, as strangers and refugees in this world! Do not give in to bodily passions, which are always at war against the soul. Your conduct among the heathen should be so good that when they accuse you of being evildoers, they will have to recognize your good deeds and so praise God on the Day of his coming."

Peter says if you believe that this world is not your home; then live like it. Peter says separate yourselves from the world. You see loved ones part of our struggle as Christians is that we often want to compromise. We don't want our friends to think we're **'Bible bashers'** so we will just go out and have a few pints with our friends. We don't want our friends to think we're **'too religious'** so we listen to their filthy talk and filthy jokes. We don't want our friends to think we're **'perfect'** so we listen and join in with their gossip. Now I understand why we do this, it's because we don't want to be so heavenly minded we're no earthly good. But loved ones, there needs to be a balance, a clear line that shows you don't live like the rest of the world does.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 "Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done. How can right and wrong be partners? How can light and darkness live together? How can Christ and the Devil agree? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? How can God's temple come to terms with pagan idols? For we are the temple of the living God! As God himself has said, "I will make my home with my people and live among them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And so the Lord says, "You must leave them and separate yourselves from them. Have nothing to do with what is unclean, and I will accept you. I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Ask yourself; **is there anything about you, which makes you radically different from your neighbour?** Or let me ask that question this way, **can people see Christ in you? Can they hear Christ in your speech?** Now I know and understand that being a Christian in this sin cursed world isn't easy.

But when you think about **what's the worst that people are going to think?** Oh they may say, **'oh he's weird'** or **'she's obsessed with religion'**. Some people may even think that we're a **little strange**. Well that's OK, because we are strange, we're strangers in a strange land. Fearing what others think of you shouldn't concern us; but what should concern us is **what does Jesus think about you?**

1 Peter 4:3+4 "You have spent enough time in the past doing what the heathen like to do. Your lives were spent in indecency, lust, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and the disgusting worship of idols. And now the heathen are surprised when you do not join them in the same wild and reckless living, and so they insult you".

Peter says don't be surprised if people think you're a little strange that you don't want to do what they do. Because let me tell you something loved ones, if you proclaim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and you do what they are doing, they are still going to be surprised.

Because instead of thinking you're a **'Bible bashers'** or **'too religious'** or **'a little weird'** or **'obsessed with religion'**. **Do you know what they are going to think?** They are not going to think anything; they are going to **know** that you are an **absolute hypocrite**. And being a hypocrite should concern any true follower of Jesus Christ.

Yes people may think we're a little weird or whatever but **what do you expect? Do you really expect people to listen to what Jesus has to say? Do you really expect people to allow you to expose their sinfulness? Do you really expect people to allow you to show them from the Bible that they are hell bound if they if they don't fully obey the gospel?**

Let me tell you what I expect, I expect the world to hate us, that's what I expect. Jesus Himself warned us that this would happen in **John 15:18+19** "If the world hates you, just remember that it has hated me first. If you belonged to the world, then the world would love you as its own. But I chose you from this world, and you do not belong to it; that is why the world hates you".

Let me ask you, **are you the light of the world, or the light in this meeting room? Are you the salt of the earth or the salt in a shaker?** You see loved ones, we're supposed to influence the world, we're not to allow the world to influence us. They should hear Jesus in our speech, they should see Jesus in our dress and they should come to know that we belong to Jesus through of our conduct.

Do you love God? Do you truly love God? Now you might be thinking that's an easy question to answer, well before you do listen to what John says. 1 John 2:15-17 "Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world---what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of---none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live forever". Whom do you love most, the world or God? That's a question we always need to be asking ourselves.

D.M. Stearns was preaching in Philadelphia. At the close of the service a stranger came up to him and said, "I don't like the way you spoke about the cross. I think that instead of emphasizing the death of Christ, it would be far better to preach Jesus, the teacher and example." Stearns replied, "If I presented Christ in that way, would you be willing to follow Him?" "I certainly would," said the stranger without hesitation. "All right then," said the preacher, "let's take the first step. He did no sin. Can you claim that for yourself?" The man looked confused and somewhat surprised. "Why, no," he said. "I acknowledge that I do sin." Stearns replied, "Then your greatest need is to have a Saviour, not an example!"

You see loved ones, the world needs examples of Christ-likeness but the reason they need an example is so that by our example we can point them to what they really need most of all, a saviour. And we need to live here on earth like we're waiting for our saviour to return. Philippians 3:20+21 "We, however, are citizens of heaven, and we eagerly wait for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven. He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body, using that power by which he is able to bring all things under his rule."

The city of Philippi was a Roman Colony. The people lived like Romans, dressed like Romans, spoke like Romans and obeyed the Romans laws. Now Rome was hundreds of miles away from Philippi, but they lived like Romans. And so Paul and Peter are saying "yes, you're living here on Earth but live like people of heaven, dress like people of heaven, speak like people of heaven and live your lives according to the laws of heaven".

Colossians 3:1-4 "You have been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne at the right side of God. Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory!"

Have you ever been away somewhere separated from your friends and family and you start to feel a bit home sick? It's horrible isn't? You want the time to go past fast because you just want to be around loved ones so much. Do you ever get home sick for heaven? This world is not your home loved ones. If this morning you want to change your eternal destination, then please don't leave here today without speaking to someone about how we can help you do just that.