

Make Him Known

Good morning church! It is so very good to be with you this morning.

Let me welcome you all to church, if you are joining us online, I'm so very glad you could be with us this morning.

My name is Robbie Isley, I serve as the High School Pastor, and it is my joy to do so. Before we begin, I want to thank Pastor Rob for allowing me to fill in for him while he and Becky are taking a much-needed break.

Before we get going, I feel the need to correct one thing from last weekend. If you were with us, you know that last Sunday was not normal. Pastor Grady, Erin, and Jonathan ran us through a recap of High Five, which was so great! An amazing week...Grady told us that it was the "best week ever."

This is what I need to remedy, because as great as it was, I will argue that the best is yet to come. Summer Camp!

At the end of July Jared, our Jr. High Director and I will be taking a boat load of Jr. High and High School students to Lake Williamson for an amazing week of worship, learning, fun. This...in my humble opinion is truly the best week ever.

That being said, please open your bibles to 1 Peter chapter 3.

If you need a Bible, please get the attention of one of the ushers and they will be sure to get one to you.

As you get there, I want to wish you a happy Independence Day.

As we celebrated the 249th birthday of our country, I want to bring your attention back to our freedom. In our country we have been awarded the opportunity to live a life that much of the world will never experience.

The freedoms we have enjoyed as a country for the past, nearly 250 are unprecedented in human history, especially our religious freedom. We have been free from large scale, violent persecution.

We are free to not only worship our God in these walls, but outside them as well.

However, over the past few years it been increasingly difficult for Christians to live out their faith.

Whether it is legal battles, like the Masterpiece Cakeshop who was sued in 2018 for refusing to bake a cake for a same sex wedding.

Or our students not being able to publicly pray in school...or worse yet the mockery they endure for living out their faith. Not only from other students, but from teachers as well.

The outright hostility in the workplace, friends, family members are vocal and sometimes hostile to those living out their faith.

Those that are striving to become more like Christ are facing different challenges today than those of our past.

Don't get me wrong, there have always been hardships for the Christian...but regardless of what hardship you face, your mandate, from Jesus himself, is to make Him known.

The Christian life can be difficult. Our life experience shows us that suffering is very real and life is hard at times.

As we strive to live out Jesus' command to make him known, the apostle Peter has some encouraging words for us this morning.

Look at the text with me this morning. Once again, 1 Peter, chapter 3, verses 13-17 with me.

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

In this passage Peter is acting like a great coach. He knows the church has been on hard times, day in and day out they are getting their teeth kicked in by those who don't believe in Christ.

Peter is giving one of the greatest half-time speeches in history. The church has just come off the field bloody, bruised, beaten, and battered...surrounded by a culture that was very anti-Christian.

An empire that not only hated Christians but killed them.

Nero was the emperor of Rome during the time that Peter wrote this letter. During this period of time Christians were being crucified, burned alive, slaughtered because of their faith.

And yet...in Peter tells them to be ready.

He steps up and delivers a few paragraphs that are full of hope, full of encouragement, full of truth and love.

His charge applies to us as well, despite the hardships, make him known! Make the world know what you believe and why you believe it.

In order to make Christ know, the first thing Peter tells us is:

- **Do not fear the world**

Look back at verses 13 and 14.

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

Peter begins his encouragement with a rhetorical question for the church to answer.

Who is there to harm you? – With an eternal perspective; the obvious answer is no one.

Physically, yes people can hurt you, but that’s not what Peter’s talking about.

It reminds me of Matthew 10:28a.

Jesus said, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.”

Although we are free, and we absolutely do enjoy religious freedom in our country, world seems like it is becoming more and more hostile to Christianity.

The days of sitting on the fence are quickly disappearing.

Where you have one foot in the world and one foot in the church...I urge you, get off the fence.

Spiritually speaking there is no fence, you’re either all in or all out.

Ask yourself, do people at work know I’m a Christian? Does my life look different than theirs?

Or are you afraid to make Jesus known because of what might happen?

I believe that, in some capacity we have all failed because of fear. The opportunity arises to share the gospel, the pump has been primed and...you don’t.

You have this inner argument about how you know you should say something, but then you find an excuse not to.

And how often is that excuse rooted in fear?

Thank God for his grace in those moment though. Even when we give into fear there is grace for us.

Remember what Jesus said, do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.

There is no one that can take away your security in Jesus. There is ALWAYS light at the end of the tunnel.

Verse 14 says that you might suffer for righteousness’ sake, living for Christ may cause physical hardships, but you will be blessed.

Either in this life or in eternity, there is blessing waiting for those who suffer for Jesus.

At the end of Acts chapter 5 we see that Peter and the other apostles were put in prison for preaching the gospel.

Miraculously they are freed, and they keep on preaching.

Then they were brought before the Jewish religious leaders, told to stop preaching and beaten.

What did they do?

Acts 5:41 says, “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.”

They rejoiced! They were not afraid, but they were so zealous for the gospel, that they suffered for righteousness’s sake.

You may never be beaten for your faith, but peers will sneer, promotions may be withheld, family may disown you...but with an eternal perspective, that does not matter.

Do not be afraid of those that cannot kill your soul. Do not be troubled by them. Know that your security and your identity sits firmly in the grasp of Jesus himself.

So, take heart! Be free of fear and make him known, but how?

Peter shows us. After his encouragement, he shows us how.

Look at verse 15.

“¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,”

Peter is telling us to:

- **Defend Christ with a clear conscience**

Actively defend the one you have put your hope in, the one you have given your life to.

He’s telling you to be an apologist, that’s your action.

Contrary to what I used to believe, an apologist is not one who is really good at saying sorry.

An apologist is one who defends their faith. One who, as Peter says, “makes a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”

An apologist is ready to defend their faith.

In your excitement to defend do miss the first part of verse 15. “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.”

When you defend Christ, when you share the gospel...honor Jesus.

In the world of YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram it has become increasingly easy for “apologists” to gain popularity.

Not all of them honor Christ.

I’m not saying they are all bad, I’m not even saying what they are saying is always wrong.

But through their actions and tone you can see they are not honoring Christ as holy.

These viral apologists are often out to win an argument, they are out to show the world how much they know...no matter the cost.

And it hurts my heart. Christians screaming at non-believers about the bible. Arrogance saturating their tone of voice.

It seems to me that these apologists are out to win an argument...not a soul.

The words they say may be true through and through, but their approach steals the effectiveness of the message.

Let me give you 4 very specific ways to honor Christ in the defense of your faith:

First, defend Christ:

- **Humbly**

To honor Christ is to humble yourself, putting him above yourself in everything including your approach to gospel conversations and being honest where your knowledge of the things of God lies.

We must abandon the idea that we know everything there is to know about Scripture and about God.

Do not let pride puff you up because you know things about Scripture.

There is always room for more learning and more growing.

It wasn't until I got serious about continuing to study the Word of God that I realized how much I don't know about God.

Sunday school answers are great, but they can only take you so far.

What if someone comes to you and asks why God allows bad things to happen to good people...or why did God take my loved one away from me.

Or how would you defend Christ as God to a Muslim, who denies Jesus' deity?

My point is, we must put Christ first and recognize we must continue to learn.

Know that there will be hard questions about our faith, but be humble enough to say "I don't know."

When a question arises that you do not know the answer to...simply acknowledge that you don't know and then say, "I will find out and then let you know!"

Then...it is imperative that you follow up with that person.

Follow up for two reasons. First, you will show integrity and make sure they hear biblical truth. Secondly, this ensures that you are learning more and more.

In my experience there are key questions and objections that come up over and over. You must learn the answers to share them!

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was too great for you to ruin a gospel conversation because of pride.

The more you run into questions you don't know the answer to, the more it will force you to learn and the more you will become prepared to defend Christ!

Approach all conversations about God with humility.

Next...defend Christ

- **Gently**

Be gentle in your responses.

Look back at verse 15.

"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; (and here it is) yet do it with gentleness and respect"

Once again...win the person. Not the argument.

Have you ever been in an argument?

We all have. What happens when someone escalates the situation by raising their voice?

It doesn't take long before both parties are screaming and it's less words and more raw emotion coming out.

Proverbs 15:1 tells us that a that a soft answer turns away wrath.

In other words, arguing really gets you nowhere.

There is a sense of dehumanizing someone when you are in the heat of an argument, isn't there?

Like when you argue with your spouse, or your child, or your parent.

Both sides have this need to be right at all costs.

One person raises their voice, then the other person responds by escalating even more.

It's at this time the need to win becomes much stronger than the need to love.

Be gentle...when someone asks you for the reason for your hope, tell them gently. Respond to them gently when they call into question your sincerity, or flat out verbally assault you and call you self-righteous.

Do not escalate the situation but be gentle in your response.

Right after Peter says gently, he charges us to...Defend Christ

- **Respectfully**

Once again, Peter says it right there at the end of verse 15...

Honor Christ by defending him with gentleness and respect.

Meaning, be willing to listen and do not wrongfully dismiss a person because of their background, appearance, or beliefs.

Let me explain by telling you a story.

When I was in High School, I took a mission trip to New Jersey. During this mission trip we were split up into groups of 4 or 5, handed a stack of Bibles and then told to go hand them out in a park.

As a squirrely sophomore in High School with my calf high black socks and my long baggy jorts...I was determined to find people who wanted a Bible in their hands.

As we were walking through the park, the awkwardness of carrying a stack of Bibles and the uncomfortable task of talking to strangers proved difficult for me.

I would find those people that looked like me, looked inviting, and looked like they would take a Bible.

As we were walking through the park, I made eye contact with a young man. Jet black dyed hair, eye liner, a leather bracelet with spikes on it. Holes in his jeans...he looked like he belonged front row at a White Snake concert...sorry anyone under 40 didn't get that reference.

He looked like he'd be front row at a Billy Eilish concert instead of first row at a Baptist Church.

After we made eye contact, I sheepishly looked away and continued walking.

He stopped me in my tracks when he said, "Don't I look like I need one of those?" He was talking about one of my Bibles...

I didn't respect him enough as an image bearer of God to think he would be remotely interested in the gospel.

That was a hard lesson for me to learn that day.

Although unbelievers are lost, other people of other religions are wrong...they are still humans, made in the image of God.

They deserved to be treated with respect.

When you defend your faith, respect the person enough to love their soul. Love them enough to introduce them to the truth of the gospel.

This also applies when someone wants to come at you for your faith. When they attack you because of what you believe. Your defense must be respectful.

You do your job and share the gospel. Do not play judge, jury, and executioner by refusing to share the gospel.

You share the gospel. It is their job to believe, and it is God's job to save.

Be humble. Be gentle. And be respectful.

Finally...defend Christ:

- **Boldly**

Be bold in your defense. The truth is on your side.

Look back at the middle of verse 15 again.

Peter tells us to "be prepared."

Meaning be ready to actually speak about your faith, in order to do that you must read your Bible.

Although you don't know everything, you must know some! As Christians, we must always continue learning. Searching the Scriptures, refining our theology.

Understanding more about who God is, what His love is, what His salvation is!

Be prepared by continually applying the gospel to your life. Continue resting in God's grace!

Every day become more and more bold because you are growing more and more in love with your God.

Do not slink back because of the culture's accusations against Christianity. Remember there is no one that can harm you when you have an eternal perspective

Culture claims that the Bible is nothing more than an ancient text, out of touch and irrelevant.

The claims of our culture against God, Christianity, Jesus, us...are bold and confident. All the more that must drive us to be bold in our faith.

Peter began his encouragement with the question, "Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?"

Remember this rally cry and do not be afraid to answer "No one!"

Be bold in your defense, get excited to share your faith! There is no better way to show the love of our God than to tell them the truth without hesitation.

So be prepared to make your defense, but in that defense honor Christ the Lord as holy.

Finally,

- **If you're going to suffer, suffer for righteousness**

Look at verse 16 and 17.

¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Peter doesn't hide the reality that the world will be against you, which may bring physical hardships. Unlike the beginning of our passage, he brings the present condition into focus.

Remember the church at that time was witnessing unthinkable violence. So, moving from the eternal to the present helps us prioritize an eternal perspective without being delusional about current hardships.

Notice he says, "when you are slandered." The tone here is a matter of certainty and if you are living for Christ in a way that the world notices there will be people that will slander you, that will revile you, they will hate you for what you believe.

We may never see justice served to those who slander us, who hate us. Most of the early church never saw justice in their lifetime.

But God is a good Judge, he is righteous, he will bring about justice.

Peter ends this passage with a reminder for us. "It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil."

Are you suffering today?

My question to you is why? Is it for doing good, or is it for doing evil?

If you are suffering for the gospel then there is blessing for you. Rejoice like the apostles!

If you are suffering for doing evil, then turn toward Him, repent of your sin, and receive his forgiveness.

We will not all suffer the same way, but as Christians we can all live for him every day.

As you go this week, enjoy the freedom to live out your faith, make a defense for the hope that is within you, honor Christ as holy. Keep your perspective eternal and there will be no one that can harm you for eternity.

As Peter rallied the troops with encouragement, I do the same. Be prepared and honor Christ as holy and make him known.

Let's pray.

Prayer:

God help us. Grow us in zeal for your gospel. Let us see the lost with the same love you have for them. Teach us how to live out our faith in gentleness and respect. Remind us that the world cannot harm us.

Go before us this week, in all that we do. Help us be the church that you call us to be, remove our fear from us so that we can fully live out our faith for the world to see.

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Benediction:

It was such a blessing to be able to bring the Word of God this morning. Thank you!

Need To Talk: If you need to talk with someone our Biblical Soul Care room right across the hall is open. Our team is ready to help, please go see them. If you would like to pray with someone one of our Elders Tim Millage and his wife Kim will be down front.

Guest Central: Don't forget about Guest Central right out in the lobby!

Pete and Chelsea: Also, don't forget to stop by and see Pete and Chelsea in the lobby.

Summer Camp: The Greatest Week of the Year is coming up fast! Get your students registered today! July 9th is the deadline to guarantee they get the right sized shirt. It's going to be great!

Independence Day: Happy Independence Day, remember you have been afforded freedom to share the gospel with those around you. Don't take that for granted. Enjoy the rest of your Independence Day Weekend and know

YOU ARE LOVED