



Being Good News for Our Community - Spring 2017

Study 9 - Do Share Good News with All



1 Peter 3:8-22

(sermons on March 19th)

Introduction

The theme of our series from Jan 22nd to Mar 19th has been Being Good News for Our Community: how the way that we live our lives, as a church as well as individually, can have an impact for good on the communities where we live. But an important part of being Good News is to share the Good News that lies behind all that we are and all that we do.

1 Peter 3:8-12 Living in Harmony

Peter was writing to groups of Christians in what is now Turkey who were experiencing opposition to their faith and who could see that they might soon be persecuted more severely. So Peter encourages them to remain strong in faith and hope and he describes the sort of lives that they should live, in the face of opposition, to make an impact for Christ.

v.8 Finally, all of you – Peter has just been writing about how Christians should ‘live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us’ (2:11-12); he has been explaining how this works out in various relationships and now he has teaching that applies to everyone.

v.10 This is a quotation from Psalm 34, when David is thanking God for rescuing him from his enemies. So the message of rejecting the way of evil and revenge, and trusting God for deliverance, is relevant to the Christians to whom Peter was writing, as they were facing persecution.

1. Why does Peter emphasize so strongly living in harmony and avoiding retaliation? How is this different from the way that many people in our society respond to perceived insults and criticism? How did Jesus show the attitudes Peter describes in *verses 8 & 9*? Can you give practical examples of how we can show them today?

1 Peter 3:13-17 Suffering for Doing Good

2. Look at Peter’s advice in *verses 13 to the first part of verse 15*.

Is there anything we find hard to accept, or might find hard to put into practice?

What does Peter mean by ‘*in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord*’ (verse 15) ?

3. ‘*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*’ (verse 15)

Are we *all* called to respond to people’s questions that have been provoked by how we live? Have we had an experience recently of being put on the spot about our faith?

How can we ‘*be prepared*’ to take advantage of such opportunities without giving a pre-rehearsed answer that doesn’t necessarily relate to the question that someone is asking us?

Is this different from being an evangelist who tries to set up situations to speak publicly about the Christian faith?

Might some of us be called to do a bit of both pro-active and responsive speaking about our faith?

4. What extra advice does Peter give *at the end of v.15 & v.16* about *how* we should answer people? What is the opposite of speaking '*with gentleness and respect*' (v.15) ?
5. Does it surprise us that it might be '*God's will, to suffer for doing good*' (v.17)? In what ways might we be called to do this? How are people suffering like this to a greater extent elsewhere in the world?

1 Peter 3:18-22 Jesus' Example and Inspiration

After one of the clearest statements about the meaning of Christ's death (in verse 18) come some of the most obscure verses in the New Testament; you will have to decide how much time to spend on them, or whether to leave them on one side for the moment.

v.18 Christ died for sins once for all – Peter has already said more about this in 1 Peter 2:24-25.

v.19 he went and preached to the spirits in prison – it is hard to be sure what Peter means and Christians have interpreted this verse in different ways. This is the verse from which we get the phrase 'he descended into hell (or Hades) in the Creed. But who, or what, are the 'spirits in prison'? Are they being given a 'second chance' to respond to God, or are they hearing a message of judgement; the word here for 'preached' is 'announced/proclaimed' rather than 'spoke good news'.

v.20 saved through water – mentioning Noah and water seems to lead Peter back towards his main line of argument about how we should live out our faith in thankfulness for God rescuing us. We are not left in some mysterious underworld but raised to new life with Christ (v.22).

6. How is Jesus' suffering (*verse 18*) an example for us to follow. How was his suffering unique?
7. What can we learn from the parts of *verses 19 to 22* that we *do* understand?