

**May 14 2017**

**Reading from the Bible** 1 Peter 2:1-10

**Sermon** “But now”.....”

What a wonderful hymn-the last line- “never, no never forsake you.”

As we turn to 1 Peter in the Bible, this week and next week, we find Peter as a pastor, and Peter as a person who had a deep heart for the Christians around the world. This song really could have been written instead of 1787, it could have been written in the 68/69 AD when Peter wrote this letter to the people in Asia, actually in eastern Turkey. Peter- it is amazing that he got to this point. Isn't it? Sometimes we wonder how he got anywhere and he probably wondered himself at times of the changes in his life. He knew it was solely by the Grace of God because after all he had forsaken the Lord. He had miserably failed. He knew what he had been. But now he was a strong leader in the early Christian church. There are a lot of sermons in this scripture. However, I am only going to preach on one. this one though, and I save the others for next time.

We are in 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 1-10.

“Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: ‘See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner’, and ‘A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.’ They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.“

It is amazing sometimes how we find things repeated in what you read. This week I have run across 1 Peter and his themes no less than four times in other devotionals. I think God wanted us to look at chapter 2. Coupled with a devotional that I found really striking called Worthy and that word struck me as I worked on this. God determines the worthiness of a person. How do we measure worthiness in

someone or, how does someone deserve the particularly good benefits they receive. We must spend time with them alone when we are listening to their troubles or concerns—a job offer, a scholarship, a grant, choosing member for your team, extending membership to a club or some happy and some not so happy things. How do we decide that someone is worthy of our trust and our love? It is partnership with the word investment. We live in a market-based world and we hear this question—what return will I get if I invest in this person? There is some research that shows that there has been a shift in how people related to one another. We can assume that there has been a shift from early America to technical America. In the past people visited with one another because they wanted to visit with one another. They enjoyed the company, the comradely of the neighborhood picnics for no other purpose but to get together and enjoy one another. That is why we have front porches, I love to sit on my porch and wave to the people as they go by. But what has happened since the Industrial Revolution, technology and with a faster pace of life we now have; people are now viewed as mere instruments. If we out to a meeting we want to work the room. Do you understand what I mean? It means I am looking for a prospect, a good candidate for one of my projects.

I never watch daytime TV but I happened to watch it one morning and the fellow who was on was talking about how we relate to people. I'm going to borrow Micki here in the choir for just a minute. I think Micki is worthy. She pointed out that when I am “working” the room, I really am not watching what people are doing or relating to them. This man on TV said to try the belly button method. In other words my belly button points to Micki's belly button and we doing business together and it makes me much more impressive. Thank you, Micki. In our world of faster paces and technology things have become more important than the person we are talking too. Every person that we meet is worthy of our time and worthy of our love.

The background of the letter of I Peter, he is writing about 67 AD about 34 some years after Jesus died. He has started to realize there were terrible persecutions in Rome. Have you ever heard of Nero the Roman Emperor and burning of Rome? The burning of Rome was caused by an urban development project, clearing out the slums. Nero had people torched-burned alive even after they put out the fires in the slums of Rome. And then because people were angry they had been burned out, they started to point their finger at Christians. And some awful, awful things happened to the Christians. Not everyone in Rome hated the Christians and some were very good but others did some terrible things. Some Christians were burned at stakes, crucified or were killed in the sports arenas, while others were shunned. There was name-calling, they had trouble getting jobs, they had trouble being in public, many pressures were put on them and they were urged to worship the emperor. Peter reminded the Christians that no matter

what they were going through God were going through it with them. He was writing to the Christians who were exiled or the dispersed in Asia and Asia Minor. He reminded them they were chosen and designated by God the Father, sanctified by the Holy Spirit and obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood. May Grace and Peace be yours in abundance?

Eastern turkey was quite popular, a rich area and lots of commerce. They were in a city and were ministered to by Peter and Paul. There were Jews in the city and believers and up to now the believers were under the umbrella of protection of Judaism. Rome realized there were two completely different groups, the Christian believers and the Jews. They were both dangerous sects to Rome because did not worship the Emperor. Believers were made responsible for the fire in Rome. They were persecuted everywhere, however, Peter reassured them of God's love and reminded them to stand firm. How were they to do that? I can reassure you they were not doing that with a 22 gun because they knew exactly where they were they were with God. When someone asked who are you? We start clicking off our facts—I say only daughter; my parents are deceased; I am the pastor in Newport, Washington; I have two cats; I have had Christian education. Peter tells the readers of 1 Peter, you are an elected people, you are chosen people, you are not forgotten, and you are not abandoned. It is because you in your community you are different. You are beloved! He doesn't use the words of Hosea, the Old Testament prophet. Hosea prophesied about the people of God who were really off track. God would not show them mercy. You are not my people and I am done with you! But now Peter says, "You are not like them, you are my people. You are God's chosen people." "You are a restored people." The Old Testament prophecy that says the whole world will come to your light and the gentiles will be preaching the good news. They were chosen and are citizens of a new Kingdom and given a new identity. Paul said it well; we are just passing through this place. The believers are in the world but not of the world. We are sojourners; we are just passing through this place. It is sort of a double life. In most communities believers were no bodies and brought together by Jesus. You are worthy and you don't have to worry about earning God's approval. What- not earning God approval? We put such a large value on approval, how can this be? We like to check off-How much a person can earn, how many degrees, or how many hours they have gone to school or at work, how much stuff they have been able to buy with their earnings? Peter said, "God called you his beloved."

So what do we do with this knowledge? Those who received no sympathy are now loved. We are now God's people. What difference does it make as to how we in the Newport UCC in church act? There are a lot of people that I know who are walking and who are out and about. I bet every one of us knows someone who has been hurt deeply and all too frequently by the church or by someone in the church

or some teaching in the church. They have been told they are going to hell in a hand basket unless they do this, this and this and maybe just maybe that will be enough to get them into heaven and they know they will never get there. Sometimes it is people who have been judged by who they are and who they are not.

I have a friend who went to a church, a wonderful heart-felt woman, a person of great prayer and who loved the Bible, and loved the Lord. She went to the church and they welcomed her but they said when you come back next week, please dress appropriately. She never went back to that church. Her best friend lived across the street and right next door to that church and she read about a Bible study in the paper. She went and she had never ever been in church. Both of those ladies one ended up in churches. One at the other Baptist Church and second lady ended up in our church and became a deacon. Both served the Lord in their ways but they had overcome. It maybe something like that happened to you. I love our denominational phrase, "wherever you are, and wherever you are on your journey, there is a place for you." Let us be sure that is true especially on this Mother's Day if there might be some woman without children is not offended. We have to be careful, we don't have to be politically correct, and that is not what I am talking about. I am not talking about just guarding someone's story or get over it when they come for the first time to try our church but you have an opportunity to greet them and make them feel at home. If someone new comes, maybe for the first time, maybe just to try different church. We are different, so keep your eyes open for one another especially new comers. Maybe we will meet someone who has never shared a story about another church. There are people who are outside mowing their lawns and they don't believe they belong in a church. How can we when we talk to them or talk over the fence and invite those people to our church?

I have an interesting group of neighbors. I pray every day that God will give me a chance to build a relationship with my neighbors. And everyday I say to myself I am worthy and they are worthy of my attention, my prayers and someday they might be sitting in these pews. But they certainly won't if I miss treat or ignore them. We need to find some things in common with our neighbors like a human-powered push mower. I now have a trend because that is first thing that I have found that I have in common with my neighbors. Being close to people and sociable when we talk about our faith, we need to be honest, humble, and we are not perfect. Speak in faith and love to someone who will build up this church. Invite a family member, someone at school, someone who is hurting or someone who does not know that God accepts them as they are.

I am reading a devotional called Jesus' Calling and everyday it talks about how Jesus wants to be loved. There are people who do not know that simple truth. I want to quote couple of lines from that devotional. She writes "sometimes I

struggle to believe in my own worthiness. I see my flaws and am undeserving of any good because of my bad. I question my worthiness but I am already called worthy by God. Before I took my first breathe, God knew who I was, who I am, and who I will become. My prayer is when I question my worth I am thankful through Jesus Christ, I have already been given my answer.”

Let us pray: Dear Lord we pray for those people who will be coming through this door. We pray for those people who will be on our path this week. We pray that you will bless us and we will listen. We will count each person that we meet as worthy of ourselves, our love and our time for them We will hold out the truth and hope of Jesus Christ is the light in the world to each person. Amen