

**Victory of the Lamb // Pastor Ben Sadler // March 29, 2020**  
**The Way of the Exile // Live for God // 1 Peter 3:15-16**

**1 Peter 3:15-16** <sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Over the past two decades it has become common to hear people say, "That's fine if you want to be a Christian, but just keep your faith to yourself. Keep your personal faith private. It's dangerous to be too open and too public with your religion." Maybe you have felt this pressure at school or work or even in your own family.

By in large the Christian community has listened to this message. To quote the Christian campfire song, *This little light of mine, we didn't let it shine. We hid it under a bushel. We let Satan blow it out.* We didn't talk about it anymore in public. We didn't let our faith influence our life and our decisions. And over the past two decades as the Christian church keeps shrinking the light of our faith grows dimmer and dimmer.

But now we need to go public with our faith. The whole world is filled with worry and concern. All the things that we used to trust in are not helpful anymore. We are concerned about our economy, our health, our families.

So we need faith to be public. Our families need us to go public with our faith. Our neighborhoods and communities need us to go public with our faith. Our world is starving for hope. And we know where hope is truly found.

So here is the question I want to answer today: **How can we go public with our faith?**

To answer that question, we will continue looking at 1 Peter as we continue our sermon series called **The Way of the Exile**. The reason we called this series the way of the exile, is because Peter is writing to the Christians in the first century. They were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. They were a misunderstood minority.

The Roman Empire saw these pockets of Christians as a threat to their empire. They believed that if people stopped worshipping Rome and the Roman gods and the Roman Empire then their empire would begin to fall apart.

The Romans said to the Christians, "That's fine if you want to be a Christian. But just keep your personal faith private. Keep it to yourself." In fact, later on, a Roman Emperor Decius demanded that the Christians burn incense to the emperor as a sign of worship. He was saying, "You can be a Christian but first you must worship the Roman emperor and keep your faith private."

Over time, many Christians were giving in to the persecution. They let their faith become more and more private and isolated. Publicly they were basically Roman atheists even if privately they might call themselves Christians.

Peter was concerned to hear that Christians were giving into the pressure, that their faith was becoming more and more private. And he knew that if their faith was just a private, marginal part of their life, it was of no use at all.

Peter encouraged small group of Christians scattered throughout the world:

**But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. (1 Peter 3:15)**

This word “revere” is kind of hard to translate. Literally it means to “sanctify”. But that’s a religious word that we don’t use anymore. “Sanctify” means to “set apart”. It’s what you do to something precious to you. You don’t let anything infect it and mess with it.

Maybe I could translate it this way, **In your hearts, quarantine Christ as Lord.** Now at first that might be confusing. Quarantine Christ? I thought we were talking about going public with our faith. But what Peter is saying here is we need to guard our faith from anything that contaminates it. Don’t let your faith be infected by fear or doubt or false ideas. Just like we are trying to keep the virus from infecting your body, you need to make sure nothing in this world infects your soul.

If you are going to be able to get through this pandemic, you need to guard your heart. There are so many messages that are coming at you right now that might give you the impression that Jesus is not Lord. Maybe you have been watching the news constantly. Maybe you have been endlessly checking social media.

Peter says, “In your hearts, raise up, lift up, set apart, guard, even quarantine Christ as Lord.” In your heart, believe, trust, worship Jesus as the real king and emperor. Don’t let anything contaminate that conviction you have.

As much as everyone is letting fear suck the life from their souls, feed your faith with the word of God. Feed your faith with the truth. Go to your room. Close the door. Get on your knees and pray to Jesus, the king of the world. Open the Scriptures. Meditate on a Psalm. Sing to Jesus.

**1. In your hearts, quarantine Christ as Lord.** Don’t let any message infect your faith. Before you can share Jesus in public you need to know him in private. Before Jesus changes others, you must change you.

Now if you and your family are strong in the Lord, if you have this conviction that Jesus is still the Lord, he is still king, then you will stand out. Your kids, your neighbors, and all the people you are still in contact with will see a difference in you. So what are we to do when we stand out?

Peter says, **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... (1 Peter 3:15)**

Peter says that we must let our private faith go public. When Christ is set up as Lord of your heart that is going to change everything. You are going to want to speak. But how do we give an answer? How do we speak about our faith? First I want to comment on what Peter says about *how* we speak. He says give an answer with gentleness and respect.

For the past few months, I closed down my Facebook page. But since COVID-19 I opened it up so that I could give lectures on our Facebook live page. When I opened Facebook, I felt like I was being thrown into a tornado of outrage. There are lots of good, encouraging stuff on Facebook but there is also a lot of

people shouting at each other. Shouting about politics. Shouting about health. Shouting about their faith.

So what are we supposed to do in the middle of all this outrage? Do we grab the megaphone like everyone else and add to the noise and just try to shout louder than others? No. Peter says, give an answer with gentleness and respect. Don't grab a megaphone. Instead grab a spotlight and shine it on our hope.

So what does that look like? A megaphone means shouting our opinions at everyone, letting people know why we are right and everyone else is wrong. Putting the spotlight on Christ means having a calm non-anxious presence. And when people come to you and tell you how they are feeling you are ready to put the spotlight on Jesus. Not on us or how we are handling everything, but on Jesus.

That's what Peter says. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... (1 Peter 3:15)**

Peter encourages us to pick up the spotlight and shine it on the hope that we have. He told us what our hope is in the opening of his letter. Pastor Bill preached on this passage as we began this sermon series.

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)**

So what is the hope that you have? It is a *living hope* because it is based on the *resurrection of Jesus*. Everything perishes, spoils or fades. Everything. Our jobs, our health, everything else that we trust in can die, but Jesus lives. He died and rose. He died and rose for you so that you would have an inheritance of God's forgiveness and love and mercy. And that cannot be touched by any virus. It's kept in heaven for you. And right now you are shielded by God's power until his salvation is fully revealed when he returns and makes all things new.

We have a hope that cannot die. We have a living hope. That is good news right now. As we continue to live in lockdown mode our economy will suffer. Some of us might lose our jobs or our incomes. But you won't lose Jesus, because Jesus lives. And the same Jesus who fed the 5,000 will find a way to feed you.

As this virus spreads, some people we know and love might suffer. Some might die. But because Jesus lives, we too will live. We will be resurrected by his power.

So what exactly is the answer that we want to give to everyone who asks us about the hope we have?

## **2. Jesus still lives.**

Our hope is not in a politician. It is not in our economy. It is not in a religion or an argument. It is not in ourselves. Our hope is in Jesus and Jesus lives.

When you share that hope with gentleness and respect, it will change you. You will be reminded of the reality of Jesus and his power. You will be strengthened as you share your hope. But now only you, you will further God's kingdom.

I don't know what God is up to, but he is up to something. I keep hearing from pastors all over the country that are seeing a multitude of people becoming followers of Jesus. Even in our small corner of the God's kingdom, we have about 10x as many computers as normal streaming our services. People seem to be hungry for a hope that lives. Hope that can't be destroyed by a struggling economy or a virus. People are finding hope in Jesus.

So this is the time to go public with your faith. Begin by setting aside Christ in your heart. We need to have a private faith. We need to cry out to Jesus in private. But our faith can't stay there in private. We need to bring it out into the public. But we don't need to grab the megaphone and join in the arguments and the outrage. Grab the spotlight and shine the light on our living hope, on Jesus Christ. Our world needs hope. And God wants to use you to partner with him to spread that hope. Let God's light shine in your hearts, don't hide it under a bushel, Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. Amen.