

Bible Byte - #2

To begin, why not re-read all of Chapter 1.
Recall what you discovered last time...

The lectionary skips over verses 10-17 but we need to stop here just for a moment. In vv10-12, the writer wants us to hold in mind that the Old Testament prophets spoke not just to people in their own time but to people throughout the ages, including us, as they testify to Christ's suffering which lead to his "glory". The writer also reminds us that the Spirit of Christ who spoke through the prophets is the same Holy Spirit that brings the good news to you.

- *Pray – thank God for the Spirit of Christ who has spoken to and through women and men throughout the ages, calling us to draw close to God*

Verses 13 invites us to "prepare our minds for action", to "discipline yourselves" and to "set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed". And then verse 15, "be holy... in all your conduct" (v.15) – "be holy as [God] is holy" (v.16 - quoting from Leviticus 11:44-45, one of the grounding statements of the Hebrew/Jewish law).

- *Prepare for action, be disciplined and focus your hope on grace*
- *"Be holy" – "holy" means set apart from common use, dedicated or righteous both as individuals and as a people – how is your conduct "holy"? What kind of conduct would our church community need to show to be "holy"?*

Easter 3 – 1 Peter 1:17-23 – Being Holy

This section unpacks the call to be "holy" to a people who are already "different". Many of the people to whom this letter is addressed, "the exiles of the Dispersion" (1:1), are non-Jews (also known as Gentiles) who have come to believe in Jesus the Christ. So they don't fit in the Jewish world nor do they subscribe to the world of Greek and Roman mythology.

God "judges all people impartially according to their deeds" (1:17) so "live in reverent fear". This can be understood to mean that we also will be judged so need to be attentive to the reality that we do not always live as God intended. And it can also be understood to mean that we are able to live confidently before God as the one who embraces us all.

- *How does your life show "reverent fear"?*

Verses 19-21 contain a powerful statement about who Christ is that deserves some close consideration. Remember this letter is written at a time that the early Christians are still working out how to articulate what Christ's death and resurrection mean – they know it is significant and they know that it is transforming but how do they put words to it? You have been "ransomed" from your previous futile ways with Christ's blood (v.18-19) which is compared to that of the unblemished lamb, the sacrifice made according to the ancient Jewish law.

This sacrifice does not and will not perish – not like a sacrifice of silver or gold – this is permanent, ever-lasting, "imperishable". Again, it is a contrast to the sacrifices offered at

the time both at the Jewish temple and at the Greek and Roman temples – all these other sacrifices are meaningless and will eventually pass away (rot or rust) but Christ's sacrifice is forever and for all time (v.20).

- *The writer is using images that would have been very familiar to the people of the time. However, concepts like "ransom" and "sacrifice" are not words that are used in a wider religious sense any more. As we try to explain to people in our time what Christ's death and resurrection is about, we either need to explain more about "ransom" and "sacrifice" or we need to find images that our world will understand more readily. Can you think of images that are more familiar that might help us describe the extraordinary work of God in Christ?*

Verse 21 makes it clear that Christ's resurrection was the work of God – intended to point us to God and to secure our hope and trust in God. The NRSV says "God...gave [Christ] glory" and the NIV says "God... glorified [Christ]".

- *What does "glory" mean? What do we mean when we say we give "glory" to God?*

Obedience is a major concern of this letter. In v.22, obedience to the truth purifies us, and so we are called to "genuine mutual love" and to "love one another deeply from the heart".

- *What is "truth"?*
- *What does "genuine mutual love" look like across the Christian community, particularly when we don't always agree with one another?*

And then again in verse 23, we return to the idea of what is permanent and what will disappear as the seasons come and go. The seed that has been planted in us is imperishable, we have been born anew "through the living and enduring word of God."

Concluding verse 24

The lectionary leaves out verse 24, which is a quote from Isaiah 40:6-9. It reminds us, reinforcing verse 23, of the contrast between that which is perishable, withering and falling as seasons come and go, and that which cannot be destroyed, "the word of the Lord endures forever". And the writer then ties it back to verses 10-12 reinforcing the link between the words of the Hebrew prophets and the news of Christ's resurrection, that same word, is the "good news" that you received.

- *Pray – give thanks to God for the people who have shared the stories of Christ with you, people who have taught you faith, people who have wrestled with the Scriptures with you. Give thanks for all that you have learned and are learning of who God calls you to be.*