

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

*Living as Exiles in a Hostile
World – The Epistle of 1 Peter*

*Part 25 - The First Place Christ
Will Judge When He Comes
Again*

February 12, 2017

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 4:15-18

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:1-16

1 Peter 4:15-18 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. (16) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (17) For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (18) And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

This morning I am skipping ahead a bit in our study of 1 Peter. We have come to chapter 4 but the 15th to 18th verses, and verse 17 in particular, have been on my mind of late. Listen to the following comment made on our blog in response to our recent article regarding how a true reformation is long overdue in the visible church:

Thank you, dear Pastor, for this observation of the terrible reality that so many of us learned in the most heartbreaking of ways. The young need to know this, before they have children. It is they who suffer the most.

My three children have lived through the experience of the elders at the church where they grew up, who are the fathers of their best friends from birth, telling their father to leave me (their mother) because I exposed and would not tolerate his abuse any longer (at this point, he was no

longer pretending to be "sorry" about it).

Rather than stand with us, and defend and protect us, they believed our abuser (who, since I would no longer keep silent, was working to discredit me) and told him to "get out" of the marriage, because, they said, I'm a "bad example to the children of how to treat a man." They referred him to a very wicked lawyer and declared to me that they decided I have a personality disorder.

This was elders at a large, seeker-friendly church that prided itself on making everyone who ever visited feel totally comfortable and accepted. (This was said by the worship pastor before the congregation: "Before you behave, and even before you believe, you belong here.")

We fled briefly for refuge to a reformed, extremely devout (I thought) small church. The elders there said it's ok to stay with an apostate who calls himself a believer. They told me to figure out what I was doing to make him abuse me. They said they would do marriage counseling only, and would not confront him on his sin.

They said I need to "reconcile" with him--and the previous church too (?!?!).

Both sets of elders utterly threw us to the dogs. They abandoned my three children and me in our most desperate time of need. Their treachery boggles my mind and pierces my heart in the deepest of places. I now see the church as the most dangerous place for any true believer to be.

Now, of course what she is speaking of and what I wrote about in our article is *the visible church*, not the true church. The visible church is that group of people on this present earth who profess to be Christians and who normally gather together into local assemblies. These local churches consist of true and false sheep and are overseen by true and false shepherds. The *invisible church* is that great company of true believers, the genuine people of Christ, from all ages of church history and this present age and those in heaven with the Lord. We call this the invisible church because you cannot see these saints in this present time. Some, but not all.

Every local, visible church is to one degree, lesser or greater, *corrupt*. That is to say, no visible church is free from sin and most surely have false sheep

wearing their disguises. However, there have been times in the history of the Christian church when the corruptions of the visible church became much wider in extent – such as the time just preceding the Protestant Reformation.

It is my suggestion to you this morning and my opinion that we live in a time of very widespread corruption, hypocrisy, and wickedness in the visible church, just as it was in the days of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 23:1-4 "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. (2) Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD. (3) Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. (4) I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD.

Isaiah also spoke of the “church” in his day-

Isaiah 1:2-20 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. (3) The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." (4) Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. (5) Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. (6) From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. (7) Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners. (8) And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. (9) If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. (10) Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! (11) "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt

offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. (12) "When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? (13) Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. (14) Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (15) When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. (16) Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, (17) learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. (18) "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. (19) If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; (20) but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Here then, this morning, is a message for all of us and in particular anyone

who is masquerading in the house of God as a Christian but is in fact a goat hiding among the sheep. Here is the Lord's message. Listen and then we will support this statement with Scripture:

Christ has always and will always begin His judgment with that which claims to be His visible church. The first evildoers He exposes and judges and holds to a greater accountability for their evil are those who have paraded as His people and especially those who have claimed to be His shepherds.

That is to say, the most perilous, fearful place for any human being to be right at this present time is to be a hypocrite, a false professor, in the visible church.

I will prove it to you. Listen to Peter again:

1 Peter 4:17-18 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (18) And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

Have you ever wondered what Peter meant by those words? *Judgment beginning at the household of God.*

The time of that judgment is imminent. Christ could come at any time. And it is a judgment of *those who are in the visible household of God*.

This has been the repeated pattern of God's judgment of those who profess to be His people. Here are more examples:

Malachi 3:1-11 "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. **And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple;** and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. (2) But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? **For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.** (3) **He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.**

(4) Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. (5) "Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner,

and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. (6) "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. (7) From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' (8) Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. (9) You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. (10) Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. (11) I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts.

See it? When He comes, in fact, *when Christ came the first time*, where did He go in judgment? To the TEMPLE. To the visible church. He did not go judge the Moabites or the Philistines, but He judged His own people in a judgment of purification. He drove the wicked out of His Father's house and He encouraged His true people, and THAT is what is meant by *zeal for His father's house consuming Him*-

Matthew 21:1-16 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, (2) saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. (3) If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." (4) This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, (5) "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

(6) The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. (7) They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. (8) Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. (9) And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

(10) And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" (11) And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

(12) And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. (13) He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers." (14) And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. (15) But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, (16) and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?"

If you are going to be protected from stumbling, that is to say, if you are going to prevent being deceived into thinking that every person who claims to be a Christian or every local church that claims to follow Christ *is a gathering of phonies who hurt people in the name of religion and exalt themselves*, the you MUST understand what the Bible says over and over to us about what we can expect to happen over and over again in the visible church. Namely, that –

Wicked people who claim to be Christians, who put on often very

convincing disguises but who are in fact what Christ called wolves in sheep's clothing, are going to tirelessly work to infiltrate the church. Their goal is always to put themselves first, to be "Christ" themselves, to get glory and worship and adulation from people, and to bring us all into real spiritual bondage.

Think of it. Have you ever studied church history? This is precisely what we have seen over and over again. And the first thing that the Lord does when He comes is expose the wicked ones, announce their evil so everyone can see it, and cast them out of His presence –

Ezekiel 9:3-6 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his waist. (4) And the LORD said to him, "Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." (5) And to the others he said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him, and strike. Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. (6) Kill old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one on whom is the mark.

And begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the house.

I believe this last phrase is exactly what Peter had in mind when he wrote verse 17, that judgment begins with the household of God. *They began with the elders who were before the house.*

And here is more –

Luke 12:48 But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

The enemy is ALWAYS at work to creep into Christ's visible church. And today far too many Christians are asleep on guard duty, letting it happen.

I live in a small community. Very small. I like it very much. We have lived there for 17 years now and it seems to me that we are just now really making some friends. Not because the people are unfriendly, but because in a community like ours you really have to prove yourself, and that takes time. You especially have to prove yourself if you claim to be a Christian!! Why? I have told you before and I will say it again –

Because our community has seen a history of evil people parading as Christians in local churches here. In a small community, people know all about one another. If you are a "Christian" hypocrite, you can be sure that they will know it.

So when I talk to people in our community about Christ, I openly and very early on tell them, "yep, churches today are very, very often in a pathetic state of affairs. They have members who are rank hypocrites, playing holy on Sunday and then living like the devil the rest of the week." And in some cases I plainly tell them, "no, you shouldn't go to that particular church. I would never go there myself."

But then I want them to know something else. I want them to know that Christ has His REAL church, and sometimes you cannot even see it and that is what the Bible repeatedly calls "the remnant." Here is an example of how it has always been and how it remains today -

Romans 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (29) But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

John 4:23-24 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (24) God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Luke 11:39 And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

The Pharisees of course were the "clergy," the preachers of that day. How many times do people in our own day pick up a newspaper or go online and see a news report of just such corruption in a local church to church hierarchy? All too often.

Romans 9:25-28 As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" (26) "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" (27) And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, (28) for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."

So what grieves me the most is that people *who need to find Christ and His forgiveness and new life have never seen Him*. What they have seen is a counterfeit. And who is it for the most part that is responsible for this? Here is the answer –

Matthew 23:1-7 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, (2) "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, (3) so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. (4) They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. (5) They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, (6) and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues (7) and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

Understand? Do you see then why it is that the FIRST people Christ is going to judge when He comes is what Peter calls *the household of God*. The visible church. People who claim to be Christians. And this is how it will go down –

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who

does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' (23) And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Notice that these people are *people who claim to have served Christ!* But they were fakes. The whole thing, all of their church-going and church-doing was a sham done for their own praise, not Christ's and not for genuine love for people.

Finally, let me close with one more point. In spite of all of this evil which parades itself as being of Christ, the Lord most certainly is *real*. Christ is real. Christ came into this world, the Son of God, went to the cross for our sins, died and was buried and rose again the third day, ascended to His Father, and is coming again to judge the world in perfect justice.

Right now, His invitation is open. It reads something like this:

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (18) All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us

the ministry of reconciliation; (19) that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (21) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.