

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 98 – Practicing the Love of Christ in Exile

March 12, 2017

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 4

Scripture Reading: Judges 13:6-25

1 Peter 4:7-11 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. (8) Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. (9) **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.** (10) As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: (11) whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be

glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Verla and I were in Salem the other day and drove by the big Baptist church there. I remember attending there for a short time when I was a kid and seeing people all gathered around the Oregon governor, Mark Hatfield, after the service out front when he attended services.

As we drove by we noticed the electronic marquis sign on the multi-million dollar building complex announcing 1) The “missions team” was holding a garage sale, and 2) This Sunday’s sermon was “A New Day: A Thankful Life.” My thoughts?

- Those announcements are totally irrelevant to the mass of people driving by and reflect an “out of touch” mentality
- I wonder how much evil is hiding behind those walls, parading as an angel of light, and how many

of its victims are oppressed in there

Such is the state of the visible church today. We dare not be naïve about it.

And yet Peter is addressing the true body of Christ. He knows about this evil full well as you can see if you read his second letter –

2 Peter 2:12-14 But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, (13) suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. (14) They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!

And so you have this tension in Scripture which is a tension in the Christian's life –

1. Evil exists. Evil is constantly trying to creep in among us and destroy Christ's church
2. Christ's true remnant, the true Israel, the genuine Body of Christ, always exists

3. We, as elect exiles, are to love one another, serve one another earnestly, and one common means of doing so is to show hospitality to one another.

Listen to the Apostle to the Hebrews elaborate on this -

Hebrews 13:1-16 Let brotherly love continue. (2) **Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers**, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (3) Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. (4) Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (5) Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (7) Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. (8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (9) Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. (10) We have

an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. (11) For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. (12) So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. (13) Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. (14) For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. (15) Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (16) **Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**

Hospitality. That is the central theme we want to focus upon this morning. I propose to you that this subject is widely misunderstood and wrongly taught in churches today. Let me give you an example:

Recently Pastor Jeremiah Steepok went to his new pastorate at a 10,000 member mega-church. In collusion with the elders, he came disguised as a homeless man to “test” the people’s reaction. The video report of this on Facebook has been seen by millions of people, most all of whom praised his actions.

I do not.

He reported that only 3 people greeted him, that no one gave him money when he asked for it, and when he sat in the front row for the service the deacons asked him to move to the back.

Then the elders introduced the new pastor to the congregation and he walked forward down the aisle, took the microphone, and revealed his disguise. I don’t know what all else he told the people.

This is not the hospitality that Scripture is speaking of. What he did was wrong and unbiblical, and I can tell you why-

1. His intent was to shame the church while grandstanding and exalting himself
2. In our day we are bombarded with charlatans parading as people in need who *we are not to give money to*
3. People like this who march into a church where no one knows them, walks down front and sits in the front row, is rightly immediately suspect and may well be dangerous. We are not to be naïve about evil.
4. Finally and perhaps most importantly, when Scripture such as those we are going to look at

this morning, speaks of showing hospitality, it is fundamentally teaching us to be hospitable toward the brethren, even if they are “strangers.” This is what John rebuked Diotrephes for –

mishandling God’s Word and teaching a false application of it.

Listen to James –

James 2:1-6 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. (2) For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, (3) and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," (4) have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (5) Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? (6) But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?

Who is the shabby man in this account? He is a poor man *with faith*. An heir of the kingdom. That is to say, he is a Christian. The rich man also professes to be a Christian, but in partiality he is shown preference. And that is sin. But even here James does not have in mind someone who just wanders in off the street, unknown to

3 John 1:5-10 **Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are,** (6) who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. (7) For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. (8) Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. (9) I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. (10) So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. **And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.**

Understand? So that mega-church got themselves a mega-pastor who at his very first appearance put on a mega-performance in order to establish himself as superior to everyone else. And it worked. He duped and shamed them. And worse, he did it by

everyone, not recommended by another church, asking for money. We are not to naively and ignorantly or indiscriminately trust anyone who walks through the door and *treat them as if they were a brother in Christ.*

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Heb 13:2)

But there is a corollary here as well that might be stated like this-

“Do not be naïve in showing hospitality to people you have no knowledge of, for thereby some have entertained demons.”

Scripture says so –

2 Corinthians 11:13-14 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

I posted what I just have told you on the ACFJ Facebook page yesterday and in short order I received the following message from a reader -

I hope I understand this tomorrow because Jesus said when you have done it to one of the least of these you

have done it unto me so we don't want to be wrong about this I have let a homeless man into my house automatically feeling like I was obeying God but at the same time I had a strange gut feeling and I started praying so I hope I can really understand how to discern... I was raised a Mormon so when I read the red letters I have that old interpretation first

I pointed her to Jesus' words again –

Matthew 25:40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these **my brothers**, you did it to me.'

In other words all of these verses on Christian hospitality are fundamentally simply talking about us *loving one another in the body of Christ.*

Listen once more to Peter here in our text for this morning and then we will look at some other key passages on Christian hospitality.

1 Peter 4:7-11 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. (8) Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. (9) **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.** (10) As each has

received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: (11) whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Notice verse 8 again-

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Then comes the exhortation to show hospitality *to one another*. Hospitality is the warm, genuine, sincere love of Christ put into action for the sake of Christ toward others in His Body the church. It is *earnest love*. Not something shallow or superficial or done for show. It is impartial – rich or poor, friend or stranger. You see it here in Matthew:

Matthew 25:31-46 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. (34) Then the King will say to

those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) **For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'**

(37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) **And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'**

(40) And the King will answer them, **'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'**

(41) "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' (44) **Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or**

naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' (45) Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, **as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'** (46) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

When we show genuine love, kindness, and put it into ACTION, it is called *hospitality*. And especially so when we do this for a brother or sister in Christ with absolutely no intent whatsoever of personal benefit from doing it.

Now, notice very, very carefully what Jesus said to the wicked. First of all, they are fake Christians. You see that? They claim to have served Christ. BUT they did not receive and love Christ's people. Notice their objection to Jesus' charge in verse 44 again –

(44) Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' (45) Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, **as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'** (46) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

This is vital to understand. It is not that *they did not help anyone at all in need. It is that they did not help Christ's people when they saw them in need!* Indiscriminate social concern programs for the poor and needy launched by churches in the name of Christ are NO sign of genuine love for Christ. The question is, what do we do with *Christ's people*? Love them or reject them?

Look at the pattern in Scripture. Once again, Hebrews says:

Hebrews 13:2-3 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (3) Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

NOTE: Most church prison ministries are not what this passage is talking about. The prisoners here are those who were in prison *because they are Christians*. Those are the people we are to give special attentive love to.

But does verse 2 mean then that we are to welcome anyone and everyone into our homes and churches and show them hospitality? No. *Some have entertained angels unawares*. In other words, people who came as servants of the Lord and had credible professions of that faith were shown hospitality. In

some cases they turned out to be angels, messengers of the Lord to those who welcomed them. Follow along –

Genesis 18:1-10 And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. (2) He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth (3) and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. (4) Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, (5) while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."

(6) And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." (7) And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. (8) Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate. (9) They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." (10) The LORD said, "I will surely return to you

about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

Then you have Lot –

Genesis 19:1-3 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth (2) and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." (3) But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

And Samson's parents-

Judges 13:6-25 Then the woman came and told her husband, "**A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome.** I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name,

(15) Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you." (16) And the angel of the LORD said to

Manoah, "If you detain me, I will not eat of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD." **(For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.)**

(17) And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?" (18) And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?" (19) So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching. (20) And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground.

(21) The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.

Manoah did not know. And yet there was just something about this messenger that made it evident he was at least, *a man of God*. So they welcomed him.

And here is the point. In doing so they welcomed *the Lord*. And were blessed.

I don't know if the Lord has ever or will ever send a real angel to any of us, but I can say with certainty that He most surely will (and has) sent us people that are His messengers to us. People whom He chooses to use for His particular purpose in our lives, and we will be the poorer for it if we fail to show hospitality to them.

In all this we must be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.