

Message to Community Baptist Church in Lubumbashi, D.R. Congo, 9-4-2011

BON JOUR. JAMBO. HARBADE. Hello and Good Morning!

My French is very bad and my Swahili is even worse so I am going to speak to you in English and Pastor Dider will translate in French and Pastor Peter in Swahili.

I only know 10 words in French and only 5 words in Swahili but the most important word we have in common is Yesu (Jesus).

This is my first time in Africa, and I am very blessed to be your guest.

I bring you greetings from your brothers and sisters in Christ in the United States of America.

Brother Stuart who was here with you several weeks ago sends his love from his family which now includes 2 beautiful girls from your country, Jamie and Jordan.

Brother Ray Hill who was here with you last year with Jim Hagen, they send love in Christ.

My family, my wife and children send you their love.

Several churches in California that know Pastor Didier send you their greetings and prayers.

Many people are praying for you and this church and this trip and this orphanage and this day.

My family has a long history with this country, back when it was called the Belgian Congo.

My great-grandfather was a missionary in western Congo in Bolenge.

He was a medical missionary, and he saw many Congolese come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Cripples, cannibals, witch doctors, were saved – Jesus changed their lives.

It is a great privilege for me to return to the country where my great-grandfather served as a missionary.

It is a great joy for me to be here with my friends to help Josie and Gabe bring home their twins Brandon and Kara.

It is a great honor for me to be able to speak to you today my brothers and sisters in Christ!

Your pastor, my brother Didier has been such a blessing to our family and church family.

Pastor Didier spoke to our church last year for only a short time but he has had a big impact on my life and on the lives of many in our church and still does.

It is a highlight of my life and ministry to stand beside him and speak to you.

If you have a Bible with you, please turn to 2 Peter 1.

Pastor Didier has asked me to speak on the Word of God in the life of the believer

It is my honor and joy to speak to you from God's precious Word about how precious God's Word is.

Please listen as I read the first verses of this chapter and the last verses of this chapter.

2 Peter 1 (NIV) *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,*

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

² *Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

³ *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

⁴ *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises ...*

¹⁸ *We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

¹⁹ *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain*

and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

²⁰ *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.*

²¹ *For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

My job as a preacher is not to tell you my own interpretation or opinion.

I need to speak from God His message with the power of the Holy Spirit.

LET ME PRAY FOR GOD'S HELP TO DO THAT

This is a chapter that begins and ends with the importance of the Word of God for the Christian.

We need to understand who this is written to and then how it applies to us

Who is this passage written to? If you look at v. 1, it tells us

Peter is writing “to those who have received faith” – he is writing to Christians

Faith is something we receive; it is a gift from God

Faith is not a work we do to be saved, it is God's work in us so we can be saved

by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: *par la justice de notre Dieu et du Sauveur Jésus-Christ:*

Jesus is our God and He is our Savior

We are saved by His righteousness, not our own (we are never good enough)

Our faith is in Jesus being good enough for us, His perfect righteousness

He lived the perfect life we could not live to give us what we do not deserve

He paid the price for our sins we could not pay and gives us what we do NOT deserve – grace

God treated Jesus on the cross as if He lived my sinful life so that He can treat me as if I lived the perfect life of Jesus!

This is the precious faith we share that God has given to us.

Peter says in v. 1 he is writing to those with “a faith as precious as ours” or “the same kind as ours”

The idea is that it is the same value, the same kind, one is not different or better than another

Peter is a Jew writing to many who were not Jews but he is saying we are the same in Christ

Peter at one time thought Jews were different or better than the others but God changed his heart

We are not different, we are the same in Christ

My skin is lighter than yours but we are the same in Christ.

We have the same kind of faith, we all come to Jesus the same way.

We are all in the same family of Christ if we believe in Jesus.

Josie and Gabe are adopting Congolese twins into their family.

These twins Brandon and Kara will be treated the same as their other 4 children

Their adopted children will receive the same share of inheritance.

Their adopted children will call them “papa” just like their other children (in fact I have heard them many times this week already)

Josie and Gabe will love them just the same as their children in every way.

Adoption is a very costly process and they had to come a long way but they do it because of God’s love in their heart.

It is a beautiful picture of the gospel of Jesus and what God does for all His children.

God’s children are black, white, brown, every color and culture in the same family.

We are not naturally born into God’s family, God has to adopt us.

It was very costly for God to adopt us, He gave up His own Son Jesus.

God came even farther to adopt us, all the way down to earth to live among us.

Paul says in Galatians when God adopts us we all call him “papa” (BABA in Swahili)

Paul also says to Christians we are “heirs of the same inheritance”

Paul says in Romans we are heirs together with Christ – everything God gives to His Son Jesus He shares with us, too!

And God loves us the same as He does His beloved Son Jesus Christ.

And we are all in the same family, and he greets them as family in v. 2.

“Grace and peace” was how the Christian family greeted one another in the Bible

Just like here people say “Bon jour” or “Jambo” or “Har-bahdee” the early Christians said “Grace ... peace”

GRACE – God’s kindness that we do not deserve

This greeting means “May God’s love or kindness be experienced by you”

PEACE - “May God give you much peace, spiritual well-being, health of mind”

And the way v. 2 says we receive more grace and peace is by knowing and God and Jesus our Lord

How do we come to know God more? Through His Word in v. 3-4.

Verse 3 says God has given us everything we need through knowing God.

Everything we need for life and godliness God has given us!

Everything we need to live the Christian life God has given us!

There is power in this book, power to live the godly life.

In verse 4 Peter explains that God has given us very great and precious promises.

“Great” means very important and “precious” means very honorable, very valuable

Where are those promises? They are in God’s Word.

Peter made promises he could not keep – remember when he said to Jesus “I will never deny you”

But Peter denied Jesus 3 times before the rooster crowed the next morning

Man may not keep his promise but when God makes a promise, He keeps it.

God promises to every Christian “I will not deny you.”

Peter was a many of many words, but Jesus made him a man of God’s Word

Peter saw many miracles, but Peter says God’s Word is great and precious.

Peter had many experiences with Jesus, but Peter says we have something better than that

In v. 18 Peter talks about the time on the Mount when they heard God speak from heaven about Jesus His Beloved Son.

But in v. 19 Peter says we have something “more sure” in the Bible

The Word of God is more sure, it is better than the best experience, Peter says

Experiences and emotions can be good, but we must trust God’s Word, not how we feel

We don’t need to hear God speak from heaven (v. 18), we have God’s Word from heaven in this book

Peter says in v. 19 this is what we are to pay attention to like a lamp in the darkness

God’s Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, the Psalms say

It shows us where we need to go, how to walk, what the next step is

What are some the “great and precious” promises Peter speaks of? Look at verse 10.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,

¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What a great and precious promise! If we know Jesus has saved us, we will not fall away!

All God’s children will receive a rich welcome into the kingdom of Jesus.

You may not be rich here on earth, but you have great treasure in heaven!

We need to remember these great and precious promises, that’s what Peter explains in Chapter 3.

2 Peter 3:1 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.

² I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

You see, we need reminders, we need to remember the promises of the Bible and the things Jesus taught.

Jesus promised He would come again, that’s what chapter 3 is about. Look at verse 13.

¹³ *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

¹⁴ *So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

The great promise of a new and better world to come should make us live differently in this world.

I love how Peter calls them “dear friends” – I am saying these things to you as dear friends, as precious friends

Peter also talks about other precious promises of God in his first letter, for example, 1 Peter 1.

1 Peter 1:3 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,

⁴ *and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you*

You see, precious friends, if we are born again into God’s family, by the resurrection of Jesus, all true believers in Christ have a precious inheritance in heaven.

God not only protects and preserves our inheritance, He protects us and preserves us!

⁵ *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.*

Why are these great and precious promises important? One reason is so we can have joy even in trials and in grief.

⁶ *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*

Many of you have suffered or had grief or been in various trials.

But we can have joy even in grief – I know this because I have experienced it.

I have had grief in my life – but God’s precious promises have given me grace, even joy.

⁷ *These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold [or “more precious than gold”], which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

Peter likes to talk about precious things, gold and silver. This is what 1 Peter 1:18 says

¹⁸ *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed ...*

In other words, the most precious things of earth could never pay for us to be redeemed, to be bought from the slave market of sin.

Verse 19 says Christians are redeemed “*with the precious blood of Christ.*”

It is because of the precious blood of Christ that Christians have His precious promises!

Everything else in life is temporary, except the precious promises of God’s Word

²⁴ *For, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.*

Everything else in life fails, but God’s Word never fails. It is firm forever.

Why is God’s Word so precious? Because they are the words of Jesus who is precious.

In 1 Peter 2:7 it says to you who believe in Jesus He is precious, precious value.

There are other precious promises our precious Jesus gave to Peter in the gospels.

Jesus said one time “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!”

Jesus said to Peter another time: “Satan has asked permission to shake you, to test you, but I am praying for you.”

What a promise, that Jesus is praying for us, and Jesus then told Peter, “afterward you will strengthen the brethren”

You see Satan cannot do anything to us without the permission of Jesus the King.

And Jesus wants to use us in our suffering to later strengthen other Christians.

Jesus also told Peter “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

In 1 Peter 5:7 there is this precious promise that we can put all our cares on Him because He cares for us.

Then 1 Peter 5:10 has this very great and precious promise:

“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

In the end of v. 12 Peter tells them to stand firm in the grace of God, and I want to end this message the way Peter ends his letter.

My brothers and sisters, stand firm in the grace of God.

Your brothers and sisters in America stand with you and are praying for you.

The Bible promised that one day people from deep in Africa would worship the true Lord together shoulder-to-shoulder with people from other nations.

Today that Scripture is happening in this place.

God is doing great and mighty things in Africa, and it is affecting us in America.

The last book of the Bible has a precious promise that people from every people and nation and color and culture will worship Jesus Christ together in heaven!

That should make our hearts want to shout for joy to our precious Savior!!

There is a great Lord's Supper coming at the end of time, a great meal where Jesus promised people from East and West of Israel (like America), North and South (like DRC) would eat together with Jesus.

We get a little picture of that as we celebrate the Lord's Supper together today and our agape meal today.

My family, I came to this country wanting to encourage you, but I think you have encouraged me even more!

God is at work and I have seen Him answer so many prayers already in our trip in just a few days.

Keep praying, keep trusting in the Lord and in His precious promises in His Word.

Everything we need Peter says God has given us in His precious Word.

May the Lord bless you with his grace and peace and may you be encouraged by our time together. I love you so much.

Thank you! MERCI, MERCI. AHK-SANTI SANA.

Amen.