



THE ORCHARD

## Love Deeply, Live Differently

1 Peter 1:13-25

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- Good morning everyone, for those who don't know me, my name is Eric and I have the privilege to serve as the youth pastor here at the Orchard Vernon Hills.
- I also want to specifically welcome all of the students from our student and children's ministry who are joining us today.
- First, I want to say that I am so excited to be sharing this morning
  - And secondly, I would love to quick pray
- Before we go on I think it is helpful to review the context of this book of 1 Peter
- As Pastor Tom taught us last week
  - 1 Peter is a letter that was passed through the Churches of what we now call Turkey.
  - He wrote to the believers who were scattered and who were suffering for their faith and living as exiles in a world that is not their home
- Peter first reminded them of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and they hope they have



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- That they been chosen specifically by God for salvation and God had caused them to be born again through the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- And that God was using even their suffering to refine their faith as they wait for Christ to return
- And now in this next section Peter begins to instruct them on how they should live
  - That because they have been redeemed by Christ
  - They are being called to
    - Set their hope on Christ
    - Learn to fear the Lord
    - And to love one another earnestly

### PART 1 (Set your hope on Christ)

- First in verses 13 to 16 we see that Peter instructs the believers of Asia Minor to ***“Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”***
  - In other words, what Peter is teaching is that if you are a Christian your life should be in alignment with the truth you believe
  - It means our goals, thoughts, and actions should all be centered on Christ



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- What this means is that for anyone who is a believer;
  - All of our hope for salvation
  - All our hope in life
  - All our hope in death
  - Is that Christ was true in what he promised us
  - The promise that he will return for all of us and that we will reign with him forever
  
- And it also means that we as Christians should long for and desire for this day to come
  - It should mean that our thoughts and minds should be consumed with the fact that Christ will return for us and that there is nothing else in this world we desire more
  
- Now I don't know if all of you are dog people
  - And, if you aren't, that is ok,
  - But you do need to figure it out



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- What I love about dogs is that a well trained one can be some of the most perfect illustrations for what followers of Christ are called to be
  - Creatures that hear their master's voice and drop all things to run to them
  - Creatures that love their master more than anything in the world
  - And for the sake of today, they are creatures that have their hope fully set on their masters return
  
- If you have or ever have had a dog you know that there are few things they love more than when their family comes home
  - My dog Gus, whenever anyone is gone, will still play and nap and eat food
  - But anytime he would hear the elevator doors open or hear a voice in the hallway he would spring into action and run to the door
  - And sometimes it wouldn't be me or Alyssa and he will go back to doing what he was doing
  - But other times the door to apartment would open and you would think it is the best day of his life
  - His whole body would be shaking because he is wagging his tail so hard and he abandons whatever he was doing to come and lick and get petted by us



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- And whenever I see this it reminds me of what I should be like as I wait for Christ to return for me
  - I want to be overcome with joy and fulfillment
  - That the one I desire over all things has returned
  
- You know there was one time early on when we had Gus that he was so excited to see me after I got home late from youth group
  - That he actually hurt himself because he wouldn't stop jumping for joy
  
- And that what I want to be like
  - When Christ comes back I want to run at him so fast that I pull my hamstring
  
- And yes, I can enjoy some of the things in this world while I am here
  - And yes, I can enjoy my time here
  - But where my hope resides and where my attention snaps to at the slightest creak is the return of Jesus Christ.
  - It does not matter what job I have, how much money I have acquired, how great or beautiful my family is



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- But when Christ returns I want to be ready and to sprint to him to be greeted and welcomed by a master that loves me.
  
- But with this verse there is warning
  - And the warning that we see in verse 14 is that <sup>14</sup> *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,*
  - The temptation for Christians as we wait for Christ is to not wait expectantly
  - But instead indulge in the world and to become drunk in pleasure and excess
  - To not pay attention to the return of Christ and act as though we are indifferent to him returning.
  
- What does that proclaim to the world?
  - If with our words we preach that Christ will return for us
  - But with our actions we show less interest than a dog whose owner was only gone for an hour at the store?
  - Christians should be people whose thoughts and hope are laser focused on the return of Christ
  - And often find themselves sitting in prayer simply longing for the day when we will see Christ again
  - And so Christians should be people who long for Christ to return



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- But now what if you want to long for Christ
  - But you simply cannot find in your heart an excitement or desire
  - When your longing is more centered on when your favorite team plays
  - If you might get that next promotion
  - When your next family party is
  
- What do you do if your longing for Christ has been overpowered by your longing for other things?
  
- Or in other words what do you do if you find that you love things, even good things more than God
  - Tim Keller often referred to this as disordered love
  - He would argue that sin, at its core, is not just breaking rules, but is putting good things in the place of God
  - It is loving the gifts more than the Giver
  
- But, so then what is the solution?
  - Is it to just work harder?
  - Should we work to decrease our love of the things that have usurped God?



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- No, I don't think those are the solutions we need.
  
- What I think we need to do is ensure that we are loving Christ over all things
  - We need to reorder our loves, not so that the good things we love are abolished
  - But have been placed under Christ
  - So they are no longer sins, but the things that God gave us to enjoy this world
  
- So if the love of family or friend is the idol that you have placed over God
  - If what you long and desire is that next vacation or holiday over God
  - If you would say my people are my everything
  - The solution is not to work to push them away
  - Or try to make your heart love them less
  
- But the solution is to remind yourself everyday through prayer and time with God that
  - Our family was not meant to carry the weight of our soul
  - What is our hope, joy, and assurance can only be Christ Jesus



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- And the beauty of this is that once you reorder your love
  - You will not only have Christ as supreme
  - But also you will be able to love the good things in this world the way that they were meant to be loved
  
- Instead of asking our family or friends to carry the weight of our hope and satisfaction
  - We get to enjoy them as gifts from God
  - And allow them to be free to live to please Christ and not us

### **PART 2 (Learn to fear the Lord)**

- Following this, Peter continues on with verses 17 through 21
  - And he shares that the believers who have fully put their hope in God
  - And who call God father
  - And who have been ransomed from sin by the blood of Christ Jesus
  - Will be pure and and blameless before God
  - And will believe in him and have their faith and hope rest in God



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- This is a beautiful recap of the gospel and explanation of the hope that we are so focused on
  - But what I want to focus on and what I think is interesting in this passage is in verse 17
  - *“<sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, **conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,**”*
  
- *Conduct yourself with fear throughout the time of your exile*
  - To me this this is a great example of a verse in the Bible that can challenge some of the preconceived notions we have about God
  
- Now Orchard children, I hope I haven't lost you,
  - I know how hard it can be to focus in “big Church”
  
- You know I remember when I was a student and I would join my family during our family sundays
  - And now this might come as shock to some of you
  - But I also sometimes struggled to focus
  - Please don't judge me



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- I remember specifically one Sunday on a family Sunday during summer break
  - I was sitting next to mom with my head full of all the things I wanted to do in my free time as soon as service was over
  - But the pastor kept on preaching and preaching and preaching
  - And I remember little Eric correspondingly kept getting more frustrated and more frustrated as it felt like I would be there forever
  
- Until, I finally broke
  - I turned to my Mom and said “*Why can’t he just tell us what to do? He doesn’t have to take so long to prove it!*”
  - And my mother turned to me to look me in the eyes and said “*Stop talking*”
  
- And whereas little Eric never had the epiphany
  - It took me years later to realise why I felt this way
  - I would get frustrated at Church because I viewed the Christian life as simply following rules.
  
- I viewed God as teacher in heaven with a long yard stick ready to smack the fingers of anyone who stepped out of line
  - I thought that we just need to be good enough, so we don’t provoke his anger
  - I was fearful, of God



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- But that is not what fearing God is meant to be
  
- But here in this verse we are told to conduct ourselves with fear as we wait for Christ's return
  - Why would we fear our God who is the purest embodiment of love that has ever existed?
  - This isn't a trick question or a contradiction in the Bible
  - But it is a great opportunity to show the depth of who God is
  - Because God is not only a Father, but he is also an impartial Judge
  - These roles do not clash, but both demonstrate who God is
  
- God is our father who loves us so much that he sent his son to die on the cross for us so that we might know him
  - But also God is a judge who all saved and unsaved must answer to
  - And in the context of this verse, it is applied exclusively to people who are saved and call God, Father



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- Even though we have been saved from sin and have been born again
  - We have not been perfected yet
  - And still have the free will to choose to sin
  - What this verse is doing is warning us against abusing the love of God that we have received
  
- What this means is that there is accountability for the way that we live our lives here on earth
  - The fear that we see in verse 17 is not a terror of God in that he might break his promises
  - But it is an understanding that God is deserving of reverence and awe
  - And an understanding that our sin is an offense to God & must not be taken lightly
  
- I think that this part of walking with God is extremely important, but also one we must ensure we understand correctly
  - If you stray too far on one side, you sin without fear
  - But if you do not properly understand holy fear you can become afraid of God himself, who loves you dearly



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- I will never forget a conversation that I had while I was drug rehab counselor in Saint Louis
  - I was meeting with a new client who people had warned me about
  - He was violent and angry
  - He hated that he had to meet with us
  - And wanted nothing to do with us
  
- I remember sitting down with him the first time
  - And he didn't even look at me
  - He ignored everything I said
  - And would occasionally shoot me an angry glare
  
- However, as 10, 20, 30 minutes past he began to soften
  - He would give one word answers to the questions I asked about him
  - He talked about anime, tv, his friends
  - And eventually after about 45 minutes we began to hit the hard topics
  
- He shared about his strained relationship with his father & how his mother was no longer around
  - He then made a comment about God and I asked him if he was a Christian



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- What he told me I will never forget
  - He told me that he believed God was real, but he never wanted to be a Christian because it is just one more person to let down
  
- That comment crushed me
  - Here was someone who needed the love of the father as much as anyone else
  - Who was hurt and broken
  - Whose only way of seeing a relationship was through give and take
  
- I think a lot about him
  - We met many more times
  - And I explained him the gospel many times
  - And I don't know if he found faith
  - But I pray God has softened his heart
  - And entrust him to the Lord
  
- That is the weight when don't understand properly fearing God
  - That is the effect if we think our relationship with God is about what we do as opposed to what Christ has done



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- This teenager was living his life terrified of God because he viewed him as a dictator
  - What he was missing was that while yes we are to fear God
  - It must be built on the foundation that God is love
  
- My client skipped over knowing God and was just afraid of letting him down
  - In order to properly fear God you must first know him
  - Because when you know God you understand the reverence and glory that he is due

### PART 3 (Love one another earnestly)

- Lastly, we come to verses 22-24
  - Peter finishes this passage by detailing that the last essential part of the Christian walk is that we must love one another earnestly
  - Verse 22 reads *“<sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,”*
  
- What this verse reveals is that believers were saved for a purpose
  - And that we weren't saved for simply forgiveness sake



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- What this reveals is that real faith should always produce love toward fellow believers
  - I think there is no better way to end a passage than with the reminder of one of the reasons Christ saved us
  
- We were saved so that the love that Christ freely gave to us might overflow to our brothers and sisters
  
- Love that comes from a pure heart does not come with hypocrisy
  - Or selfish ambition
  - Or the desire for glory
  
- But it is love that comes entirely from a heart that has encountered God's grace
  - Because a heart that has been loved for no reason other than God chose it
  - Will overflow with love for all people
  - And this is the love that propels God people to impact the world in a way that nothing else can
  
- Because there is nothing more alien in this world than love given freely and generously
  - And this is the call of us as believers



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- And so I think it is appropriate to ask
  - Today are we giving the love Christ gave generously
  - Or are we only giving it to those we like
  
- Are there some who we find so difficult to be around that we would rather not love them at all
  - Or some who we do not think are deserving of our love
  
- Peter did not instruct us to love the loveable
  - Or to love those who loved us first
  - But he commanded the believers to love one another earnestly from a pure heart
  
- If you have been saved by Christ Jesus you have no excuse to reserve your love
  - Because we have already been loved
  - We have already been forgiven
  - We have already been shown mercy
  - And that grace that has been shown to us should compel us to pursue one another with love, forgiveness, and mercy



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- And so if there is person who you have pulled back from loving
  - Someone who you might have felt wronged by
  - Or someone who is just so different to you that loving them feels wrong
  - Or even someone who you just struggle with
  
- Let today be the day that you stop withholding your love
  - Show your brother & sisters the love we see in the Bible
  - And show to the world that we truly believe the love that Christ declared he has for us
  
- Because a church that does not love another is nothing more than an intellectual gathering
  - But a church that loves
  - Is a church that preaches with every interaction and moment
  - That we believe in Christ Jesus
  - That we believe that he does love us
  - That we believe he died for us
  
- So lets declare God love for us this next week simply through love being given to all believers



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- Lets pray