

2 Peter 1:1-11
Feilding Baptist
25.10.26

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Two verses from 1 Corinthians 12 (NLT)

13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

Almighty God, thank you that despite our differences, we are valued, and we as a church, are one. Thank you for accepting us, despite our background, despite our circumstances. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, again offered for all. And we thank you for Jesus, who offered us forgiveness, enabling us to connect with You. Thank you for what Jesus achieved by dying and rising again. Thank you for the hope that we have because of the life Jesus has. Holy Spirit, please bless this time and this space, and us as we worship this morning, Amen.

Message - Polar Opposites

As fellow servants, we grow in the character of God, out of grace, for the glory and restoration of God's Kingdom.

Is it possible to sail a submarine under the North Pole? Can you sail a submarine under the South Pole? The North Pole and the Arctic Circle is a sea of ice. It is possible to sail under it. Above the ice you'll find wildlife, and even some people communities. What sort of animals would you expect to see in the Arctic Circle? [polar bears, arctic foxes, walrus']

The South Pole is in Antarctica, which is a continent, therefore is land. Posing some difficulty to submarines. There are no indigenous people groups, only research stations, and the wildlife consists of? [penguins, whales, seals]

It could be said that the Arctic and Antarctica are poles apart!

Consider as we read, what are poles apart? Let's read;

2 Peter 1:1-11 (NIV - UK)

1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour 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.

Confirming one's calling and election

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life 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, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

//

10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters,[a] make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:10 The Greek word for brothers and sisters (adelphoi) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family.

May God bless these words to our hearts and minds.

As the world continues to recover from the Covid pandemic, I'm noticing a lot more anti social behaviour. Have you seen it? Burning rubber at intersections, burning household rubbish in fireplaces, dogs pooping on grass verges, rubbish on our streets, tagging, angry social media matches... Seven years ago, I'm sure these things were not as bad, at least around here. It boils down, as I see it, to a culture where the world is about me. And I can do anything wherever and whenever I want.

Which makes it worth pausing to consider this bizarre concept of Peter, in verse one, being a servant, a doulos (Greek), a slave. But not the usual sort of slave. This one here is someone who is totally owned and fully and completely devoted to the owner. The owner in Peter's case is Jesus. Peter is saying that he is totally 100% devoted to Jesus. He willingly takes this lowly position. Amazing!

Why is this so remarkable? Simon Peter's name is invariably the first name in any list of disciples. He was a natural leader. And he commanded the respect of his peers due to the sheer force of his personality. Peter was easily the powerful figure in the early Christian community. Despite having all the makings of a bully, here, Peter, calls himself a doulos, a slave. How counter cultural! It's a polar opposite. Peter humbly lives before Jesus. His power and authority is not in himself, but in who he belongs to (Davids, 161).

Let's not miss the point here, Peter is a humble servant of Jesus, of Jesus who came as a humble servant. Jesus, who even washed people's feet. Here, in this first verse we are being challenged. Are we too being slaves and servants of Jesus, 100% devoted?

The interesting thing, as last week's verses in Acts showed (26:32), that slavery to Jesus, actually brings freedom. What are we freed from? The power of sin. So, that would mean that

if we were not slaves of Jesus, we must be slaves of sin, and all that that dark world entails. One of the things that that dark world reflects is anti social behaviour.

Ah, now, before we go on, when we are slaves of Jesus, does that mean that we don't sin. Sadly no. Sin is a power in us, that Jesus has overcome. But we are still trapped in it. By being a slave of Jesus means we are no longer bound by the power of sin. Does that mean we can sin freely? If only! Keep reading! We can't be loyal to both poles, it's one or the other.

What is God doing about the power of sin? Read a few more words, still verse 1, and you'll find the word 'righteousness'. Righteousness is about the power of God making right what has been made wrong. It's about God restoring us, and restoring the world, after the damage that has been wreaked by Satan in the Garden of Eden. Evil took over God's good plan in the Garden of Eden when Satan brought sin into the world. God took back the initiative with Jesus, with Jesus dying and rising again. Death is not our end. Jesus provided us a way to be part of God's Kingdom, not by doing a whole heap of stuff, but by the grace of God, undeserved favour.

Which brings us to verse 2, here again like in 1 Peter, grace is not just poured out, but this grace also is multiplied, over and over, and over, again.

So here, in two verses you have enough for a sermon! The bold and charismatic Peter as a servant. A servant of the God who is restoring, and offering us the opportunity to be included. Which is exactly where the letter goes next - 'to those who have received a faith as precious as ours' verse 1, 'live' verse 3 'a godly life', participating verse 4 'in the divine nature'.

Can we be like God? Yes! Because we are made in the image of God - imago dei - Genesis 1:26-7. We, not just men, but men and women.

26 Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Unlike all other creatures, we are made in the image of God. Can we be God? No! Our self centred nature would like to thing so. We are but an image. But we can be like God by expressing the seven characteristics that come next, verse five to seven.

Verse five says, to make every effort to add to your faith. And we might be tempted to think, isn't faith enough? But as I've said before, faith is to be active, alive, not passive. This might all seem a bit too hard, but we've just read that the divine power has given us all we need (v3) so that v4 we might participate in the divine nature. So these things that are listed, in the next verses, should be seen not as impossibilities, but characteristics of God that will shine through us. Is that scary or exciting?

See how the NIV and Eugene Peterson have translated Peter's Greek words:

Goodness	Good character
Knowledge	Spiritual understanding
Self Control	Alert discipline
Perseverance	Passionate patience
Godliness	Reverent wonder
Mutual Affection	Warm friendliness
Love	Generous love

What are the polar opposites? Satan's kingdom of darkness has the polar opposite to each of these. That is what is bringing this world down. Not AI. But God is into restoration and life, and that's what we're offered and invited into.

So firstly, we should expect to see in each other moral excellence. Oh, that's the NASB translation, the NIV says goodness. The Greek word refers to a fast running warrior, a warrior known for excellence, for bravery, for honour and might. This is an honourable person.

We should expect to see knowledge. This is not being 'know it alls'. This is more about living an ethical lifestyle. It's applying the knowledge that we have in practical wisdom and discernment.

We should expect to see self control, this looks like purity, the sort that the Nazirites would have had. Yes we are in the world, but are not to be of the world. Don't give in to desire. And a very helpful assistant to self control is endurance or perseverance. This is about standing firm, this is about staying in place. This is about being confident in what we believe. This is about being tough and not giving up.

How are we to have godliness? This is about having the agenda of God. As opposed to something that suits our own purposes. This is about living a lifestyle that God would approve of. Now, when we stop and think, that's not impossible.

We should expect to see brotherly kindness, loving the unlovely, especially within the family of the church. And we should expect to see agape love, unconditional God like love, the love that grace comes from. Acting lovingly towards each other.

These, note that this family of seven, the perfect number, these aspects of faith, are all characteristics of Jesus. Which is hardly surprising when we are called to be Christlike. We are to be like Jesus. We have been given the ability through the Holy Spirit to succeed in this.

And these elements are important. Verse eight says we are to take these seriously so that we are not ineffective and unproductive. Or as the NASB says, so that we're not useless. We are not to be useless or idle, and fruitless, or v9 forgetful. So how do we do this? Is this about simply trying harder, we've got to try harder to be better Christians, try harder to endure, be godly, to love, be self controlled?

When I was teaching I came across a lot of kids who struggled with reading. Telling them to try harder didn't help them. Teaching them all about reading didn't work either. It was only when they did reading, using a variety of strategies that they began to read and read well. We are to give these things a go, allow God to work through us.

Oh, one more thing, another reason we should engage with these seven things, they, along with remembering when we first met Jesus v9, keep us from stumbling, v10. We know that Antarctica isn't like it was 50 years ago. So many pieces have broken off and floated away. So much ice has melted. That's not to be like us. We're to stay ice cold and firm, sure and fixated with and by the character of Jesus. This is what keeps us from stumbling.

If you are getting bored with faith, or you are finding faith rocky at the moment, these verses should be a pointer to how to get the most out of faith, and how also to contribute the most. For we all want that rich welcome into the eternal kingdom that v11 talks about.

We don't have to wait for that, a rich welcome is available here, and now. Jesus is ready to welcome us. God's Kingdom has come. Light has overcome the darkness.

In summary;

As fellow servants, we grow in the character of God, out of grace, for the glory and restoration of God's Kingdom.

Benediction

(Ephesians 3:16-19, New Living Translation)

I pray that out of God's glorious riches
he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.
And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,
may have power to grasp
how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,
and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—
that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.