2 Peter 2
Feilding Baptist
8.11.26

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

This is the passage I was wondering about having for our Call to Worship, but after the death of New Zealand's oldest man, I wondered if I was being crass or insensitive? Or perhaps it is appropriate?

1 Corinthians 15:12-22 (New Living Translation)
The Resurrection of the Dead
12 But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? 13 For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. 15 And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. 16 And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. 18 In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! 19 And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

20 But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

21 So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. 22 Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.

Father, we acknowledge those who have lost loved ones this week. Thank you that because Jesus rose, because of the resurrection of Jesus, we too can rise. Thank you for the hope that we have in Jesus, despite our personal circumstances, or what's happening in our world. Thank you for your good plan, for the new heavens and earth, for the time when no more sin and pain and death is part of life. Thank you for Jesus, thank you for the Holy Spirit, thank you that we can gather and worship, freely. Amen.

Message - Let's go to Egypt!

In page after page in the Bible, God calls us to live with righteousness and justice.

The famine in their land was so bad, they were about to run out of food. This meant, they were forced to leave what was home, and go and live as foreigners, in another land. You can see the parallel for those in the likes of Sudan, or Burma, or Afghanistan, who come to live in New Zealand for safety and to have a future. We can help, as we should.

Those first people, were Joseph's father and brothers, and their families. They took themselves to Egypt, to give themselves a future. Egypt welcomed them, and appreciated them. But over the years, things changed, and the Egyptians began to fear them. So they turned these people into slaves, and abused them.

Finally, God had had enough, and through a series of plagues, the Egyptians had enough, and let the people go. They crossed the Red Sea, and headed towards the Promised Land. And you would think that they would be forever grateful, to God.

Six hundred or so years later the prophet Jeremiah was born. Jeremiah is sometimes known as the 'weeping prophet'. Which is surprising, as he was born in Anathoth, near Jerusalem. Anathoth in my mind is the home of some of New Zealand's best jams and pickles! You would think it would be a pretty good place!

God's messages to Judah through Jeremiah were not popular. As a result, the leaders of Jerusalem tried to silence Jeremiah, locking him up, and even putting him down a disused well. God had been challenging the people and leaders to repent, to put away their foreign gods, and be faithful to their rescuing God. Otherwise the Babylonians would take them away from home, and into exile.

Well, they didn't listen, the Babylonians turned up, 586BC, and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, either killing or exiling the leaders, and taking the people.

And Jeremiah? Well, the Babylonians found him in chains (Jeremiah 40:1) so they left him in Judah with a few of the poorest people, who were left to care for land (Jeremiah 39:10). The Babylonians left a governor in charge, Gedaliah (Jeremiah 40:7).

Over the next few months, those who had escaped the Babylonians started to drift back to Judah. And they began to form little terrorist groups. One of these groups killed Gedaliah. And anyone who was linked to the Babylonians.

They knew that the Babylonians probably weren't going to be very happy about what they had done. And they knew that a response would come. So they did a wise thing, they asked Jeremiah to ask God what they should do next (Jeremiah 42:2). So Jeremiah did. Now I imagine they expected an answer the same day. But God didn't answer for ten days (Jeremiah 42:7). You can imagine what was happening in that time. A lack of patience. "Let's get the heck out of here! Have you ever seen the pyramids? Hey, let's go!"

No! They wouldn't seriously consider going back to Egypt would they? Did they fail history level 1?

Anyway, ten days later, Jeremiah shared with rebels. God said that if they stayed in the land, in Judah, remarkably, God would care for them. They needn't worry about the Babylonians if they stayed put (Jeremiah 42:11). However, if they chose to, for example, go to Egypt, then God said, the war and famine that they were trying to avoid would go with them and they would die there (Jeremiah 42:16).

Guess what they chose to do? Jeremiah 43:5-6 tells us that they rounded up all the people, including Jeremiah, and took off down to Egypt.

This rejection of God is pretty staggering. They had lost respect for God. In fact, they had replaced God with something more to their liking. They created god in their own image. A safe god. A god they could control. A god where they could do as they liked. Idols. We read about this in Jeremiah 44.

Surprisingly, Jeremiah continued to prophesy, even in Egypt. How impressed is God with the people? Well, God speaks these words through Jeremiah in Jeremiah 44;

Jeremiah 44:11-18 New Living Translation
11 "Therefore, this is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: I am determined to destroy every one of you! 12 I will take this remnant of Judah—those who were determined to come here and live in Egypt—and I will consume them. They will fall here in Egypt, killed by war and famine. All will die, from the least to the greatest. They will be an object of damnation, horror, cursing, and mockery.

15 Then all the women present and all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to idols—a great crowd of all the Judeans living in northern Egypt and southern Egypt[c]—answered

Jeremiah, 16 “We will not listen to your messages from the Lord! 17 We will do whatever we want. We will burn incense and pour out liquid offerings to the Queen of Heaven just as much as we like…

Why is it so hard to live the way we know is right?

Why do we think that we are so right, and God is so wrong?

Well, you might be thinking that this is just Old Testament stuff… but here, in 2 Peter 2, we have much the same thing, with people ignoring God, forgetting righteousness and justice, and doing their own thing. They are doing the opposite of what God wants from this, the church.

Let’s read the start and end of the chapter;

2 Peter 2 New International Version - UK
<u>False teachers and their destruction</u>
1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

17 These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. 18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity – for ‘people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.’ 20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. 22 Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its vomit,’[g] and, ‘A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.’

a) 2 Peter 2:4 Greek Tartarus
b) 2 Peter 2:4 Some manuscripts in gloomy dungeons
c) 2 Peter 2:10 In contexts like this, the Greek word for flesh (sarx) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit; also in verse 18.
d) 2 Peter 2:11 Many manuscripts beings in the presence of
e) 2 Peter 2:13 Some manuscripts in their love feasts
f) 2 Peter 2:15 Greek Bosor
g) 2 Peter 2:22 Prov. 26:11

We can sit back and relax in chapters like this and think, thank goodness I’m not a prophet or teacher. For Paul is only addressing false prophets and false teachers. But these verses are not about allowing people to sit back and take it easy. We’ve read Jeremiah as a reminder that the responsibility for faithfulness lies with every individual. And we’ve read 1 Corinthians at the start of the service to remember that Jesus must stay at the centre. Not the skills or personality that any preacher or leader might have.

This was not a witch hunt either. This wasn’t about testing the leaders to see who was and wasn’t measuring up. It wasn’t even about leaders not keeping the creeds, or some set criteria. The problem was the lifestyle that these were living. It was about personal greed and oppression (Davids, 221).

The problem with making this chapter all about the leaders is the loss of trust in leaders. And this is destructive. Yes, leaders do have to lead with integrity, respect does have to be earned. But no, this chapter is for the people of the congregation, not just the leaders. If it was just one person Peter was bothered with, he could have sent a private message.

We all have to be careful that we're not, verse 1, denying the Master who bought them – the NIV says denying the sovereign Lord. Master is the original context, a person who has paid for the workers. Jesus has paid the price for us to be part of the Kingdom of God. We have been bought. Let's value and appreciate that, not take it for granted, not deny it. Let's all be faithful.

For those that accept Jesus, and then forget, are like springs without water, v17. Useless! When we choose to return to our former ways we are like dogs returning to their vomit, or clean pigs who keep going back to the mud.

The pig saying isn't from the Bible, but something in society at the time. The dog one though is, but Peter only uses the first half of the verse.

Proverbs 26:11 (NIV – UK)
As a dog returns to its vomit,
so fools repeat their folly.

Like returning to Egypt!

Pigs, and dogs were regarded as unclean animals. Being likened to them could have been offensive. But we need to consider the offense to Jesus of turning our back on Him. This is a chapter about being faithful. This is a chapter to remind us that Christianity is not so much a set of truths to be believed or rules to be followed but a way of life to be lived (Davids, 222).

How will we live out the message and mission of Jesus this week?

Benediction – Nathan Nettleton
(based on Isaiah 40:1-11, 2 Peter 3:8-15, Mark 1:1-8)

Go now: wait and work for the coming of the day of God.
In the wild places prepare a straight path for the Lord.
Lead lives of holiness and godliness,
strive to be found at peace,
and speak freely of the Lord's comfort and promise.

And may God our shepherd gather you in loving arms;
May Christ Jesus reconcile justice and peace within you;
And may the Holy Spirit baptise you into the life of God.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Jesus. Amen.