

THESIS: Live Different

INTRO:

Welcome to Crossroads. My name is Andrew, and I've lived here in Pittsburgh for almost 8 years.

During this time, Pittsburgh has become home for me. I went to college here, I've made lifelong friends here, I bought my first home here, and I met my wife here.

Last month, I was in California taking a class for my master's degree, and I met a woman in my class who grew up in Pittsburgh. She now lives and works in Missouri, but she said she went to college at Point Park University, she started her career in finance here, and she even still owns property in Pittsburgh!

She said to me, *"even though I've moved away, I frequently visit Pittsburgh and it will always feel like home."*

Maybe you can agree that Pittsburgh feels like home.

Today, we are going to be looking at a passage in the Bible from the book of 1 Peter. If you need a Bible, just ask an usher coming down your aisle. **1 Peter is on page 980** in the Bibles we have here.

1 Peter is a letter written by Peter, who was one of Jesus' close friends. Peter is writing to Christians in the first-century who have been displaced from their homes.

1 Peter 1:1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia"

At the time that Peter wrote this letter, the Roman Emperor Claudius (**PIC**) was making expanding the borders of the empire by establishing the 5 provinces that Peter mentions.

These provinces were unsettled territory.

It was like the American Wild West (**PIC**). The new territory offered new opportunity and a fresh start but was also plagued by lawlessness and violence the Wild West was an every man for himself mentality.

The emperor wanted to populate the Roman Wild West to gain control. At this time, Rome despised Christians as a nuisance. So, Claudius deported followers of Jesus and other minorities to these provinces.

One scholar writes, “It was also not uncommon for the emperor or senate to deport a group viewed to be troublemakers in Rome to colonize a newly acquired territory in some remote area of the empire.”¹

Peter wants to encourage his readers - the exiles - that regardless of where you live **or where you come from you are a citizen of God’s Kingdom.**

This is also a message for us today.

Let’s turn to chapter 2 verse 9 and continue to unpack Peter’s message.

1 Peter 2:9-10,

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Peter says you are chosen by God! You are God’s “special possession”.

All of us are separated by God because of our sin. Our sin has left us like spiritual orphans. But God’s grace saves us. Jesus came to earth and gave his life as a substitute for us so that we can have a relationship with God. By faith in him, he has brought us out of the darkness of sin and rebellion into the light of a relationship with God. He has chosen us.

ILLUS: my home

I said earlier that Pittsburgh feels like home. That became especial true for me when I bought my first home four years ago. (PIC)

¹ Jobes, Karen. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Peter*, pg. 30.

It's a 2 bedroom townhouse here in North Fayette Township.

I searched listings for several months, visited showings and worked real estate agents.

I finally found our townhome on foreclosure, which means that it needed a lot of work. All of the walls needed repainted. The furnace and air conditioning needed replaced.

The kitchen was had no appliances, refrigerator, range, and the cabinets needed replaced, and the dishwasher was barely working.

When you walked into the garage, you were greeted by a very unpleasant odor - like a wet dog smell.

It took a lot of work to turn this into a home. My family helped; Crossroaders helped.

And I used countless gallons of bleach to get rid of the pet odor in the garage.

When Lauren and I were married, she really turned it into our home. We got real furniture, and She brought in decorations, real dishes, and potpourri.

We love our home.

As a young couple, we were that our home is our **special possession**.

APPLY: You are God's special possession.

If you have put your faith in Jesus, you belong to the family of God! You are not a stranger; you are chosen by him.

When we are living in sin, we are far from God, we wander through life without purpose. But, God chooses us to be his own, and he promises us a spiritual home in heaven for eternity. We have hope because our identity is in God.

The message in our text today encourages us to live in this world knowing that our permanent home is with God.

1 Peter 2:11-12,

“Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

Remember, Peter’s audience is a group of foreigners in the Roman colonies. He does not tell them to put their hope in a house or property. He does not say “conform and do whatever you see other people doing.” He says, live as foreigners and exiles. He reminds us that our permanent home is in heaven and not in this world.

APPLY: Friends, this world is not our home.

We are called to live as foreigners in this world. We are not citizens of this world, we are citizens of heaven. Our hope is in an eternal home not this temporary world.

Anyone who does not have a relationship with God does not have an eternal hope. Without Jesus, the only hope that we have is in this temporary world. If this world is our only home, we will look for hope in temporary things: relationships, property, money, social status, and pleasures. Sadly, all of these things are temporary! Beauty fades. Money runs out. White picket fences decay, and cars will rust.

ILLUS: home idol.

Earlier, I described my home. Sometime ago, I realized a sin in my life. I was idolizing my house. It became my treasure. I loved it. I was proud of it. In some ways, I worshipped it. And if God called me to give it up, I didn’t want to do it.

I asked myself, “If God called me to move somewhere else, can I let go of my home?” I struggled with that question. I had to surrender my house and my property to God’s will.

APPLY: Friends, this world is not our home.

We are visitors. We are temporary residents in this world because our hope is God’s eternal kingdom.

My identity is not in what car I drive, or my square footage, or the school district I live in, or my bank account. I am a citizen of another world. I am a citizen of God’s kingdom.

I admit, as Americans, this is very hard to understand practically. We have rights bestowed on us by our constitution and defended by our government. We enjoy peace and prosperity and opportunity.

Today, you may be from another country and not a U.S. Citizen. I want you to know that you are welcome here, and that if your faith is in Christ, you are a citizen of the kingdom of God.

Our true home is not based on our earthly citizenship. We are temporary visitors in this world. American citizenship does not last forever, and when we leave this world, we will be reunited with Christ in our eternal home.

While we live in this world, God has called you and me to live in way that shows we belong to his kingdom.

God calls us to Live Different.

The message of our text encourages us to live different than the rest of this world. We are supposed to be different than the culture.

Here me clearly, **Our main goal is not to live different just so we can say “Look at me! I’m countercultural”.** The main goal is to become more like Jesus.

Culture says: Express yourself.

Jesus says: Deny Yourself

Culture says: Get even when you’re wronged.

Jesus says: Forgive.

Culture says: Make as much money as you can.

Jesus says: Give away as much as you can.

Culture says: Do what feels good.

Jesus says: Do what is good - no matter how it feels.

How can we practically take steps in our daily lives to Live Different in this world?

1. Say “no” to the flesh.

1 Peter 2:11b, “abstain from sinful desires,which wage war against your soul.”

As humans, we each have fleshly desires that come from our sinful nature. My sinful nature urges me to assert myself, dominate others for my benefit and do what is best for me.

But God calls me to live different and say “no” to the desire of my flesh.

Peter even writes that when the world sees that we say “no” to the flesh the world is surprised:

1 Peter 4:3-4, “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.”

ILLUS: Jake and Hannah.

I have two friends that I grew up with named Jake and Hannah. They were highschool sweethearts and married each other when we were in college together.

I remember when they got engaged, many of their friends and family asked, “when are you moving in together?” Jake and Hannah said they would live together when they get married. Their friends were really surprised. Then they asked, “But aren’t you already sleeping together?” No, they weren’t. They chose to Live Different and follow God’s plan because they are citizens of God’s Kingdom.

APPLY: How has world pressured you to conform?

This world tells us to listen to our flesh.

“If we live together while we are dating, we can save money.”

“We should have sex before we get married - like a test drive - so I know what I’m getting into.”

Let’s be honest, we know the consequences of saying “yes” to the flesh bring heartbreak and struggle.

Abusing alcohol threatens our relationships and can harm our bodies.

Porn becomes an addiction.

Greed alienates us from the people we care about.

Possessions (like my house) become idols that we worship.

Saying “yes” to flesh leaves us stressed out, filled with anxiety, and struggling to find meaning and purpose.

Hear me clearly, In order to live different, we don’t just say “no” to the flesh. There are positive things we should engage in to demonstrate that we are citizens of God’s Kingdom.

2. Say “yes” to God’s Spirit.

If you are a citizen of God’s Kingdom, his Spirit lives within you to guide your choices and actions.

ILLUS: Our student ministry went on a mission trip to Kenosha, WI, last month. Before the trip, a young woman who is a senior in high school asked about signing up for the trip. She prayed about going and felt God prompting her to go and serve others. She made a decision to not go on her senior trip so that she could afford to go on the mission trip. She chose to say “yes” to God and Live Different, and I know she doesn’t regret it.

1 Peter 2:12, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

We are only visitors in this world. Our home is God’s eternal Kingdom.

Saying “yes” to God is called Holiness. Holiness is more than checking off a to-do list of go to church, read the Bible, say a prayer. Holiness is when we Live Different.

Even though we get made fun of or accused for Living Different, the world will notice. Your life, yielded to God’s Spirit, will lead others to a relationship with God.

ILLUS: I remember a Crossroader who called me years ago concerned about his teenage sons. He said he wanted to make sure that they had opportunities to grow their faith. I encouraged the dad to get his boys into our student ministry program so that they could be in a small group with our followers of Jesus.

This man’s boys (in addition to playing on high school sports teams) also played travel sports, which made their schedules even more busy. Their dad made a decision to keep them on the school teams, but stop playing travel teams. This made space for the boys to join a small group. It was a very hard, difficult decision.

Since then, these boys have become strong, godly young men. They are both in college, and they are pursuing careers. In addition to that, they've served on mission trips, volunteered to help others, and one of them became a leader in a national organization that is sharing the message of Jesus with high school students through sports. And it's all because their dad said "yes" to God. He chose to lead his family as citizens of God's Kingdom and not citizens of this world. And now they are making an eternal impact in the lives of others.

APPLY: Saying "yes" to God produces fruit that lasts beyond your lifetime.

When we say yes to God....

- We can have peace. If our hope is in this world, we will be consumed with worried.
- We can have healthy relationships. If we live like citizens of this world, our relationships will always have friction.
- We can experience eternal joy.
- Others who don't know God will be drawn to God through your lifestyle.

I want to leave us with a few questions that we can ask each day in order to become more like Jesus and Live Different in this world:

1. Do my possessions serve God, or do I serve my possessions?

Our possessions can quickly own us and make us work for them to buy bigger, better, fancier things. Am I working to keep up with my "stuff"? Or, Am I stewarding my resources to produce eternal fruit in God's Kingdom?

2. Does my love for Jesus come through at my job?

1 Peter 2:13, " Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority..."

Do I submit to my boss? Do I work honestly with integrity? Do my words and behavior reflect that I'm a citizen of heaven?

3. When I am wronged, do I seek revenge or forgiveness?

1 Peter 2:23, "When they hurled their insults at him [Jesus], he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats."

1 Peter 3:9, "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

This world is not impressed by Christians who take bigger vacations or drive fancier cars or race to be the most successful and most profitable. That's what the world expects!

The world is impressed when we sacrifice generously. The world does a double-take when we forgive. The world is speechless when we pursue holiness and not the flesh. The world will want God when we live as citizens of his kingdom.

The world is impressed when we Live Different.

CONCLUSION:

In 2015, my wife and I were asleep one night when Lauren woke me up at 2 or 3 am.

Our upstairs bathroom had a plumbing problem in the middle of the night. Water was running uncontrollably out of the sink. The floor was soaked and it was running through to downstairs.

It looked like a waterfall rushing out of the ceiling on the main level onto our dining table. The carpet was soaked through and I rushed to the basement level where my home office is. The water was coming through into my study - dripping down on all my books and my desk.

Let me tell you, there is nothing that will bond a young couple more than ripping out wet drywall at 3am!

Our dining table was ruined, Lauren's laptop was destroyed, I lost over \$2,000 in books. It was a disaster.

After we stopped the water, Lauren and I stood looking up at our ceiling - exposed rafters, soggy drywall, ruined carpet. I was surprised that neither one of us was angry or upset.

But I thought, "This isn't my home. This is my house. But it's just four walls and a roof. This is not my home. My home is in God's kingdom. This house doesn't own me."

We were even displaced to a hotel for a night because the restoration company had giant fans and blowers drying out everything.

It took months working with contractors and insurance to begin the restoration process. Every day, I would come home and look at the giant hole in my ceiling. But I smiled and reminded myself "This is not my home. My home is in God's Kingdom. All of this is temporary until I get to heaven."

This world doesn't own you. You are a citizen of God's Kingdom. Rejoice in that freedom! The pressures and anxieties of this world are temporary. We have an eternal hope because God has made us his own. In that hope, **Let us go and Live Different.** Holding loosely the things of this worlds so that we can hold tighter to the things of God.

PRAY.