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## *Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter*

### *Part 22 – Living Out Our Hope in a Hostile World*

*January 15, 2017*

**Sermon Text:** 1 Peter 3:7ff

**Scripture Reading:** 2 Thess 2

If you have been following the ACFJ blog and Facebook page this past week, you will have read the accounts of a family in Marion county that was recently found in their burned out home, all of them dead. Mother, 3 children, and the father.

Law enforcement announced that they are handling the case as a murder-suicide, the husband/father being the perpetrator.

News reports also included the fact that this man was an elder in the local

community church, so the pastor and other people from that church have been making comments. Here are a few of them. Think carefully about what these professing Christians are saying and how the name of Christ is being affected in the eyes of the world-

Also assisting with the healing process is the family's congregation, Mid Valley Community Church, which has its doors open to members who want to come together and seek comfort.

"We're just stunned," Pastor Jesse Hamberger said Thursday. "We're just kind of walking in the wake of disbelief that this could happen, that somebody would do this."

Hamberger said that Keith Kroeker was an elder in the church, and they have been planning a trip to their mission in Nicaragua. He fondly recalled the first time Keith went down there to help build a church when his hand tools disappeared. Although they were eventually found or replaced, the

next trip, he took 20 screwdrivers instead of just one.

"He brought them all and then gave them away," Hamberger laughed. "He was just prepared. He just loved those guys who were struggling on a whole other level of poverty that we can't comprehend. That was something significant in his heart — and Erin's."

Erin Kroeker was also active in the church, serving as a pianist to the children's choir. The children also attended Sunday school.

"I'm sitting here looking at projects that the twin boys made of shields — shields of faith that they made in one of their classes — and I think, this was a family that moved forward and worked hard toward what is right and what is good," Hamberger said. "They were committed to Christ. That they are gone is cause for us to look within and identify how deep is our commitment."

While it's hard to comprehend someone intentionally setting the fires on the Kroeker property, Hamberger said there is comfort in each other.

"The amazing thing is I'm seeing such strength and love and power exchanged from one person to another in the congregation," he said.

And here is another comment printed in the media, from one of the church elders-

"When I'm around people like that, I just want to be a little better and do a little more just cause, you know, they're setting the bar high," said Roland Lethe.

Lethe describes Keith Kroeker as an all-around good guy with a lot of character who served with him on the elder board of the church.

"He's good with electrical and he's helped around the church. I know he's helped some other families with electrical and other needs and when you have a young family at home and take the time to help others, I mean, that's a big deal," said Lethe.

And still another-

"Keith and Erin are both wonderful people who are always ready with a welcoming smile and a joy that emanates from their core," Tebbets said. "When they ask you 'How are you?' they mean it.

"We are all devastated by this loss," she said.

Tebbets said the Kroeker family is part of the small church community.

Kinlan said the Kroekers are a family of strong faith, and their friends and

family must maintain that faith and pass kindness to others during this time.

And then you have the public announcement of the memorial service-

Almost a month after a fire consumed the Kroeker's Hubbard home, friends and relatives of the family of five will gather for a memorial service at Salem Evangelical Church.

The service will honor the entire family — Erin Kroeker, 39, Keith Kroeker, 42, twin 10-year-old boys and 7-year-old daughter — and include music and photos commemorating the Kroeker's years together, said Jackie Kroeker, Keith's mother.

The community is invited to attend the memorial service at the church, 455 Locust St. NE, on Jan. 27 at 6 p.m. Jackie said she's received an immense outpouring from the community in the wake of the fire, the investigation and the discovery of the bodies of Erin, Keith and the children in ashes of the home.

"They were a strong Christian family," Jackie said. "They have friends everywhere."

The Kroeker family residence, a rural home surrounded by hops fields, "was always going to be their forever home where they would raise a family," Antonia Kinlan, a childhood friend of Erin's, told the Statesman Journal.

The Kroeker's home, shop and attached garage erupted in flames early in the morning on Jan. 3. The Marion County Sheriff's Office investigated the fire and announced they believed it was intentionally set.

Autopsies performed by the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office revealed the three children and adult man found inside the home died from gunshot wounds to the head. The woman died of blunt force trauma to the head.

"We don't know what happened," Jackie said. "We don't have any answers. It's just a great tragedy." Jackie, a longtime Willamette Valley resident, said the community has become even more like family since the fire.

Now let me ask you to think very carefully about all of this as I read to you Peter's instruction to us about living as elect exiles in a world that is hostile to Christ, in a manner that will

lead the lost to ask us about the hope they see in us -

1 Peter 3:7-17 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

(8) Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

(9) Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

(10) For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; (11) let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. (12) For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

(13) Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

(14) But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be

troubled, (15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (16) having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

(17) For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Is living in denial of evil going to be seen as God's wisdom? Is calling a wolf in sheep's clothing *a fine example of a Christian* what Christ would do? Is a Christian a person who is to just close their eyes to the truth and repeat to themselves, "*it's all good*"? Increasingly we see local churches as places that cause the world to detest the name of Christ. And this is a prime and all too common example.

Are those who revile Christ and His people going to be "put to shame" or empowered by the actions of that pastor, those elders, and the members of that church? The answer is obvious.

*I will fully expect that at the memorial service the murderer will be pronounced to be a Christian and surely in heaven, the whole family now living in bliss, all being forgiven.*

You might say that 1 Peter 3:15 is a key statement of this entire epistle that shows us quite clearly what Peter's purpose is in writing:

(15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Once more, Peter is instructing us as Christ's people regarding how we are to live so that this world that is hostile to Christ will see Christ. And perhaps even some will ask us about this "hope" they see in an increasingly hopeless world.

- Honor the king. Don't be some rebellious revolutionary.
- Be the best servant of your master/employer you can be.
- Be the best, most loving wife
- Be, as we are about to see, the best husband you can be

And now, instruction to husbands. Look at it again –

(7) Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Let me see if I can translate –

***“Husbands, love your wives, listen to them, watch out for their needs, protect them, do not make them carry heavy burdens, and do not regard them as inferior to men but as equals with you in Christ.***

***Any husband who habitually, characteristically, and without repentance violates these commands is not a Christian. God does not hear his prayers.”***

Therefore, what is the truth, what is the righteous and most kind statement about a “Christian” man who murders his family? What should be said publically by the church, after a confession that they were duped by evil? This –

***This man was no Christian. He was skilled at deceiving others and crept in among us. We were deceived by him and for that we ask the Lord's forgiveness. Here is the truth of God's word about such a person –***

**‘Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.’ (1 John 3:15)**

THAT honors Christ. THAT is what needs to be said. After all, the Bible is very plain in numbers of other places. A fundamental and in fact THE

fundamental quality of a true Christian is his love for the Lord and love for others, in particular his love for believers.

A husband who mistreats his wife, who dishonors her, who regards her as an inferior, who sees her as second rate in God's kingdom, who regards her as someone who exists only to serve him, is a man who God does not hear or know even if he offers up the most holy sounding prayers.

Do Christian husbands fall short of this command and sin in this regard sometimes? Of course. But they genuinely repent. They are able to look back, as their wives will as well, and see that their thinking and their behavior toward their wife has changed over the years. And they will grieve over some of the ways they treated her – even if it seemed like a little thing then.

I know a man who claimed to be a Christian but over time his claim was shown to be absolutely false. One of the ways you could see it was that he would put heavy burdens on his wife. While he spent money on hunting and playing, she had to pack water in buckets for years to the shack they lived in, even in winter when there was 3 feet of snow. He could have had a well drilled long before.

Another time he took off to go hunting for a couple of weeks, leaving his wife and children home. They had electricity, but the circuit panel was outside, it was open to the elements, and it would get tripped or shorted by snow. He expected her to go out there and “jiggle the wires.”

Let me say quite plainly, a man like that is to be put out of the church as a wicked person who is no Christian. But many churches today would pronounce him “saved.”

Now, let me make an important note for wives as well. You remember the scripture we looked at last week –

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you

do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. (1 Peter 3:1-6)

Are there women who claim to be Christians but who disregard these instructions? Absolutely. I have known many of them and so have you.

They did not have anything like a gentle and quiet spirit that was true beauty. And one of the characteristics you will see in such a woman is that while they will be quite selfish and demanding, they certainly do not have any quality of being a beautiful, “weaker vessel.” As a result they hinder their husband in treating them as such. If, for example, her husband does some kindness, let’s say he cleans up the kitchen because he knows she has had a hard day, and her response is to complain about how he did it, well, what is the outcome of that? Wives who are regularly and unrepentantly behaving this way also give us much reason to doubt that they know the Lord at all.

## **Conclusion**

What, then, happened to that “model Christian family” where the mother and children perished in murder at the hands of the husband/father? The man who was a “pillar” in his church? The man who went on missions trips and did so many things for people? What happened?

The man as it turns out was a deceiver. He did not just “snap” and somehow due to mental illness thought he would send himself and his family to heaven. *He smashed his wife’s head in!*

No, here is what happened. This man was no Christian at all. He was a murderer. He crept into that local church, deceiving as he went. What really went on behind the closed doors of his home? We have a pretty good idea even without actually being a fly on the wall.

In most cases like this, the wife suffers quietly, perhaps eventually trying to reach out to someone and dropping some clues that all is not as it appears. Eventually, if she resolves to leave the abuser, she faces the most dangerous time of all and sometimes the wicked one kills. It is most probable that what happened here is that this “pious man” found out his wife was leaving him, that his charade was being called out, and he refused to have it.

What message needs to be announced loudly and clearly at the memorial service (which should only be for the victims by the way)? *This man was evil. God did not hear his prayers even though he could pray like he had the tongue of an angel. He was one of those we are warned about in Scripture, a wolf in sheep’s clothing that arises even from among us, who*

*creeps in among us secretly with no conscience, brazenly living his charade as if God didn't see. This man was no Christian. This man is in hell. And Christ will effect eternal justice upon him on that Day when He judges the world in righteousness.*

*And WE as Christ's people MUST do better in being wise as serpents about evil, lest this happen among us again.*

THAT message will be respected by the world, and it is a message that points to the HOPE that we have in Christ. A HOPE that not only rewards Christ's people with eternal life, but a hope that confidently looks to perfect justice being carried out one Day. It is that confidence that will permit us to heed Christ's instruction –

1 Peter 3:9-18 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. (10) For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; (11) let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. (12) For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (13) Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? (14) But even if

you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (16) having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (17) For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (18) For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,