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1 Peter 1:17-23 - "Imperishable Life"

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Today, we're continuing to look at the implications of Easter. Last week we said it's our modern tendency to have the celebration and then move on to the next thing as quickly as we can... But, that's not how Christian history has celebrated Easter... Easter is a season we settle into, and in fact in our tradition, we say that every Sunday is Easter Sunday, because we are the Easter people of God.

I want us to consider how Easter makes us think about time. The time we live in now. How we will experience the times to come... How does the resurrection of Jesus and its implications change the way we think about time?

I have shared this before with you- St. Augustine said, "*Time has fallen.*"

- Of course, God is outside of our human constructs of time... Augustine says that *Time* comes into being with creation, and with the fall, time falls with creation... Because of that, there's often a fundamental problem with the way we view and use time... We buy time, we sell time, we abuse time. We can't do some wonderful and beautiful things in life because we don't have time... there's obviously something wrong with that.

Here, Peter addresses both time, and the way we are to live in this new standing we have as Easter people- born anew through the resurrection... He says, to live out your time as a foreigner in this world... As Exiles... Now, when we think of foreigners, or exiles, we of course think of being from another place- we think of those who are away from their homeland and living in another place... But, today, I want us to consider what it means to be a foreigner or exile in the way we experience time and material things...

How does the resurrection of Jesus directly impact the way we view the time we live in, the time we have left on this earth, and the way we live with one another in that time?

Three things I want us to look at from these verses -

1. *The Age of Vanity*, 2. *Resurrection Days*, 3. *Imperishable Living Now and In the Future.*

Twice in this first chapter of Peter's letter, he uses the term, "*chronos*,"

- a period of time in which some activity occurs. In both places he's stressing the time in which believers live... v. 17 - the time in which you're living in this strange, or foreign land... and then in v. 20 *that Jesus was revealed in these "last times."*

- Peter is saying that with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus - the last days have begun... And so those who have been born anew, as Easter people IN Christ, you now live as strangers, exiles in the world - We live in a time, an AGE that is not our own...

So, what is the Age we live in? What are these last days?

Historians mark off different ages and segments of history, right?

They have to in order to bring some type of organization to how we study history. Every field of study does this - there's a way in which we systematize our study - Historians do this specifically with developments in politics or technology - there was the Iron age, The Industrial age, the colonial period, the computer age....

However, there is something that all of these "ages" have in common.

Do you know what it is?... Humans. No matter the age, or the politics, or technology, humans have been driving these developments...

And humans - have a Vanity problem... An inflated pride in oneself.

This is what the prophet Jeremiah spoke - on behalf of the God...

He says in Jeremiah 16- 17 *My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. 18 I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols.*

Edmund Clowney, the bible commentator great theologian says that in the Old Testament, Vanity is synonymous with idols. In other words, where there is idolatry present within Israel, or the other nations - *it is product of mankind's vanity- their overinflated pride in themselves.*

And so, while we and the historians might break down history into differing ages, the presence of sin in the world makes the ages of the Old Testament, and the modern world of 2023, an Age of Vanity - rife of idols...Human substitutes for God himself...

Placing created things in the place of the creator... Peter says, this is what Jesus came to change - Look at v. 18 - *18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

Before, you with all of your forefathers and all of humanity were given to perishable things-*vanity, vanity - things like gold and silver - created things of the earth... material things that will eventually perish, or fade... no matter their current earthly value... These things will fade -*

Peter says, these things will not work in ransoming you, rescuing you from your greatest threat and problem - sin and death... You cannot treat sin and death with perishable resources. You need something outside of yourself, to address the age of vanity -

The other night I fell into a YouTube rabbit hole - too easy to do - I was looking up all of my favorite bands from high school... feeling nostalgic. Reminiscing. What I was looking for though was not videos from back when I was listening to them, but I wanted to see

some recent videos or content... And most of them are still around, still playing, still touring...

But you know what hit me when watching them?? We are so OOOOOLD now.
Oh my goodness. All these bands and artists... they're all my age or older...
We all are heavier and have grey hair... I kept saying to Jenny...

"Oh my goodness, look at him! Look at how old we are!"

These are rock stars, artists... People who 25 years ago were at the top of the cultural moment - trend setters... Now they're greying and middle aged like me... Nothing lasts - Even the things the world celebrates, admires most... it all fades, it all grows old, it all diminishes... It's all so fleeting.

"You were not ransomed from this Age of Vanity, with the products of vanity... What you inherited from your forefathers... silver and gold... "You were ransomed with the precious blood of Christ- like a lamb without blemish or spot."

God the Son, entered our dilemma, and through his perfect life - through his death that ransoms us from the penalty of sin... and through his resurrection... Was revealed in these times... The times of our vanity ... Why? "for your sake." You. And me.

Which means that within the Age of Vanity - those who have been redeemed- Easter people - are given a new way to understand the time in which we live - Because these are

2. Resurrection Days - look at v. 20 - *20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

It's important to remember that the majority of Peter's audience in this letter were Gentiles. People who were not only new to the good news of Jesus, but also those who did not have a background in Judaism and an understanding of how God's plans were coming about through history.

This is why Peter says, Jesus was chosen before the creation of the world, but revealed in these times for your sake... This has always been the plan, Peter is saying... this is where history has been moving. Even these Gentiles in Turkey, your history has been moving-these last days, where Jesus has been revealed. Not only to Israel and the Jews, but to the entire world.

God's purpose before and foreknowledge was that Christ would be the redeemer... Jesus would come, he would die, and he would rise again.

Which means the "times" in which we now live, are "Resurrection days." We are people of the Resurrection, marked by the Resurrection, even as we live in an Age of Vanity... Even as the world offers things that will constantly perish and fade.

Peter says, you Gentiles have been brought into the family of God, you now also live as strangers and exiles in the world. You live in the resurrection of Jesus... In these "last times," in these "resurrection days," your life is meant to be lived not along nationalistic lines, or ethnic or racial lines.

Your life is meant to be primarily viewed through the resurrection - your faith and hope are in God because Jesus has been raised from the dead and glorified. Now, that would have caused first-century gentiles to truly look at their situation, their lives, and their time differently... And it causes us to look at our situations, our lives, and our time differently... And it will... IF, IF... our time is marked by the resurrection, and not marked by the temporary things of this world...

Just for a moment, think about something that you consider to be truly timeless... It could be a location.. it could be a piece of art... or a song, or hymn... It could be the scriptures Themselves...

My son and I were listening to a history podcast this week on national parks, and they described the founding of this 1,000 ft waterfall in what eventually became known as Yosemite National Park... How people when they first encountered it were transfixed... almost transformed by the experience.

What is it like to stand in front of the Grand Canyon? Looking out over something so timeless... something that seems almost eternal... What does it make you feel? It makes you feel VERY, VERY temporary. Very small... and very temporary.

Though our lives are very temporary... though we do fade, like those bands I was talking about earlier... our lives are marked by the resurrection, by eternity. The days we live in then as Christians, are resurrection days...

We still deal with the temptations of this temporary life, but something so grand, so transforming has happened in the world... that we have been BORN ANEW in these last times... *to see our time differently, and to live differently..*

3. Imperishable Living, Now and In the Future

Look at v. 22 - *22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

Peter offers more direct Easter implications for us.. For those who have been born again...not of perishable things - things of vanity, but of what is imperishable--the living Jesus himself, and the living word of God.

God's initiative to send Jesus... His plan and initiative for his death and resurrection, directly effect the way we see our past, our, present, and our future... Our time...

A life that has been born anew... that has been brought from death to life will begin to inhabit the now and the future in a new way...

And Peter says it will show itself through love.

Sincere love for one another. "Love one another deeply."

Our time, these Resurrection Days- send us to believe and obey God's living word .. and love one another deeply. It directly flows out of being born anew in the resurrection.

So, how are we to live today in these Resurrection Days, in the already, but Not yet of God's kingdom? Marked by Easter, but still exiles in the Age of Vanity of 2023?

First, it is to let the truth of the gospel, that Christ has risen from the dead be the very thing that anchors us. That though the world ebbs and flows, though it perishes and fades... though the bands come and go... The trends and the silver and gold... the truth of God's word stands..Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again...

And second, back to this idea of time... We are to live in these Resurrection Days, pursuing love for each other...And, what does love....Real love, between brothers and sisters require? Time.

Remember, Augustine said Time is Fallen...so the way we use time is corrupted by sin... which makes us not truly value the times we live in, OR see them as resurrection days. Instead, we are often inconvenienced by others... we do not allow time for one another. It can lead to a spirit of competition between us... A mistrust of intentions, because we don't extend love in the form of time with one another.

Unless.. through the redemption the lamb who is without blemish... through Jesus... there is a way to not only view time as fallen... but to see time as a gift. A gift from God... A gift that has been redeemed through the resurrection... Because we have eternity written in our hearts now... And a gift to give to one another... If these times, these resurrection days are viewed as a gift from God...to give to one another... Then we cannot and will not become slaves to the vanity of the momentary time... Instead, our lives begin to show the kind of imperishable fruit and gifts right now and in the future.

Now... I know that when we start to talk about time, and the way we spend it... we could all have a thousand opinions... It's kind of the leftover fallenness of time that leads us to judge how other people should spend their time best.

Of course, the modern adage is that time = money. And we're all very concerned about our time not being wasted... our time not be valued...

I would guess though... that there are places in all of our lives right now, where we are being led to see time as a gift that we are meant to give away to one another.

I don't know what it is for you right now... For our family... The first three or four months of this year our daughter Jane has not been sleeping well. Which is not uncommon in people with sensory processing disorders... But this has been new for us... you work through seasons as a parent... you hope to leave the sleep struggles behind after the toddler years.. but these past months have been tough. On a number of occasions, I've been up with Jane all night long until morning, because she just would not go to sleep...

We all have issues with time... even more so when we can't sleep and our time is completely jeopardized...

On some of those nights I would just sit in the chair with her... and I would be so frustrated... all the hours... all the time... And one night I remember thinking...maybe this is my ministry right now. We've tried everything...maybe right now all I can give her is my time... To wait this out with her...

The truth is... even during the hardest of those nights... These are resurrection days... And I've been born anew... I stake my life on that truth... And now, all I can do is see Time as a gift... A gift to give in love to those around me...

Friends, the implications of Easter not only ask us to recognize where our true home is - that we are exiles in this world, waiting for God's kingdom to fully come... But, as we wait...we see these last times... these resurrection days as a gift from God to be drawn towards one another in love...

Easter is not simply an intellectual claim we make as Christians... It marks us as Easter people... given not to what is perishable, but to what is imperishable... Now, today... and in the future.

Let's Pray.