**Sojourners and Exiles**

**1 Peter 2:11-20**

**Jubilate 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Did you read the title of this sermon? Way back in early February, before this whole COVID-19 thing hit, I had entitled this Sojourners and Exiles. Little did I know that it would be such a apropos title for this Sunday. I guess that I should not be surprised, God’s Word addresses us in all our daily life situations.

We could talk about our life in the brave, new, world of coronavirus, but I have seen that it is not all that brave a world. There are people terrified about what is happening. In fact, the decisions that are being made by our leaders in government across the globe are decisions based in fear, not in bravery.

Let me be very clear here, I am not – in any way, shape, or form – condemning the decisions of anyone in any position of authority that has had to make even one decision which might have an effect the lives of people.

I am saying however, that every decision – from the decisions of leaders in our world – to the decisions of everyone else – very decision lately has been made with a certain amount of fear.

Many made from the fear of death. That fear of death may take many forms; fear of own death, fear of a loved one’s death, fear of the death of others, fear of being accused of killing someone by your actions.

Some decisions made from the fear of what others will think. Others are afraid to make any decision whatsoever. Of course, some are afraid that no matter what they do, they will be accused of making a foolish decision, if nothing else.

There are many people today who are simply filled with fear. Some are fearful about their economic future with what is going on. Others are afraid of what the future may bring. Some are afraid of the welfare of their loved ones from who they are presently far removed. And still others are afraid they will never get out of their house again.

Where does this fear come from? Because we are out of our element! We are living as sojourners and exiles. The biggest problem is that we did nor realized it until recently, and then, we have only considered ourselves exiles for the wrong reason.

I have jokingly given the devotions I have been publishing the subtitle of Devotions in Exile. And you know what, the reasoning behind that name was also given for the wrong reason. It was given because we have been exiled to our homes, and from one another. We have been exiled and cut off from the world – and that bothers us.

Maybe what should bother us is how close and comfortable we had become with the world! Isn’t the world one of the big three enemies of the Christian? You remember those three enemies as: the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. These are the three that tempt us and lead us into sin.

That is what God is explaining to us through Peter’s pen. We are to be sojourners and exiles – we are to abstain from the passions of our flesh which wage war against our soul. We are to tune out the siren voices of the world that beckon to us. We are to avoid those things which are appealing to our eyes, to our stomachs, to our senses, to all those feeling which you make us think we are happy – when they wage war against our soul – against the Word and will of God.

This is exactly what I mean when I say that Christians are ‘in the world,’ but not OF the world. You are to be different, a living witness to God in Christ Jesus, in everything you do.

I think I have asked this before, but Who are you? Have you ever seriously thought about that? And I do not mean to consider who you are according to your name, what family you belong to, your job, your hobbies, or anything having to do with the things of the world. Who are you according to, and in relationship, to God? If you are truly a Christian, and in a right relationship with God, the world will hate you – you are a sojourner and exile here.

You are to keep your conduct among the Gentiles – your conduct among unbelievers – honorable. They will speak evil of you, but they will see you good deeds and glorify God on the last day.

You and I are the redeemed of God. We are different! You know the One who went away for a little while to the grave, who crucifixion brought grief and pain to His disciples for a little while, but then was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father on the third day. On that day, their weeping and lamenting was turned to joy.

Of course, He left them again. Until Christ returns, we are in this world. It is the world which rejoices now in what appears to be the absence of Christ. We are teased for what we believe. We are ridiculed for what they call or ridiculous hope.

 Dearly beloved of God, it is as a sojourner and exile that I have any hope, comfort, and peace in the midst of the panic and terror that is globally overwhelming so many.

We have been subject, for the Lord’s sake, to every human institution – even the governor – because it is the will of God. In doing this, we have put to silence some foolish people. By the way, a fool is someone who does not believe in God – the foolish are those who deny God.

We have been living as those who are free, using our freedom to gather together and to hear God’s Word. We have gathered to receive the grace of God, to have our adoption into the Kingdom confirmed, renewed, strengthened and nourished by Word and Sacrament.

And then, having our faith fed in nourished, we have returned to our exile in the world as a faithful witness of the hope that lives within us. We live as those who know the end game! We know that no matter what may happen, the victory is ours! It is an eternal victory! It is a victory of glorified and resurrected flesh that will never see disease, death, or decay because it is given as a gift of God. On that day, we will no longer be sojourners and exiles. On that day we will be the glorified, resurrected, children of God enjoying the eternal paradise that is our true home.

Let us find our peace in Christ, in the victorious One who conquered sin and death for us, freeing us from this veil of tears and our exile to it. Amen. He is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!