

My children right now are going through a phase where they keep calling each other nonsense names.

At least I hope it is a phase, because I can't handle it much longer.

We have told them not to call each other mean things, so they have resorted to calling each other weird stuff.

Like shoe head or head ball.

Today when we read 1 Peter chapter 2, Peter is going to call us to be something strange.

There are four different images Peter will use.

Four different kinds of things we are to be.

And some of them are weird.

They may make you shake your head and wonder.

But remember, the kingdom of God is strange.

We worship a God who cannot be contained or fit in our nice boxes.

And if we will follow Him, then we have to be willing to do what He asks.

And we have to become what He asks us to be.

Even if it seems weird.

Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2:1-12

I. Be like infants (v. 1-3).

My young children love to pretend to be babies.

They lay on the ground and make loud baby noises.

So often in my house I have to repeatedly say, "stop being a baby."

Baby time is over I need you to be a regular boy.

But Peter is telling us the opposite.

Here Peter is telling us we need to be like infants.

Here in our grown up fancy space.

Where we may feel old, or significant and quite independent and respectable.

But God's Word wants us to be babies.

Not just young children, but newborn infants.

Why would it say that and what does it mean by that?

Let us take a look together.

Verse 2, **"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk."**

Or your translation may say crave.

We are to desire and want the spiritual milk.

It is the image and command to be like babies.

Like a new born cries to be fed.

It is really all a newborn baby can do.

We are to be like that.

But what is this?

It means we are to crave our spiritual nourishment.

We are to long for what feeds our souls.

The rest of the verse helps us see.

"that by it you may grow up into salvation."

You see, the spiritual milk is what enables us to grow into salvation.

It is what helps us grow spiritually.

What helps our souls transform.

What helps us be sanctified as we become more and more like Christ.

And this is not a narrow thing.

Peter does not seem to have just one idea in mind.

He certainly would be thinking of the Word of God.

Because every time we read it.

Every time we hear it read, we are being fed and nourished.

We should long and crave to be fed by the Word of God.

We can think of communion and the eucharist.

We come the Lord's table and it is not our physical bodies that our fed.

But our souls are nourished as we eat, drink, and reflect on Christ.

We should long to be nourished by communion.

We should long to be nourished by gathering together with other believers to worship our Savior.

We should long to be nourished by prayer and time spent with Jesus.

All of these things nourish our souls in Christ.

They are what we are too long for.

How different would our days be if longed for these things as much as we long for sugar, or coffee, or for our favorite snack.

The reality is that we need spiritual nourishment more than life itself.

This is part of why we are too fast regularly.

Because it reminds our bodies and our souls.

Man does not live by bread alone, but by the words of God.

We need spiritual milk more than we need water to drink.

This is why Peter uses this image.

Because infants need their mothers milk, or formula, to survive.

They are completely helpless.

So are we.

We need Jesus and the true spiritual milk.

If we are to be babies.

If we are to follow God's command here,

Then there are behaviors we need to put behind us.

Verse 1, **"So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander."**

If we are to long and grow in our faith.

We must put these things behind us.

We must no longer do them.

Because they keep us from being like Jesus.

They also keep us from wanting to become more like Jesus.

First we are to put away all malice.

This means all hate and the desire to see others suffer.

We have to put away the desire to hurt those who hurt us.

We have to put away the desire to see others we don't like suffer.

We also put away all deceit and lying.

Anything that even smells like deceit.

We don't hide the truth or try to obscure it.
We are a people of truth.
We say what is true even if it is costly.
We speak the truth even when it means confessing our own sins.

We are to put away envy.
To no longer desire what other people have.
To no longer wish we had their life or the blessing they have received.
Instead we can rejoice with others.
When someone conceives even though we still haven't, we are glad for them instead of envious.
When someone is given a gift we wish we would have gotten, we can be genuinely glad.
Because envy has no place in our hearts.
We are perfectly content with spiritual milk.

We are to put away all slander.
That is a convicting one.
We are not to lie about other people.
I see slander happen all the time these days.
Here is an easy and common way we slander people.
When we assume the worst about someone and then tell other people that is what we believe.
I see Christians slander each other or slander non-believers constantly.

Some people do it as a marketing gimmick to help sell books.
Instead of saying, "this person and I have some disagreement on this particular theological issue and I think it is important."
Here is what they think, here is why i think they are wrong and why it matters.
Instead, usually we say that "this person is a wolf, and a liberal, and they are trying to destroy the church."

Or we do this in the way we talk about people we disagree with.

We have to be able to describe what they believe in a way that would make them say, "yes I believe that."

If you cannot do that, then you are slandering them.

We have to put away these things.

We have to long for spiritual milk instead.

Verse 3, **"If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."**

If you have tasted and seen the Lord is good.

If you have given your life to Christ.

If you have repented of your sins and been baptized.

If you have become a believer and follower of Christ,

then you have tasted the spiritual milk.

And if you have tasted it, we should know it is better than anything else.

Jesus gives us the true nourishment we need.

Have you tasted and seen that God is good?

Because if you have, you should not long or crave for anything else.

And if you have not, come and see.

II. Be like stones (v. 4-8).

This is one a little less weird but still strange.

If all the talk of spiritual milk and feeding like babies weirded you out, this one is more stereotypically masculine.

We are to be like stones.

And we are to be stones because Christ is the living stone.

Verse 4, **"As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious."**

Jesus was rejected by the world.

He came to save us and we killed Him.

But even though the world wanted nothing to do with Jesus.

Even though the world rejected the kingdom of God.

God chose Jesus.

God still loved Jesus.

And Jesus is chosen and precious because He is God.

Verse 5, **"You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."**

We are to be holy stones like Jesus.

And Peter uses the metaphor of us being stones that are being built into something.

Specifically we are being built into a spiritual house.

This is the church.

We are all a part of the stones who have built up the church.

And this spiritual house is where we are a holy priesthood.

We are to serve as ministers and priests of God.

And we get to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

Do you understand how incredible this opportunity is?

It was a unique blessing to be able to offer the sacrifices in the Old Testament.

You had to be born in the right nation.

You had to be born into the right tribe.

You had to be born a man.

You had to be able to be a priest.

But now any of us can offer sacrifices to God.

Continually throughout our lives.

We get to do this because of Jesus.

He tore the curtain and tore the temple down.

And now we are the new building.

Verse 6, **"For it stands in Scripture: Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."**

Peter quotes from Isaiah again.

We are stones.

But Jesus is the cornerstone.
He is the foundation.
He is the cap stone.
He is the one that holds us all together.
Without Jesus, we all fall apart and there is no building.
But with Jesus, we can be something.

And whoever believes in Jesus will never be put to shame.
What a beautiful promise.
Everyone who hopes in Christ.
Everyone who has called out to Him in prayer.
They will never be disappointed.
They will not be ashamed of the work done in faith.
They will not be ashamed of how they have spent their life.
They will be honored by Christ.

Verse 7, **"so the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,"**

Those who believe, those who are Christians.
We will be honored.
There is honor waiting for you when you see Jesus.
There is hope and salvation.
But there is not honor for those who do not believe Jesus.
Those who reject the cornerstone, they will face something else.

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"

This is the blessing for those who are like Christ.
The reminder is that we might be rejected by the world.
We will be rejected by the world.
But as Christ was raised to the cornerstone,
We will be raised to living stones.

"and A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do."

Those who reject Jesus, will face judgment.
Instead of being raised with the cornerstone,
They will stumble over the stone.
They will fall over Christ.
They will be crushed by Him.

This is our choice.
Join Christ and become a living stone being built into beautiful house.
Or we can reject Him and be crushed.
But those who become stones will never be put to shame.

As I read this I could not help but think about the picture.
We are all like bricks.
Each one of us put in place to make this church.
We have a little pavilion out on the East side of the church.
In it there are many bricks with names on them.

They are the names of the 3 pastors who have served Tanglewood over its history.
There are the names of the original founding families of this church.
And there are the names of other believers who were a part of this church who have now gone on to be with Christ.
They are bricks that made up our church.
All of us here are the same, whether your name gets placed out there or not.
We are living stones.
We make up not just our church in Tanglewood Bible Fellowship.
You help make up the universal church.
Be that stone.

III. Be like a chosen people (v. 9-10).

Peter also tells us that we are to be a chosen people.
Following Jesus is not just an individual thing.
It is not just about you and your individual relationship with Jesus.

You have been born into a family.
You have been born into a community.
You have been born into a new people.

Verse 9, **"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession"**

Let's take these one at a time.

First we are a chosen race.

This means we are a different category of people.

Most of us are white so we might not think about race often.

Conversations about race make us nervous.

But if you are a minority then you are very conscious of your race.

Peter tells us that we are a different race.

If you are a Christian, you are a different kind of person.

We are a royal priesthood.

This means that all of us again have been set aside to serve God.

In Israel it was only the tribe of Levi could serve as priests.

But now all of us serve as ministers of the gospel.

We are all representatives of God in the world.

We are a holy nation.

This does not mean the nation of Israel.

This does not mean the United States of Israel.

It does not mean any physical nationstate.

It means the church is a holy nation.

We have inherited what Israel lost.

We are a people for God's possession.

We belong to Him.

This is meant to be a comfort.

It is not like we are his property to be thrown away in some storage unit.

We are His prized possession.

He will care for us.

"That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Why are we all of this?

What are we to do as a chosen people?

We are to proclaim the glory of God.

We are to tell people about His excellencies.

Sometimes I notice people don't know how to explain the gospel.

They worry that they might use the wrong words.

Or maybe someone will ask a question they don't have a good answer for.

But what we are called to do ultimately, and part of what the gospel is.

It is not just the story of the intricacies of how exactly we are delivered from our sins.

It is the proclamation of the excellency of God.

It is the story of why our God is worth worshipping.

You may not be able to explain the gospel perfectly.

We can work on it that is okay.

But all of us can proclaim the beauty of Jesus.

All of us can proclaim how amazing God is.

You can proclaim the beauty of what God has done in your life.

You can proclaim what you find wonderful about Christ.

You can proclaim His mercy.

You can proclaim His never ending kindness to sinners and murders.

You can proclaim the tender heart of Christ who loves children.

You can proclaim the name above all names that has the power to cast out demons.

You can proclaim the excellencies of His healing power.

If you are a Christian, then you can proclaim how great Jesus is.

Because if you can't.

If you cannot think of reasons why Jesus is incredible.

Then I don't know how you are a Christian.

Because you have to think Jesus is worthy of everything in order to give up everything to follow Him.

And the most wonderful things about Jesus in in verse 10.
It is the gospel and the grace of Jesus.
The God who called us out of darkness into the light.
The God who saved us from the darkness of sin and death.

Verse 10, **"Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people;"**

Once we were lost.
We had no community and no place to belong.
But now we have been redeemed.
We have been given a people to be ours.
We are now God's people.

"Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

We had not received mercy or salvation.
We were deserving of death and punishment for our sins.
But God showed us mercy.
God has given us mercy.
Jesus has poured out His mercy upon us.
His mercy is never ending.
Lamentations reminds us that His mercies are new every morning.
It is not just something we received in the past and now we are on our own.
His mercy extends to us forever and ever.

IV. Be like exiles (v. 11-12).

This is the theme of the book.
It will come up again and agin throughout it.
We are exiles and sojourners here in this country and land.
And we are to act like it.
We are to recognize who we are in Jesus.
We cannot live in this land like normal everyday citizens.

Verse 11, **"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passion of the flesh which wage war against your soul."**

When you are an exile, there are things you abstain from.

There are benefits you do not receive.

There are rights you do not have.

And there are ceremonies and rituals you do not get to participate in.

You might go to observe.

You might get to see this from a distance.

But you do not participate.

You abstain.

Because you are an exile.

This was true for the Jews in the Roman empire.

And it was especially true for Christians.

There were customs and norms the Romans did, that they abstained from.

They did not participate in making sacrifices to idols.

They did not go to the colosseum or circuses to watch people die.

I spent a summer living with a family in Mexico.

I was an exile and sojourner there.

I was very aware of it.

I did a lot of stuff with the family and with their children.

I ate the food and tried to learn the language.

But there were lots of things I didn't do because it wasn't my culture.

This was not my place.

And there were things I could not do because I was an exile.

The same should be true for Christians.

But we are not to engage in the customs here.

We are to abstain from the passions of the flesh.

This is what the people of this world do.

But this is not what the chosen people do.

This is not what exiles from the kingdom of God do.

We must be different.

The world will engage in sinful behaviors.
And it will tell us that this is fine.
We will be told to get with the modern times.
This is the world and the culture and the way things are.
But we have to say no.
We are to abstain and not engage.
Because we are exiles here.

We are people who are just wandering through.
The strange thing is that we are exiles from a country and nation that does not full exist.
You cannot go and visit the kingdom of God.
It does not have a visitors center or land.

One of my favorite books as a young boy was Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court."
The story is what the title sounds like.
A man from America gets sent back in time to King Arthur's day.
I've always loved this time travel stories.
Especially when it is someone from the future being sent back.
Because they always struggle to fit in.
They use different words and want to dress strange.
They have different values and ideals that the people around them do not understand.

As followers of Jesus, we are exiles from the future.
Our true home is the place in the future when the kingdom of God will be fully revealed and fully manifest itself on earth.
And the world that is to come does not look like this world today.
We are like time traveling exiles.
And we must live like it.
We must not get sucked into the attitudes and actions of this world.
We must behave as if the kingdom is coming.
Because it is.

And it is our true home, not here.
We are strange people from the future.
We need to act and live like it.

This is also significant because the passions and sins of the world **"wage war against your soul."**

Sin is not just a temptation.
It is not just something we shouldn't do because God told us no.
It is not just something we resist.
Sin is actively trying to destroy your soul.
Sin is a power in the world that hates you.
It wants to wreck your life and kill you.
We need to take that seriously.
We should view and treat sin as something that is trying to exterminate our people.
Something we should not go near with a ten foot pole.

We think about sin as a war.
But we usually think about it as a culture war.
Where it something happening outside of us.
But the war Peter talks about it is inside of our own souls.
And the way we fight is by resisting sin.
So maybe we should pay more attention to the war raging for our own souls instead of the war waging in our culture or in the nation we sojourn in.
After all, what does it gain you if the church triumphs and the culture embraces Jesus, if you lose your soul because you lost your own individual war?

Verse 12, **"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable,"**

He is using Gentiles just as a shorthand to refer to unbelievers.
We are to live and act honorably.
Our conduct should be above reproach.
Yes we are distinct.

Yes, we do not do what the world does.

But we should be living holy lives that even people who do not know Jesus look at us in awe.

That they cannot help but say we are holy.

"So that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

First we need to recognize that Peter does not say if.

He says when.

The assumption is that people will say you are evil.

When you proclaim the greatness of Jesus as the only way to salvation, people will say you are intolerant.

When you say you believe the Bible is true, people will say you are an idiot to believe an old book.

When you believe life begins at conception, and all life has value, you will be called an evildoer.

When you stand for what Jesus taught us about sexuality, you will be called an evildoer.

That is the reality.

Now, when that day comes, we are to be holy exiles.

We are to live holy lives.

Lives full of good deeds.

Because we don't need to give people any other reason to hate us.

Or any other reason to speak against us.

People should be offended by what we believe.

We worship a nailed God.

Who was born of a virgin 2000 years ago.

Died, was buried, and then came back to life.

It should be strange.

But our lives should make people wonder if we are right.

Our lives should make people want to know the truth about this Jesus.

Why?

Because at the end of the day our hope is not to be able to win an argument.

It is not just to bring them to shame.

Our hope is that they will glorify God.

That on the day of visitation.

The day when Jesus returns.

They will be glad Jesus came.

We hope that we can proclaim Jesus, and that they will want to see Jesus for themselves.

CONCLUSION:

Where have we been this morning?

Be like infants.

Be like stones.

Be like a chosen people.

Be like exiles.

That is who we are to be.

That is really who we are.

So let's act like it.