

Life by Any Means Necessary
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1 Peter 1:1-2 NRSV

**1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 who have
been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to
Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood:
May grace and peace be yours in abundance.**

Introduction: My nomadic year: Even if the last year hasn't turned out as I imagined it would, it has turned out to be a really good year in ways I would not have imagined! But it has also given me the opportunity to see other people's lives with new eyes. Having moved every three months or so, I am so grateful to God that I could! I haven't spent a single night sleeping in my car, or without anything to eat. *I've known that God's got me.* Peter prays for his readers that grace and peace be theirs in abundance, even in difficult circumstances. And I've gotten a taste of that.

Do you believe that God's got you? Do you believe that God's got us?

If that is hard to believe, then now is a good time to meditate on Peter's first letter to the churches. Why? Because Peter is going to give us some very important reminders.

When things are difficult – really difficult - we need to remember...

- ... Where we've been
- ... Who (and whose) we are
- ... Where we are going and why

To encourage his readers, Peter is going to remind them

- ... They were once living apart from God,
- ... But now they are part of God's family and God's story, through Jesus Christ
- ... And that they are destined for glory

These were critically important things for them to hear in light of the fact that they were facing severe persecution.

For us,

- ... Our church has been a thriving congregation, experiencing the height of growth and ministry success as during the time that agriculture-based West Valley became technology-based Silicon Valley.
- ... Even though the community and the culture have changed, we are still God's people and part of God's story.
- ... Our goals have not changed: We are still committed to caring for one another and see

God's kingdom continue to advance at the corner of Miller and Bollinger.

Peter's opening lines declare that

All of God has All of Us

Whatever happens is going to work within God's purposes for the creation and flourishing of US - God's chosen people.

What do I mean by "All of God"?

Peter's introduction describes the Trinity at work on behalf of God's People:

The Father has chosen us and given us purpose and destiny

The Holy Spirit is at work making us a holy people – that is, making us totally devoted to God and able to be faithful and obedience disciples of Jesus Christ

The Son has given the fullness of Himself in sacrificial love in order to redeem us and make us God's own cherished possession.

What do I mean by "All of Us"?

Peter uses three descriptors for his readers. He says they are *exiled*, *scattered*, yet nevertheless *chosen*

The first recipients of Peter's letter were in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. They were likely a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers who were learning to live as a united community unlike anything they had seen before. Peter is intentionally using three terms that used to describe God's people in the OT – chosen (elect), exiles (or stranger/alien), dispersion (diaspora, scattered). These churches could have been a literal diaspora – a scattering of believers who had fled Jerusalem after the events that took place in the Book of Acts. But it is likely that Peter uses the term as a metaphor for how this community of people who have almost nothing in common with one another except belief in the gospel are now disconnected from the majority culture. Peter may be trying to connect Gentile readers with their Jewish sisters and brothers in a way to say: You are all God's people together now, so you are all part of God's larger story that began with Israel and now includes all of you.

As this was a totally new way of being not just community but *family*, the church was now facing the reality that they were being marginalized – even by friends and by their biological families-of-origin. They, like anyone who has lived as an alien or an exile, were in constant fear of being turned into the "them" that will be rejected, scapegoated, attacked.

Today is the first day of Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage month. Today is a good day to remain awake and alive how the AAPI community has been scapegoated in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, we know most of our neighbors have come from another part of the world and are still trying to find a way to belong.

Embracing the idea that we—like God's people in the Old Testament and like our Lord Jesus

himself—now occupy a place on the margins can be an important and exciting discovery. This is the place where we can cultivate inspired imaginations and identify with people who have lived on the margins for generations.

In his commentary on the Book of Acts, Willie Jennings observes that being part of a diaspora is about alienation, but it is also about power. He writes:

The people who inhabit diaspora live with animus and violence filling the air they breathe. They live always on the verge of being classified “enemy”... always having an acceptance on loan, ready to be taken away at the first sign of sedition. ...They also remember loss: Of land and place, of life and hope and even for some of faith. Yet diaspora is also power – the power of a conviction to survive, the power of a confession to never yield to the forces that would destroy them. Diaspora is “life by any means necessary”...

That is God’s invitation to us today: *To embrace the image and imagination of being a diaspora people who know who we are, where we have come from, and where we are going so that we can continue to pursue life in God by any means necessary.*

But I have a more specific invitation for you, for when you leave this place. Last week I got an email from one of our members who has been thinking and praying a lot about this season we have been in – a season that has lasted so much longer than we thought it would. Her desire to understand the needs of the community around us led her to talk to her neighbors who are immigrants. She wanted to know what particular challenges they have faced since moving here. She wanted to learn from someone who knows something about diaspora. She learned that many of the women who come to the US do so after getting married so they leave their family and support system, unable to work or drive or do much of anything outside the home. They love to sing and to paint and to sew but they need new friends and new ways to connect.

My call to you is to do what she did.

Call

Do you someone who is an immigrant or an outsider in some way? Ask them to describe that for you.

As we come to the Lord’s Table this morning, we do so remember that we have been called out from our old lives by God the Father, adopted into the Family of God through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son, and made able to live together for God’s glory by the Holy Spirit. At this Table, we brought together into unity. As God is One, so we become One with God and with each other. As we come to the table, let’s remember:

**In the middle of things not working out FOR us -
God is working out something IN us.**

Amen.