

## Getting Our Minds Right Pastor Morgan Murray West Valley Presbyterian Church

### 1 Peter 1:13-21

<sup>13</sup> Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. <sup>14</sup> Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; <sup>16</sup> for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

<sup>17</sup> If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. <sup>18</sup> You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. <sup>20</sup> He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. <sup>21</sup> Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

#### Introduction: Tempered Resilience

Reading Tod’s book *Tempered Resilience*, in which he reflects on his blacksmithing class as an extended metaphor for leadership development. Through a processes repeatedly heating, hammering, and holding the metal, and instrument of tempered steel is created. To be tempered is to be strong yet flexible. To be resilient is to not only endure through challenges, but to learn and grow through them.

We have been going through such a time. Peter and his churches were going through such a time as well (though what they faced was surely much more difficult than anything we face in our culture today). Peter is writing to encourage his readers not only to endure the trials – which is what we usually think resilience is about – but to recognize these trials as the forge in which they are becoming the strong, flexible, precision instruments of God’s glory.

#### Holiness: What the Therefore is There For

The “therefore” in verse 13 signifies a transition in Peter’s thinking. When it comes to scripture study it’s good for us to remember that *when we see a “therefore” we need to make sure we know what it’s there for!* In this instance, the “therefore” indicates a shift in focus for Peter. Up to now he has been focused on God’s blessings-unto-living-hope. Now he moves to the imperatives – that is, direction about how respond to that hope. Peter is issuing a call to holiness, which is literally at the center of this section.

When Peter tells his readers to be holy as God is holy, he is calling back to the commandment in Leviticus that all Jewish believers would know well. To be set apart for special purposes, to live with a singular intention for the good of all things – this is what it means to be holy.

Holiness is the essence of God's nature, the way in which God is wholly "other" and of an entirely different quality from everything else. So if we say that God's holiness requires our reverential fear, then we are saying something true. However to 21<sup>st</sup> century ears that can sound like a not-so-veiled threat. It sounds a bit like, "respect God or else."

But that isn't how Moses experienced reverential fear when he beheld a bush that was aflame but not consumed with divine energy. When Moses heard God addressing him from within the burning bush and telling him to stand back and remove his sandals as a gesture of recognition that this was a sacred space and a holy moment, Moses immediately did so. But it wasn't because he was *threatened* as much as he was *enthralled*. He was in complete and total awe of what he was experiencing.

The birth of a baby, the intimacy of lovers, to listen to a beautiful piece of music or gaze at a magnificent work of art – these are holy encounters. They deserve our complete and undivided attention. They call us to be fully present, bringing the full attention of our minds, the full opening of our hearts, and the full sensation of our bodies to the moment. God, who is Love, is revealed to us in this way and is fully present to us in this way – even and especially in the person of Jesus Christ. God is holy like that.

The fullness of God's presence calls for the fullness of our attention and effort. In other words, **God's holiness calls for our devotion.**

To be devoted, we must get our minds right. As Peter says in verse 13 we need to "prepare our minds for action."

The literal translation of verse 13 is "gird up the loins of your mind." It's a mixed metaphor that may sound funny to us, but it is an expression meant to describe removing any impediments to movement, like removing a long garment or tying it close to one's body so that we can do strenuous activity (such as combat). **Peter is telling us it is time to roll up our sleeves and get ready to do some work!**

If we think about it this way, we see that the devotion leading to holiness is about *quality*, not *quantity*. In other words, we often think about holiness as a list of Do's and Don'ts. We try to measure it in terms of how much prayer or bible study we do, or about the TV shows we don't watch or the kinds of people we don't associate with.

Having said that, **we are called to remove the mental impediments that get in the way of hope**; So as we seek to have a resilient faith – that is, a quality of faith that is deeper and enduring –we may indeed stop investing time and energy into things that numb our hearts and dull our minds.

What is one thing that you find yourself habitually doing that creates a mental impediment to hope? Can you, like me, agree that being informed about world events is really important... to a point. For instance, I need to know what is happening in Ukraine so it directs my prayer life. But listening to it for several hours a day won't empower action; it will produce fatigue. We need

small habits, that we can build upon, to move us through the day and keep us spiritually alert and oriented toward God's movement in us. Slipping back into the old habits won't get us there.

As I began preparing this series, I decided to try a little experiment. Each morning I have a set of things I do, first thing. I get up, head to the bathroom, step on the scale, read the number, SIGH, then open my phone to record the number in my weight tracking app. Then it's time to make coffee. Between entering my weight and starting the coffee I say, "Lord, I devote myself to glorifying you today." Maybe I add a little more to that prayer. But I want to keep it really simple otherwise the habit will never stick. It's my way of expressing my devotion intention, of girding the loins of my mind. I haven't been perfect in the doing of this habit, but I notice a small change in myself, and in the trajectory of my day, when I do this.

Another thing I do most days is listen to the Prayer as You Go podcast. I mentioned this podcast a few years ago and one of our members told me recently that she has been listening to it since then. It's a small habit that can deepen devotion.

**What small habit could you incorporate into your first-thing-in-the-morning routine that help you cultivate devotion to God?**

Our Call to Worship this morning came from Psalm 116, and it describes several small acts of devotion. The Psalmist asks rhetorically in verse 12, "What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?" In other words, recognizing how God has rescued me, provided for me, and brought me together with others in loving and supportive community, what expressions of devotion might I show?

**Psalm 116's habits of devotion:**

**13 I will lift up the cup of salvation...**

**17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice...**

**18 I will pay my vows to the LORD**

In essence the Psalmist invites us to sing and to say (see Psalm 116:12-19 *The Message*) :

I'll lift high the cup of salvation—a toast to GOD!  
I'll pray in the name of GOD;

I'm ready to offer the thanksgiving sacrifice  
and pray in the name of GOD.

I'll complete what I promised GOD I'd do,  
and I'll do it in company with his people...

Small acts of reverence can go a long way to cultivate resilient faith. What small act can you start to do?

Let us pray.