



Sermon Growth Guide

January 31, 2021

Here We Go! – Share Good News

1 Peter 2:11–25

Key Verse: 1 Peter 2:12 “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

Big Idea: Value #5 Share Good News: Do all it takes to reach those who do not know Christ.

Foundations

What are you unwilling to sacrifice to see your yet-believing neighbor turn to Jesus and receive salvation? It’s a chilling question for many. We so easily become comfortable in blending into our surroundings. Yet we are called to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth.

This week we look deep into Value #5 of **The First Pres Way – 7 Values in our Pursuit of Jesus**.

Value #5 **Share Good News:** *Do all it takes to reach those who do not know Christ.*

All it takes? Yes, all it takes. What will it take to demonstrate God’s love for the people living around you, working alongside you?

Pastor Tim writes, “We are here to bear witness to Jesus and the good news of what Jesus has done to save our souls.” Doing all it takes to reach those who do not know Christ will require much of us, but the fruit we pray for is that those around us will be saved. Doing all it takes is worth the effort—forever.

Gathered together with your circle, open your time of study in prayer. Ask the Spirit to guide and guard your spiritual formation, your growth in Christ.

Understanding God’s Word

According to our opening verse this week, what do “sinful desires” do to our souls?

What do we learn about being a witness to the love of God in verse 12? What does evangelism look like in 2 Peter 2:12?

How does Peter envision Christian behavior / disposition in verses 13–17?

Applying God’s Word

Value #5 challenges us to “Do all it takes to reach those who do not know Christ.” Identify one area of your life where you would like to more fully give yourself away in Christ to see someone come to salvation.

Witnessing God’s Word

Pastor Tim challenges us this week in the sermon with these questions: Are you invested in someone else knowing Jesus? Are you participating in the spread of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ? What are you doing to fulfill the Great Commission, Jesus’ final command to His followers?

With your circle, encourage one another in ways you can grow as a witness to God’s salvation. Testify to the ways you have seen one another grow over the past several months and celebrate what the Spirit is doing in your midst. Pray that the lost around you would be found.

Somebody in Michigan won a billion dollars in the lottery last weekend. That could be considered good news. What if I told you I have good news for you, and it's actually better news than a billion dollars? A billion dollars is good but—stick with me here—it could also be pretty disruptive, disorienting, and possibly corrosive to your soul and to your family. Apparently there's a show on HGTV about lottery winners picking their dream houses. They get into all kinds of fights and you can see how the money is already rotting their relationships—so I'm told. I can't verify anything on HGTV. A billion dollars might just mess you up. I mean, I'd take it! You know, you have to take risks in life. But there is a different kind of good news. Good news that doesn't last a lifetime, but lasts for eternity. Good news that doesn't threaten your most treasured relationships, but promises to enrich them. Good news that doesn't wear on your soul, but brings eternal life. Good news about God and what He has done in Jesus Christ to save your life.

The First Pres Way: 7 Values in Our Pursuit of Jesus. Number five, **Share Good News:** *Do all it takes to reach those who do not know Christ. Are you invested in someone else knowing Jesus? Are you participating in the spread of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ? What are you doing to fulfill the Great Commission, Jesus' final command to His followers? In Matthew, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Or in Mark, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15–16). Or in Luke, Jesus said, "and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:47–48). We have good news to share. There is forgiveness of sins. No matter what you have done or what has been done to you, no matter what marks you bear or wounds, you can be forgiven, you can be redeemed, your life can be restored, you can be snatched up from the pathway of death and dropped on the pathway of life. You can have a*

relationship with God, His Holy Spirit within you, an eternal, rising life in freedom because of what Jesus Christ has done. That's good news. It's better than a billion dollars. If the world doesn't hear it as good news, it's because we are saying it wrong, or not saying it at all and leaving people in the dark.

Our Scripture says to live in such a way before non-believers that they too may come to know the good news about Jesus Christ. "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:11–12). Sinful desires wage war against your soul. That stuff is just self-inflicted wounds. You can make your own assessment, I imagine, of the truth of that. Peter encourages his church to walk away from that stuff and walk toward Jesus, but also with the knowledge that you are being watched; your life is on display. Live good lives, it says. Honor those in authority. Give respect where respect is due. "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority" (1 Peter 2:13). And it goes on about governors and others in power, in fact for the rest of this week and next, the passage is about how we freely submit ourselves to one another. Submit yourself. Why? For the Lord's sake, for the sake of the mission of Christ, for the sake of the gospel news, live in such a way that attacks against you can't land. Verse 17 sums it up, "Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17). Then, as it says in the next chapter, be ready. People will ask why your life is different. Be ready, "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

When Peter wrote this letter around 65 AD, there were about 5,000 Christians in a Roman Empire of around 60 million people. They were a tiny minority. No positions. Zero authority. No representatives in the Senate or governors



sympathetic to their values or judges or generals. None. If you asked what people thought of Christians at the time, the phrase “stark raving mad” comes to mind. “They won’t perform any of the normal sacrifices to local gods, they won’t take oaths to Caesar, they gather up across gender, class, national, racial and all other lines as though they are family when they clearly are not, they act like Jews, but don’t ask them if they’re Jews or you’ll get this whole speech about their leader who was crucified as a filthy criminal in Jerusalem!” That’s okay, says Peter. There is still influence. Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake. Just “live such lives” and be ready to Share Good News. Three hundred years later the entire empire was Christian.

Let’s talk about slavery. Peter says even slaves should submit themselves. How could the Bible tell someone to endure that? This is not an admonition to remain in an abusive relationship. You are made in the image of God. If you are in an abusive relationship, get help and get out. So what’s going on here? It’s hard to read, isn’t it? Start with this: Peter addresses slaves. He talks to them as fellow human beings with freedom of will. “Submit yourselves,” he says. You choose. For Peter, slavery was a constant. In his mind, it was going to be there, and people were going to be stuck in it. They had no choice. But, Peter says, a Christian can choose how to live within that evil situation. The slave can say, “I submit myself. I’m not submitted because of your violence. I’m submitted because I lay my life down to Jesus. No matter how bad my master, I have another Master. No matter how bad my king, I have another King. You can’t touch me, see? You can beat my body; you can take my life. You can’t touch my soul. I belong to Jesus.” By the inspiration of the Spirit of God, what Peter wrote was actually the death knell of slavery. How could such an inhuman institution endure when its victims were instilled with such full humanity? The sadness is in how long it has taken to realize that vision.

The submission is even that big. When Peter writes about honoring the emperor, the Emperor was Nero, one the most corrupt, bloodthirsty, murderous, selfish, horrid tyrants—I mean, he’d make the top 10! The job is that important. The mission

is that big. The real things we are doing, the real errand we are on, it’s that huge. We are here to bear witness to Jesus and the good news of what Jesus has done to save our souls. What is Peter after? What is the Lord telling us to really be about? It’s not a rebranding campaign. Make no mistake, rising public opinion about Christianity does not save souls. No one got to heaven by thinking nice thoughts about Christians. Peter says, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12). They might glorify God on the day of visitation, the last day, the Judgment Day, they might be found, not filling out polls of positive public opinion, they might be found worshiping and glorifying the Lord God Almighty, singing praise to Jesus, adoring the glory of God! They might have been removed from the land of death and self-inflicted wounds of sin and transferred into the way of eternal life in Jesus. They might have been called out of darkness and into His marvelous light. They might have been saved—and they might have been saved through something you did.

I do a lot to protect the reputation of our church. Do you know that? Even during COVID, a lot of decisions we’ve made have been to protect the reputation, to preserve the platform we have in our city. We want people to think of First Pres as a helpful, positive force for good. Why? No one got into heaven on a positive sentiment about Christians. You don’t grow the Kingdom on rising public opinion. In fact, the Kingdom right now is growing fastest in China and Iran. Good Christian branding is not the answer. Nice feelings don’t save souls. I hope the decisions we make help you when the time comes to Share Good News. When you say, “I go to First Pres ...” “What’d you do this weekend?” “Well, we joined with our church online to worship.” When you say that, I hope the platform we have just takes the stink face off your friend a little bit! “Oh, First Pres. That church has a good reputation. I hear First Pres is pretty helpful. They’re not stark raving mad.” We preserve our platform so that, from time to time, we can call the question. You don’t get transferred from death to life on positive public opinion or just with your own growing knowledge



about Christianity. Let's be clear. You come to Jesus and are saved by being born again. You must be born again. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). New birth. And again, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). Born again.

When Peter says "born again," he knows what he's talking about. It's a whole life given over to Jesus. It's your whole trust placed in Jesus Christ. It's hitting your knees, as Peter did, crying "Lord, get away from me, I'm a sinful man," then standing up again when the love in Jesus' eyes doesn't budge. It's leaving everything behind for the treasure found in Jesus. It's stepping out of the boat and onto the waves of the Sea of Galilee just to stand face to face with your Savior. It's forgiveness. Redemption. Restoration. Eternal life. Born again. Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again... Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:3, 6–7). Rising opinion, growing knowledge of Christian principles, this does not save your soul. You must be born again.

Does that even happen? New life in Christ? Sunday night in our Life Group (Abigail and I are part of a Life Group that's been meeting a few years now) we heard stories. One was a campus ministry in Indiana. The campus pastor asked friends to pray for 30 students by name, praying that they would come to Christ this academic year. As of last week, 17 of the 30 have given their lives to Christ. New life. Born again. Redeemed. In Vietnam last month, Young Life was able to host a camp weekend to present the good news of Jesus to 242 kids, and 126 of them prayed and made commitments, giving their lives over to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. New life. Born again. Right here in First Pres it happens. It happens all the time. I want very much for you to be a part of it.

Share Good News: *Do all it takes to reach those who do not know Christ. Are you invested in someone else knowing Jesus? It can be hard to ask that next question, to continue that spiritual conversation, but one conversation can be an opportunity for new life in Christ. Pastor of Evangelism and Young Adults, Greg Hartnett, will be hosting an event called "Experience Alpha" this week. Alpha is one way we have this conversation about Jesus here at First Pres. Google searches for "prayer," "God," and "Jesus" have skyrocketed this year. People are hungry. You might have a friend you are in regular conversations with. What you don't know is how late at night, when they can't sleep, they are pulling their laptop and searching. "Is God real? Is God angry with me? Is forgiveness possible? Who is Jesus really?" What answers are they getting? People are hungry. Will you help them find the bread of life? Learn to **Share Good News**.*

Good feelings about Jesus don't do it. That's not what eternal life is all about. You must be born again. The good news we have to share is the good news of what Jesus has done. When we were lost in our sins, destined for death, separated from God, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Knowing this does nothing if you aren't willing to act on it. What about you? Are you resting on good feelings about Jesus, a growing interest in Christianity, a comfortable confidence in church? You must be born again. And you can be. You can be right now when you entrust your life to Jesus Christ. I want to lead us in prayer. For some of you, it's a simple continuation of a relationship with Jesus you've had for a long time. For some of you, this is the moment, now is the time, today is the day of salvation, to be forgiven, redeemed, restored, healed—today. You want to give your life to Jesus. You can. Pray with me: *Lord, I know my need. I need to be forgiven, I need to be restored. Thank You for taking my sins to the cross, for dying so I can have life. I want to be born again. Come to me and take my life, and give me life eternal. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

