

# 1 Peter 2:11-12

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 August 2010

Preacher: David Helm

[ 0 : 00 ] celebrating life in the gospel. The first four weeks we gave ourselves to the question, what is the gospel?

And certainly saw that it is something worth celebrating. Then we spent four weeks on natural implications of the gospel and saw the joyful life that was given to us because of Christ and the fact that we had been adopted into his family as children, the kind of lives that we were going to be living just by nature of the gospel.

These seven weeks that we're now in the midst of are commitments we make in light of the gospel. And this is the second in that set of seven.

So last week we got it underway from Acts chapter 17, and it really related to a commitment we make with our lips, that we are to be speaking the gospel openly and often.

And I hope that that's something that we'll all be considering as we move throughout this year. Today I want us to take a look at a different text and a different commitment that we make.

[ 1 : 19 ] Rather than our lips or our speech in regard to the commitments we make to the gospel, I want to look at our lives and our service. Living the gospel out in the open.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 11 and 12. Our text for the afternoon. Our lives of service.

This is a commitment we are to make. In fact, when you read the text or hear it read, you'll see there are two commitments we initially must make. Verse 11.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

[ 2 : 25 ] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Pastor Dennis has been encouraging the staff over these past months to begin thinking in terms of making everyone in the congregation a missionary.

A missionary with a small m. We just heard from the backstroms who are going overseas as missionaries.

Pastor Dennis has been encouraging us to think in terms of our lives and our service being given to this community no matter where we may be or what our vocational calling to begin thinking of ourselves as missionaries.

Oh, how that would change the orientation of our lives. Think even for a minute of planning for the fall ministries.

Think of planning for the fall ministries as if you were preparing to go on a short-term missions trip. Recently I returned from Kenya, the great city of Nairobi.

[ 3 : 49 ]     The first time that I ever traveled to Africa, we had orientation meetings and we were educated on the context into which we would be moving and we began to pray things like, Lord, every day on the trip, may I encourage someone with a testimony of the gospel.

Lord, every day when I'm away, may I be fervently praying and sensitive to your leading for the gospel.

There is a focus that comes when you begin to think of yourself as a missionary. In 1 Peter, he has spent a chapter and a half renewing their understanding of their true identity in Christ.

Not many of us would wear the label missionary as our identity. But for a chapter and a half, Peter has been placing in the minds and hearts of these churches scattered across modern-day Turkey that their identity in Christ means, chapter 1, verse 1, that they are the elect exiles.

That they are loved by God but left in the world. I think of the hymn we sang it this morning on the west side when Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God.

[ 5 : 48 ]     And sometimes the Christian church forgets that while he sought us as we were strangers wandering from the fold of God and living in ungodly ways in the world, when we come to Christ, we merely exchange one sojourning identity for another.

For we are now tethered to heaven through faith in Christ and are strangers here. And what is a missionary?

Well, at least anecdotally, someone who brings the gospel to a context cross-culturally in which they don't feel as if they are at home anymore.

Perhaps we have become too accustomed to being at home, sweet home, Chicago.

So I'd like you to think in terms today of the commitments we make of a life of service, first of all, by a renewed understanding of your identity.

[ 6 : 55 ]     Look at the opening phrase, verse 11, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles. Their identity was fixed in their minds that they were wanderers here.

The very word sojourner is used in the Hebrew Scriptures to speak of the patriarch of all the faithful, Abraham, who for those many years was a wandering soul in the world, holding fast to the promises of God and living his life in faith and in belief that God would use him for some great mighty purpose that he had ordained for him.

Well, I think Holy Trinity ought to take up that mantle again. The mantle of Abraham. Not the mantle of why don't we have the best building and why isn't it our own?

Why aren't we fully settled and everything works properly? No, we are the wandering generation. We are the sojourning generation of this work.

We are the missionaries, small m. I urge you, he says. And then he places their identity not as citizens of Chicago, not as men and women who feel at home, not as those who have everything in place.

[ 8 : 29 ]     No, I urge you as tent dwellers, as nomadic wanderers, as ones who, having come to Christ, know that there is no place on earth that is your home.

This world is not my home. I'm just a passing through. This is the identity that we need collectively if we are to make a commitment that evidences itself in a life of service.

Sojourners and exiles here. You know, when we began Holy Trinity Church 11 and a half years ago, there were 33 folk and two pastors and their spouses.

And we met for a year in a couple of different classrooms before ever beginning the church. And we studied the letter of 1 Peter. And it seems to me that those 33 plus 4, those 37 in number, something happened in regard to our identity.

Most everyone moved. They felt nomadic. They began initially pleading with God in prayer for places to live and schools to attend and jobs to have.

[ 10 : 06 ] They began to view their life through the lens of the gospel and the gospel alone. So I remember young, early 30s folks now getting older saying things like, you know, I live where I live and I'm joining this work for one reason.

The gospel. It had that focus, that sense here in verse 11, that they had come under the urging of an apostolic title or identity that said, you are nothing more than a sojourner here.

And so they spent themselves and continued to spend freely. Now, where are we 11 years later? God's done quite a bit.

That initial tiny core has been multiplied multiplied times and times over, especially when you think of those who have carried it to other cities, having been in our midst for two, three, four, five years and gone all over the world.

But even then, if you consider the four congregations that presently comprise Holy Trinity, that 37 is probably closer to 370 or 400.

[ 11 : 28 ] And imagine with me for a moment 400 people who thought of themselves as missionaries here in Chicago.

How would it affect your relationships? What would it mean for your prayers come morning time? This, I think, is indeed what the letter of 1 Peter does for the church.

It settles them into an identity in Christ whose destination is heaven. Not here. And because their destination is heaven, they give themselves fully to the gospel and to the love of the brethren and to the hope of their calling that they might with their lips speak forth the gospel openly and often and with their lives live it out in service wherever God may lead them.

That's the kind of thing I would like to see us collectively thinking through as we plan for the fall. Imagine going home at night and beginning to pray Lord as we look to the coming year together help us to understand in fresh ways that we are almost like a group on a missions trip and we want to be daily used by you.

Beloved he says I urge you as sojourns and exiles to do what?

[ 13 : 23 ] Well if the servants of the gospel are renewed in their understanding of their identity which certainly they are at this point in the letter especially given chapter 2 verses 9 and 10 and we're not even dealing with that then they are to live lives as servants of the gospel by making two commitments and I ask you individually to make these commitments in the coming year.

What are the two commitments from every individual whether you're 78 or 8? Well the text says it summarizes them simply in two words verse 11 abstain verse 12 keep those are the commitments we need to make as missionaries living in the city of Chicago.

It's interesting isn't it? They're personal commitments first. They're not commit yourself to change the world. No they're commitments that require you to guard your soul.

For how will the world be changed if the church's soul is left unguarded? And so these commitments we make from the gospel are critical to our life and our mission together here as Holy Trinity Hyde Park.

Verse 11 I urge you to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. Verse 12 the second commitment keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.

[ 15 : 07 ] I want to take a look at a couple of those. This is in a sense training for cross cultural work. Training for life in the gospel.

Recently I went on a webpage for a missions organization to see how do they train their people when they're telling them you're going to be a missionary and you're going to be living out the gospel in a place that is not your home.

Interestingly the first things in the cross cultural training schematics whether it's a three week class or a one month class they deal with the spiritual nature of the individual missionary first.

And so it is here. Abstain from the passions of the flesh. the flesh.

That phrase passions appeared earlier in the letter. Chapter 1 verse 14 As obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

[ 16 : 21 ] And you're wondering well if I'm to abstain from the passions what does that mean? What are those passions? And he went on to define them in chapter 2 verse 1. This is it.

Put away all malice all deceit hypocrisy envy and all slander. Interesting. The things we ought to abstain from first appear in the mind and then deal with the mouth.

malice malice of course is that despicable trait that actually hopes harm for others. Deceit of course is a cousin to it that hides from others the nature of your own heart.

Hypocrisy envy and then slander. Notice how it moves from the mind and the mouth. This is the first call of a congregation that is living as a mission in the city of Chicago.

The commitment we make is to abstain from things where our minds begin to move out of accord with the gospel that we have received. And our mouths begin to be governed by grace rather than slander and envy and malice.

[ 17 : 50 ] The word passions in our verse, verse 11, not only appeared earlier in the letter, it also appears later in the letter and it ought to inform us then in other things that we are to abstain from.

Take a look at chapter 4 verses 1 to 3. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. Look again, it begins with our mind.

For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions, there's our word, but for the will of God.

Well, what are those passions? In chapter 4, verse 3, he goes on, the time has passed, it suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking, parties, and lawless idolatry.

How we handle the members of our own body is an important consideration in regard to the commitments that we are to make.

[ 18 : 58 ] And might I just then encourage you today to pick up the mantle of being part of a church that is a mission in the midst of a city that is not your own and not your home and to begin by the power of the spirit to govern your mind, control your tongue, and discipline your body.

Those are the three steps. things. There is no great outpouring of the work of God without this. But then he goes on. He says, keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.

That's the second commitment. We not only abstain from things, we keep things. We're not only a person who refrains from things, we're a people who embrace things.

We're not merely rigorous, vigorous Christians who live according to a rule of abstinence. No, there's things we embrace, we hold, we grasp, relationships we walk into.

It's a beautiful thing about repentance. It's not just a turning away from things, it's walking into relationship with God through faith in Christ. And there are therefore things we are to keep.

[ 20 : 18 ] And what is it? Our conduct honorable. Notice the relationship here between conduct and what that might mean. The latter half of the verse, so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds.

Your honorable conduct, 12a, is nothing other than the good deeds of 12b. And this letter is filled with things that speak of good deeds and honorable conduct.

Remember it began all the way back at 115, but he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. We have a great God, a forgiving God, but a holy God.

And our conduct is to be a reflection of his very character according to the power of the spirit that he has given to us. Chapter 2, verse 15, for this is the will of God that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

This is the will of God that we would be doing good in this city. Chapter 3, verse 6, and you are Sarah's children if you do good.

[ 21 : 47 ] Take a look at 3.11, turn away from evil and do good. 3.13, now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 3.16, so that those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

And then finally, 4.19, therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good.

And so I ask you, make this commitment and ask yourself in prayer this evening, what will this look like at work?

Honorable conduct. What will it look like at school? What will it look like at home? What will it look like in my next condo association meeting?

What will it look like in my next exchange in the treasure island when I'm already praying that every day God would make me useful to his service?

[ 22 : 57 ] What will it look like to keep my conduct honorable? people? These are the commitments we make. And notice the result.

So that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. It's interesting here. What does this day of visitation refer to?

Some commentators think it refers to the day that your neighbors become a Christian where God visits them with grace. I tend to think that it more likely refers to the final day and Christ's second coming that they will glorify God on the day of reckoning because the whole letter is filled with an emphasis on that day and rather than list the five or six references I'll let it go at that and you'll have to scare them up yourself.

But the day of visitation I believe is the final day when Christ returns and your keeping and your abstaining will be used by God to bring him glory on that day either because they have been converted to the gospel that you have embraced or because they will see it in all its fullness for the truth that you proclaimed.

So there is much for us to do as we begin making commitments in light of the gospel.

[ 24 : 38 ] We've looked at two and we've got five yet to go but we ought to be speaking the gospel openly and often and we ought to be living the gospel in lives of service and it will require for us a reshaping of our identity.

I am nothing more than a sojourner or exile here. And it will mean for us the making of a commitment to abstain from things that wage war against your soul and to keep things that bring God glory.

Would you begin even now thinking of the coming months as our life together enlarges as the school year gets underway as families begin to return from vacation as plans begin to be made as work begins to develop as community groups begin to emerge that you would already pick up the echo of that message that is already trickling into the staff from Pastor Dennis.

What would it be like if we had 370 people living in reality as if they were missionaries? Well, it could only mean good things for the future.

Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for these two short verses and the great exhortation that they hold for us. And I pray, Lord, that we would be willing and able to make these commitments in the power and through the power of the Spirit who dwells within us.

[ 26 : 24 ] I commit this to you in Christ's name. Amen.