

Going Home is Certain

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[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 17th of November 2002. The preacher is Jacob Kawashi.

His sermon is entitled, Going Home is Certain, and is based on 2 Peter 1, verses 1 to 11.

Amen. First lesson, as we go through it together.

I used to think that when Jesus returns, all of us, all believers in Christ, will be transformed into same glory and be given same crowns to wear.

Everything will be equal. Everything will be same. And there will be no any difference between A or B. But I later discover, as I study more of the Word of God, and especially coming to 2 Peter, Peter seems to be saying that it's the opposite in the case here.

[1 : 25] And as we look through it, I hope and I pray that God will help us to be able to understand it and be the kind of people he wants us to be. So the reality is that Christians, the difference between them is that some are running better than the others.

And I hope that as we go through this, starting with verse 1, Peter put this so clear by saying that, look, the issue is this. We are given equal faith by God through Jesus Christ.

There is no any single believer in this world who has any spiritual faith than the one you have given to you by God. The kind of faith that Peter called the apostles and the early disciples had is the same kind of faith that you and I are given in Christ by God himself.

So Peter said in verse 1, they said that we have all received same precious faith, not inferior. I used to really be on my wife's toes whenever she made a mistake at home.

The very first week she came here, I was really terrorizing her around. Whenever she goes about doing something, I would tell her, no, no, that's not the way we do it in Australia. Come on, take corrections. And if she kind of offended me, I would tell her, look, if you don't take time, I will send you back to Nigeria.

[2 : 49] Until one day, I don't know what took her eyes to our passport and she opened the visa pages, the visa given to me and the visa given to her and that of Amos.

And she read that place and the time I threatened her that I would send her back to Nigeria, she replied to me, said, look, I am tired of hearing that one. And then she said, the visa given to you says you are allowed to stay in Australia until 28th of February 2003.

And she said, it's the same thing written on our own visa and it's the same one, Amos' visa, Amos' visa. Therefore, you have no right to send me back. We are living here the same day and we are going back the same day. I was thinking that as a husband, I have some superiority position over her as far as the visa issue is concerned.

But she said, no. And Peter is saying exactly here that there is no any single believer who has a superiority faith more than the one that God has given you.

God has given us equal faith. The only thing is that how much you use the faith that God has given you is a problem. God has given us equal faith. Everybody. Peter, Paul, all of us.

[3 : 56] And Peter did not stop there. He mentioned three things that God has given us which is equal to every believer, whether in the days of Jesus Christ or now. The second thing that God has given us as equal in everything is that we are given everything we need to be godly.

And everything we need to be godly is found in Jesus Christ. Everything. If you want to be godly, Peter is saying that you can see that one in Jesus Christ. The same Jesus Christ that came and demonstrated the kingdom of God in everything he did and all that he said, we can see it also in him today.

So in those days, if Peter and Paul could be godly because they look and imitate Jesus Christ, we can also, at the same time, in our generation, be godly if we will look at Jesus Christ, walk with Jesus Christ, live with Jesus Christ, and demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ.

And Peter goes on. He did not stop there. He said the third thing that we are also given to be equal, I mean that is equal to all of us, is that we are given the promises of God.

And it has been said that there are 30,000 promises in the Bible. I believe it. That there are 1,000, 30,000 promises in the Bible. And Peter is saying here that the promises in the Bible are given equally to all believers.

[5 : 15] So if the Bible said that thou art my son and I will watch over you, or maybe the promise that God said, you are the apple of my eye and anyone that touches you touches me.

That is a promise. Or whenever you face persecution and trouble and difficulties, I am there with you. I will never forsake you or leave you. That is a promise. And that is a promise that Peter is saying that three good things that are given equal to Christians.

And we all have these three equal things. So if you see someone working better in a Christian race, then you should ask yourself that question. How come that I am not working like that person?

If you see someone running better in the Christian race, then you should ask yourself if you are not running as him, how come that I am not running better like this person in the Christian race? Because we are all given three equal things which will help us to be godly and to be more like children of God.

So Jesus Christ is our example. And we see in the second reading read to us that it was a tradition, a custom of Jesus Christ that every evening you will retire to the mountain to go and pray.

[6 : 21] We can learn from Jesus Christ how to pray. We can learn from Jesus Christ how to share love with people. He came and he shared love, the kingdom of God with people. He demonstrated it.

And Peter is saying here that we have these three things that we can use to be excellent, wonderful children of God. But he did not stop there. He goes on to say that, look, the reason why these three things are given to us, one, is that so that we will participate in the divine nature of God.

These three things are given to us so that we will be like God. We will talk like God. We will live like Jesus Christ. We will act. We will do things that by mere looking, people will look at us and see Jesus.

By mere looking, people will look at us and know that, yes, this is different. I remember when I went to South Australia, I took picture with Hamish. Hamish is the son of Lee Cameron, the general secretary of CMS South Australia.

I took picture. I was holding Hamish like this. And when the picture came, the difference was clear. Hamish was white and one black man holding him. You could see the difference between white and black.

[7 : 28] And what is Peter saying here is that people should be able to see as we walk in the street of Doncaster, as we react when people offend us, as we do certain things, people should be able to see that, yes, we are children of God.

Because we are meant to share in the divine nature of God and to be like Jesus Christ, to live like Jesus Christ and to be everything. And the second reason why we're given all these things is that so that we will escape the corruption that is in the world.

We have so much corruption in this world. And the only way to escape corruption of this world is to be more like Jesus, is to walk closely with Jesus. The only way to get rid of living in sin is to be conscious of the fact that you are a child of God.

You are called to be a special person. It is the same Peter who said, we are royal priesthood. We are chosen nation. We are not like any other people. We are different. So we must live a different life.

And then in verse 5 he said that and for this reason, for the reason, for the fact that we are given these three equal wonderful things in verse 5. He said that we should make every effort.

[8 : 34] Make every effort. And I see this issue of making every effort as a call to really get out of some certain behaviors. Get rid of some attitudes. Try to struggle and fight against some behaviors, some ideologies.

Make every effort. And he said, make every effort. Because the fact is that Christian growth is not automatic. You cannot just give to a Christian, I mean to a baby today and within 15 minutes the baby is as tall as maybe Paul.

The truth is that Christian growth is gradual. And Paul, and Peter is saying here that we should make every effort so that we will grow and grow and grow and grow. So it should be something you struggle with it.

If this attitude has been pulling you down, struggle with it and get rid of it so that you will grow in the Lord. Make every effort. And what did he go on to say? He said that we should then add to our faith goodness.

He said we should add to our faith goodness. Goodness can be achieved through only practice. You can only be good at anything when you practice it. We are, we've been blessed with those who play the instruments this morning.

[9 : 45] But because they practice it, you cannot be good on evangelism unless you practice it. Give it a trial. You cannot be good on anything at all until you give it a practice.

Give it a trial. I will never forget the first time I was given the car I'm using now and I was so conscious of the fact that the car was given as a loan by a family in this church that we should use it.

So a friend came to me and he said, look, Jacob, take me down to the city. He was almost late for a job. And I said, oh, no problem, I'll take you down to the city. And when we went down to the city on Elizabeth Street, unfortunately, he was to go to the right and I just have to make a hook turn.

Ah! I waited for green light and the moment the green light says go, I just went few and I was about to go. And almost, a tram came almost to crash us and he said, stop!

And I stopped. And he said to me, no, there's something called hook turn. I was really, literally shaking within me. I was just praying, God, take me safe to this place that I will drop this man and I will go my way.

[10 : 45] And God did. Believe me, the next day I refused to enter the car, I would say I will not use the car. But after two, three days, something said to me, get into the car. Until you get into the car and try it again, you will not become a perfect person.

I got into the car and I decided to go down to the city. Unfortunately for me, there was someone who was about to make a hook turn. I just, I kind of watched him and went closely, followed him and peacefully we met a hook turn.

That day, I decided to go around again and make five good hook turns. Five good ones. And by the time I finished the fifth one, I said to myself, oh, perfect hook turn now, I can do it now.

Because it was practice. I did it again, again, again, again. And I became a perfect, I'm not afraid of hook turn anyway now. Peter is saying here, look, brothers and sisters in the Lord, do you want to be good as a Christian?

Practice to be good. Try to be good to people outside. Try to be good to your neighbors. Try to be good. But of course, as we watch the goodness that Jesus demonstrated, he demonstrated his goodness with something attached to it.

[11 : 53] Because Jesus was good to people, he was caring with, I mean, caring after people, feeding the hungry, taking care of the sick, even visiting the, those who were bereaved and he was comforting and bringing back to life, those who were there.

It was wonderful. But Jesus, he did all these good things and still tell the people the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As you practice goodness, add to it the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter did not stop there. He said that, unto your goodness, add knowledge. Have the knowledge of Jesus Christ you're talking about. Have the knowledge of the word of God. Academical knowledge is good.

Academic knowledge is good. Theological knowledge is good. It's good for you to have some theological knowledge of the Bible, to be able to say good things about it, interpret it better. But Peter is saying here that we should desire much of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Some of us, we have read 50 novels. We have read maybe more than 50 novels, different novels. It could be fictions, different type of stories. But we find it difficult to read the Bible.

[12 : 56] And Peter is saying here, look, read the Bible and have the knowledge of God. Add to your goodness, knowledge, which is very important. And he said, add to your knowledge, self-control. Self-control when you are pushed to the wall.

Self-control when people offend you. Self-control when you are in distress. Self-control when things are upside down against you. You should add self-control to it.

You need to learn and ask God, control me. Self-control in everything. And believe me, brothers and sisters, I believe it's a big challenge for us, those of us who are in wonderful world like Australia.

It's a challenge that we should add self-control even to the way we eat. Good food are here in Australia. You can eat and eat and eat. Add self-control to the way you eat.

Add self-control to the way you even watch television. Add self-control to the way you even spend money. Add self-control to the way you even react to people on the street.

[13 : 57] When you are driving and someone make a bad turn in front of you, add self-control. I told them this morning that there was this father that always take his son to school and he will not leave home until about five minutes to the time he's supposed to drop his son at school and he takes them about 10 to 15 minutes drive to be there and on his way he will be rushing every day and anyone that makes a foolish mistake in his front, you idiot bastard and every time, idiot bastard, you idiot bastard, give me away, I'm late, idiot bastard.

And one day the man was not around, the mother decided to take the boy to school and the mother was peacefully singing and driving and they went to school all as well and the boy just jumped out of the car and he said, oh, thank God, there were no idiots and bastards on the road today.

That was what he learned from his father, a father who had no self-control over his mouth. When he's offended a little bit, he flared up. Peter said, add self-control.

Self-control, even when we are moved by emotion. And onto our self-control, we should add perseverance, endurance, patience, in another word.

We should be patient, we should add self, I mean, add patience to self-control. Especially when you are in, when you are being persecuted or when you are passing through bereavement, be patient.

[15 : 16] Or when you are passing through sickness, be patient. Brothers and sisters, what Peter is saying here is the good thing is that God is aware of everything you are passing through. Don't look at the negative side of everything that come your way.

Begin to think on looking at the positive side. You are passing through sickness. Believe that, yes, God is aware of this thing. You are looking at it from the positive side. Be patient.

Wait patiently there. And the Lord God at his own appointed time, he will bring a miracle in your life. We'll do that. And Peter goes on to say that and on to our perseverance and patience, we should also add godliness.

Godliness is simply becoming like God in our attitude, in our conduct, in our behavior. Jesus Christ was, I mean, a typical example when he was on earth.

People saw in him God. Even his enemies at the end, they said, no, this man is indeed a son of God. They saw the godliness that was in him.

[16 : 16] They saw him, he resembled nobody but God. And goldenness, Peter is talking about here, we should look like God in everything. But people just say, oh, this one looks like God. I always say, God is a kind of person who always want to be proud over his children.

He said to Satan, have you observed my servant Job? He wants to say to the devil all over, have you seen my servant Peter? Have you seen my servant Jacob? Have you seen my servant A and B? God wants to be proud.

And especially for those of us who come from Nigeria and from my own culture, when a woman gives birth to a baby boy, don't dare make a mistake in the presence of the father and look at the boy and say, oh, he looks like his mother.

Which mother? He must look like his father. So he must look like me. Whether you believe it or not, he looks like me. That is what we believe in our culture. We have the pride that our son, a male child, should look like the father.

A female child, of course, she should look like her mother. That's okay. But a male child must look like the father. And some of you have heard you say, oh, Jacob, he must look like his mother. That is not true.

[17 : 22] He must look like me. Forget it. He looks like me. And that is what God is saying here. Please, my children look like me. Let people see my likeness in you.

Let people see my image in you. Let people see my attitude and conduct in you look like God. Peter said, add godliness, your perseverance. And he goes on to say, add brotherly kindness, which is mutual affection.

Add brotherly kindness. Brotherly kindness that cuts across culture. Brotherly kindness that cuts across color. Brotherly kindness that cuts across racial background and languages.

No more classes in a church like this. We are all brothers. Brotherly kindness that whatever happened to A, it has happened to B. That is what Peter is saying here. That we bear the burdens of one another as brothers in the Lord and sisters in the Lord.

And he concluded that section by saying, add to your brotherly kindness. Love. And this love is more than the kind of love that parents demonstrate to their children or children to parents or husband to wife and vice versa.

[18 : 29] This is the kind of love that Peter is saying here that is found in 1 Corinthians 13. The kind of love that bears. The kind of love that forgives. The kind of love that even when those who offended you come back to you, you still say, I have forgiven you.

You show love to those who are cheating you. Those who are blackmailing you. You show love to those who are offending you. You show love to enemies. That is the kind of love Peter took here. And we saw that one in Jesus when he was here on earth.

He loved even his enemies. Even at the time that they arrested, they came to arrest him and Peter drew the sword and caught one over here of one of the servants of one of those who came. Jesus said no and he still took care of that servant.

Restore his heir. Loving your enemy. That is what Peter says here. And that love is certain. And Peter finished these seven things by telling us that, look, these things are very important.

And I must say here that this is my second year. I'm about finishing my two years here in Australia. And honestly, it's not blowing trumpet, but I thank God that we end up in Holy Trinity here.

[19 : 31] It has been a wonderful time. I could look around and see people of faith, of goodness, of knowledge, of self-control, of perseverance, of godliness, of brotherly love, and of love.

I could see it here. And I could go on and say, well done. That's good on you. But Peter is not stopping there. Peter is not saying, well done. Peter is saying that, look, the most important thing is that don't be comfortable where you are today.

You are on this level of goodness. Don't be comfortable. Move a level a step higher. You are on this level of self-control. Don't be comfortable there. Move a step higher. You are on this level of showing love, brotherly love to others.

Move a step higher. Increase. That is what he's saying. Don't stand still. The reason why Paul, I mean, Peter said it clearly, is that, he said that, if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, every day you should be increasing on this, two things will happen.

You will be very effective for the Lord, and you will be very productive. If you want to be effective and productive for the Lord, increase in this thing. Increase in these qualities. My bishop, when he heard about my first semester, I was really finding it difficult with my first semester work, and he now said to me, through my wife, he told my wife that, look, send an email to your husband and tell him, if the pass mark is 50, tell him to just score 50 in all the subjects and come back.

[20 : 51] And I received the email and I was comforted. But I did not stop there. I did not just come and say, I will score only 50 and go. I would like to aim higher.

And that always reminds me of my grandmother. When I went to Form 1 and I was so happy, I got my first result in Form 1. And I came second in the class. And I came and presented the report card to my grandmother.

She's late, now I'm going to be with the Lord. She looked at the report card and with a smile, just a smile. And I looked at her face, I could not see a joy in it. And then I said, what is it, grandma? And she said to me, what were you doing that someone will come first and you will come second?

I said, wow. I was thinking I've done good. To come second is wonderful. Second in a class of 45. And my grandma said, no, what were you doing that someone came first and you came second?

What Peter and my grandma are teaching today is that don't be comfortable where you are. Increase. I know there are some businessmen here. When your turnover at the end of the year is 1.5 million as profit.

[21 : 53] Next year, looking forward to getting 1.5 million and above. You don't want to get 500,000 next year. You want to increase. And that's what Peter is saying here.

Because if we possess all these qualities, we will be effective, productive. We will increase. Verse 9. He now gave the warning. He said that, but if we fail to possess this quality, we will be nearsighted.

We will be blind. We will lose vision of heaven. We will be wandering around like those who don't know their way in and out, which is not good. Christians are not wanderers.

Christians are people who have focus. They know where they're going. They cannot make wrong tones at any time. They know where to make a tone and when to make a tone. And that is one of the things that my wife doesn't want at all.

When we are going to a new place that I've never been there and I open the map and I say, this is the map, hold it. And she will sit down in front with me and I will say to her, what is the next tone? I say, I don't know the next tone. And I will make, on my own, I will just decide, I make the wrong tone.

[22 : 52] And we'll discover that we've entered the wrong tone, go back and come again. Maybe some of us, we've made wrong tones in our Christian race. When we're supposed to go this way, we've made the wrong tones and it's costing us much.

But Peter is saying, those who are following these qualities, they will be productive, effective, they will not be nearsighted or blind. The second thing that he mentioned also is that if we fail to possess this, we will forget that we've been cleansed from sin.

Some of us, we live as if we're still living in sin. We're no longer living in sin. We are new creatures. We are transformed. We are changed. We are new people. And people should be able to see that we are new, we are transformed, we are changed.

Especially when we relate to people in the society. Now that our society is becoming more secular, the Christian society that used to be, where the church has saying in everything, is now becoming more secular.

The church should be able to reflect and display the image of Christ. Which is very important. And in verse 10, as he brings his talk to a conclusion, he said in verse 10, he said that, look, make sure that you make your calling and election a sure thing.

[24 : 00] One thing that Peter is saying is that, of course, no one can call himself into heaven. It is God who called us unto himself and gave us the faith in Christ Jesus and we became believers.

But what Peter is saying here is that, in every day, make sure that you live and you talk and people should see that you are indeed living and talking as a child of God, looking forward to going back home.

Because going home is certain. Surely, going home is certain. Why is it that Peter insisted on these things? So that by the time that we reach home, we will receive a richly welcome, verse 11.

Richly welcome for those who follow these things and those who were productive here on earth, productive and effective for the Lord here on earth, they will receive a richly welcome. In verse 11.

And it reminds me the event I encounter in the airport when I arrived in Melbourne. When I arrived in Melbourne, I was walking out. I saw a group of about 20 people, both men and female, young kids and other people.

[25 : 00] But all of them, they were holding flowers. And I could see them peeping and peeping and peeping, waiting for the passengers to come out. And when I came out, I thought maybe they were all there with flowers to welcome Jacob.

No, it wasn't me. I came out and the only person who was there to welcome me is the principal of St. Andrew's Hall, Plainfield. But when I was going out, I decided to turn around and see what is happening.

And then I saw two elderly couple. They were coming out. And the moment they came and the people saw them, they said, hey, mama, papa and the grandma, papa, and they started throwing flowers on them.

I felt inferior that day. I said, how can I come to Australia? And only one person came to welcome me. I literally felt inferior. Twenty people came and welcomed these elderly couple of flowers.

Peter is saying here that there will be a richly welcome in heaven for those who are productive here on earth for Jesus Christ and effective. And certainly, I have received so many invitations already from members of this church, those who are ready to take us to the airport, those who are ready to even take our box to the airport and be there.

[26 : 03] And I believe maybe at the end, about 20, 30 people will be in the airport here to see us off. But back at home in Nigeria, I believe there will be more than 20 or about 20 will be in the airport there to welcome us because we've been sending emails and people have been saying we are going to be there in the airport.

Anytime you come, we will be there. We are looking forward to going back home. The truth is that no matter how good Australia is, Jacob, Rother, and Amos, this is not our place to be.

We must go back to Nigeria. And Peter is saying, look, Christians, no matter how good this world is, no matter how good Australia is, we have a heavenly home which is heaven.

We must look forward to going to heaven. And when we go to heaven, it should be richly welcome. Brothers and sisters, I look forward to seeing you there when you will be richly welcome into the kingdom of heaven.

Amen.