

# Through Christ You Have Confidence In God

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[ 0 : 00 ] God, open your word to our hearts and our hearts to your word. Amen. That passage on which I propose to preach this morning is taken from the epistle for the day, is the first epistle general of Peter. It's the first chapter and beginning at the 17th verse, and it's on page 216 in your pew Bible.

So, I would like to mention one or two things to you, just to bring you in on what a great joy and delight it is to be part of this parish, and I do wish that you could see it from my perspective sometimes.

The Monday night was a supper for the staff of the MCC, which had a harried but miraculous career this past year.

Somebody turned up this week who's going to help set up a room for the toddlers. The possibility of a group from St. John's going to Jerusalem the next year was set forth by Dean Peterson.

There is, and I want you all to pay very close attention to this, you've heard of a garage sale and a lawn sale. Well, I'm trying to get people interested and have some prospects that St. John's is going to run a lane sale.

[ 1 : 54 ] Well, that's the back lane over there. You'll hear more about it. I was invited by a member of the congregation to go and talk to a grade 12 class at Templeton High School, which was a great delight to me, I must say. I would like to tell you more about that.

There was a newcomers meeting on Thursday night in which the agony of the problem was, how do we get you people to relate to you people so that the new people among you people will be made welcome?

And we have thought of every conceivable technique to bulldoze you into it, to trick you into it, to in some way persuade you to take on that ministry.

And we have all sorts of tricks, some of which we'll try to play on you as time goes by. But there is no doubt that from the text this morning, it must arise fundamentally from a sincere love of the brethren.

And sisters, and all of you for one another, may God grant that we as a congregation are given that gift and overcome the shyness which inhibits us from expressing it.

[ 3 : 13 ] Jim Packer is off on one of his five-week teaching tours, and it's a great delight to have him come home here every so often. The young people had a boat cruise on the Malibu Friday night, to which 300 teenagers turned up, which seemed a very significant event, and I'm very impressed with the young people's group.

At St. John's, when they carried off such a thing, and the Koinonia group hailed a country dance which looked simply delightful. I, of course, just looked in, because I'm not sure whether I should dance or not.

I maintained my sobriety. The learners' exchange this morning was very exciting. But at the heart of it all, I think there are small groups.

And the small groups meet together and wrestle with a portion of Scripture. And that's where the life of the parish must come from. And it is such a passage of Scripture that we're going to wrestle with this morning for these few minutes.

And it's this passage, 1 Peter 1, 17, down to the end of verse 23. And if I was to give you a text, it's verse 21, which is, Through him, that is, through Christ, you have confidence in God.

[ 4 : 54 ] Through him, you have confidence in God. I agonized about this passage because it is so full and so overflowing with the great truths of Scripture.

And yet, it was written a long time ago. And you are very sophisticated people of a very modern and secular world. And I don't know how you could possibly understand, or how I could possibly

understand, or how any of us could possibly get into this passage, so that it would become a contemporary word of God for us right here and right now.

But unmistakably, it is my prayer that it should. As we look at this, this will become for us more an immediate concern than this morning's headline in the province, which I don't know, by the way. But that we will see that this speaks more deeply to where we are right now than anything else which we might encounter this week.

So, what I think it's about is revealed in verse 17. And that is, if you invoke as Father him who judges, each one impartially according to his deeds.

[ 6 : 22 ] We're told that 85% of Canadians believe in the existence of God. I think a large percentage of them probably recognize that one of God's functions is to be our judge.

And if you have been to court recently, and I know some of you have, the possibility of getting justice done is not absolutely guaranteed.

And so, there are some judges and some court procedures in which you might despair of justice ever coming from them.

So, most people, I think, have the sense that ultimately the only person they want to judge them is God. I should tell you about my career as a minister.

I was a student minister assigned to a parish in Hamilton, Ontario. And I was given a farmer to go and see because he was ill.

[ 7 : 29 ] And I went to his farm and into his farmhouse. And they ushered me into his room. And this was my very first pastoral visit. And I spoke to the man and prayed with him, came out, and had a cup of tea with his family, during which the man died.

Now, that was a very sad beginning for my pastoral career, let me tell you. But the thing that I learned from that was that nobody spoke ill of this man for at least two days, out of respect.

But by the time three or four days had gone by, I began to hear the truth of this old renegade and what his neighbors thought of him.

And at that moment, I decided, if I am to be judged, I would rather be judged by God than by any of the people I know. So that the judgment of God is not a fearsome thing to my mind.

But a wonderful thing, which we need to face in all the terrible solemnity of it. The God who knows all the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

[ 8 : 48 ] But the unique thing about this is, and it says it right here, and this, I think, is the key to understanding this passage. He whom we invoke as Father is our judge.

In other words, our judge is our Father. And therefore, on that basis, we are encouraged to fear him because he is both judge and Father, to recognize that we are, for the moment, banished from or exiled from his presence, but ultimately will come into his presence, so that in the meantime, we are as prodigal sons in a far country, exiled from the presence of that God and Father who is our judge. And the chief function of being in that far country is that we will come to ourselves and recognize, as the prodigal son recognized, and it tells it that, my father, if I was to be a servant in his household, I would be far better off than feeding these pigs.

And that's how we are to regard our exile in comparison with the presence of the God and Father who has called us to be with him.

And so, in exile as we are, we must live with a reverent fear of the God who judges all persons impartially according to their works.

[ 10 : 42 ] He's not going to mess around or fudge the evidence. He's going to deal with you as you are.

And that's why it's very important for you to deal with yourself as you are and to recognize and acknowledge that before him.

But then it goes on to say about him that not only is he our judge and our father, but he is the one who has provided a ransom for us.

In other words, he has, in scriptural language, redeemed us. And in order to effect that redemption, he has taken the person of Jesus, the Christ, his only begotten son.

And he has ransomed us, not as a human father would ransom us by going to the judge and saying, here's a check. Do you think you can do anything about this?

[ 11 : 49 ] He has ransomed or redeemed us, not by that dead metal, which is silver and gold, but by the blood, the life-giving blood of Jesus Christ.

And the picture of that ransom or redemption is the picture of an innocent lamb being slain and its blood poured out on the ground.

So God has ransomed us through Jesus Christ. He who is our judge is our father. As father, he has ransomed us, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

He has bought us back. Now, if you look at it, you'll see what it is he's ransomed us from. It says that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers.

So that he contrasts the father from your fathers. And this is interpreted your ancestors. What your ancestors do for you is to bring you into the world and give you the ultimate inheritance of death and futility.

[13:17] And you are ransomed from that by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Now, I talked to Fran this morning about alcoholics.

And one of the things that they're discovering now is that the children of alcoholics generally have enormous problems which they inherit from their fathers.

and that those problems need to be dealt with. Well, that's an extreme example of what in fact is the reality for all of us.

That we have inherited, as it says here, we have inherited from our fathers futility.

That it's not going to lead anywhere. If we do all our fathers did, well then, our children will do all we did and nothing else will happen.

[14:29] But God, who is our father, has ransomed us from that process so that we don't have to be subject to that process. And that process is a very difficult process.

I see time and time again parents whose chief ambition in life is that their children should inherit the futility of the way in which they themselves were brought up.

And they pass that on with a zeal which is heart-chilling to see how anxious they are that their children inherit the futility which they themselves have experienced in their lives.

And what God has done through Jesus Christ is to ransom us from that. And allow us the choice not to follow in that way.

Well, then it goes on to say that this was accomplished through Christ. And Christ is the one who was destined before the foundation of the world, manifested in the midst of history for our benefit.

[15:45] In other words, what happens, and if you read the text, I think it's terribly important. He was destined from the foundation of the world, was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake.

For your sake. In other words, these 85% of the people of Canada who believe in the existence of God don't really know, I suggest, who that God is.

And the only way they can know him is to know how he manifests himself through the person of Jesus Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the person of Jesus Christ in your heart and mind.

And the work of Jesus Christ is to reveal to you the nature and character of the Father. And so that you come to know who God is. Through Christ, that's why we come to verse 21, through Christ, you have confidence in God.

And that means a consistent, persistent faith and trust in God's purpose. So that no matter what you make of the dilemmas of life which confront you from day to day, your trust in God continues.

[17:06] It doesn't falter. And it doesn't falter because the God in whom you trust, you have come to know through Jesus Christ. And it's through Jesus Christ that you've learned to put your confidence in that God.

We should probably not call ourselves Christians because Christians began in the New Testament as a term of derision for the people who followed Christ.

And you may think that's a good and honorable name and so it is. But what it is is that Christ pointed us to the Father and we are called to be the children of God who by the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, by the testimony of Jesus Christ to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we from our hearts turn to God and say, Father, so that what we are essentially is the children of God who is our Father and our Judge and our Redeemer or Ransomer.

that's how we stand in relationship to Him. Well, I have just this to tell you more and there's much here but let me show you this.

Verse 22 and 23. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart.

[ 18 : 37 ] somehow you are purifying yourself. The picture I would like you to have of this is as of a bride who is preparing herself for her husband.

She is purifying herself. She wants to come into Him holy and right and loving and responsive and not all messed up.

She is putting her life in order so that she can come as a bride to her husband. And so we put our lives in order.

We purify our souls by obedience to the truth. That is when God shows us the truth of who He is as our Judge and our Father as a holy God who has called us when we recognize that truth we become obedient as children to that truth.

We become obedient to the truth of who God is. Mostly as people we get angry that God has not become obedient to the truth of who we are. But that is not the way it works.

[ 19 : 54 ] We become obedient to the truth of who He has revealed Himself to be. And then it says for a sincere love of the brethren. Love one another earnestly from the heart.

That there is to be a real love between us as Christians and that love is to be from the heart and it's to be that unique agape love of the New Testament.

And that is I love that person not because they attract me but because of the love that God has given me in my heart for them and I find opportunity to express that love.

That's why we are to love one another from the heart. And in a sense in that way we prepare ourselves to receive the insemination of God the Father.

so you read it this way you in verse 23 you have been born anew. I pause there for one moment to tell you something which struck me again about this week.

[ 21 : 13 ] That was somebody who was looking for the first time in many years again at the Christian faith. And having lived here and raised a family here and been part of the society of this city for almost a generation this person found in their heart a tremendous hostility to the concept of Christian faith of being a child of God.

Very hard. Real hostility deeply rooted to that. That's what it is you see that we have been born anew and I hope you won't be offended if I tell you that our hearts seem to be provided with a very effective contraceptive against receiving the insemination of God the Father whose purpose is to bring us to life.

Not as it says the perishable life which we inherit from our human fathers which is death and which ends in death that's what we inherit from our human fathers death but from our heavenly father to be inseminated with life which is imperishable that's why it calls it the imperishable seed and that this imperishable seed is the living and abiding word of God and the last verse in that chapter that word is the good news which he preached that good that word is the good news which was preached to you so that what happens is we prepare ourselves as a bride in a way love of the brethren obedience to the truth loving one another earnestly from the heart purifying our souls to receive that inseminating imperishable seed of God the result of which is eternal life and that seed is the good news it's the word of

God which is preached to you about Jesus Christ so that what we do when we meet together under the word of God is to seek that that life giving word might penetrate into our hearts and lives and bring life to us when we receive and believe that word we are born anew some people have said to me well I'm a Christian but I'm not one of those born again Christians well tough luck right that's the only kind of Christian there is the one who has received the good news into a heart prepared so that you are so that you are you are born anew by receiving this life giving word from God that's where the life comes from it comes from

God it doesn't come from you or me it comes from God and you must be willing to receive the holy communion is in a sense a conception taking place as you receive this word of God in the symbols of bread and wine and what's happened is you're acknowledging God and that through Jesus Christ and his death on the cross you have an ongoing confidence in God and you have reason to because it's backed up not by your promise but by God's faithfulness to you Amen let us express our confidence in God by offering prayers to him let us pray as a family let us remember some of the concerns of this parish this week

[ 26 : 50 ] Harry has mentioned that Jim Packer is off on a teaching mission for five weeks and in a couple of weeks we have a family camp let us remember in prayer Brian and Judy Telfer's leadership we pray to the father for Donald Elliot Ferguson who is the father of Heather Risk who died on Thursday of this week the synod of this diocese is about to be assembled and we pray for

that meeting that God may be among our representatives to show us his ways as we worship the father let us pray for the focus service coming up and for a new beginning of the evening services at St. John's we also have those in and from our midst who are preparing for ordained ministry we remember Brian and Janice Campbell and Roger and Sue Chilton Marcus Bachmule Anne Kelsey Kelvin and Elaine Dick so we have many concerns for this parish so O God rouse thy church lest we sleep and miss men's need of you and your yearning love for men O God cleanse your church and forgive our lack of zeal for your kingdom O God set your church ablaze with the fire of your spirit that we may spend and be spent for your gospel your will and your glory through all our days and following on that prayer let us pray for mission societies groups going beyond the parish into all the world whether it's in this city or around the other side of this planet almighty savior who being exalted by the right hand of God did receive gifts for men send down thy grace and thy holy spirit upon your people and grant that they may give cheerfully of their substance for the evangelizing of the world bless all who are banded together for the spread of the gospel let us remember particularly this morning the SIM the Sudan Interior Mission now called the Society of International Missionaries Make them faithful and true witnesses in proclaiming your glorious name and prosper the work of their hands upon them that the light of your truth may shine into the darkest corners of the earth hear us oh merciful savior who with the father and the holy spirit lives and reigns ever one god world without end amen we have concerns about the financial and physical needs as well as the spiritual needs of this parish so Jesus Lord and Master teach us and all your people so to follow the pattern of your manhood that we may learn to interpret life in terms of giving not of getting to be faithful stewards of our time and talents and all that you have entrusted to us and to buy up every opportunity of serving the needs of others and advancing your kingdom in the world for the glory of your name amen thanks use water and you and us hold on move on and take us