

Opener.

- Dismiss Kids... Welcome guests...
- Multiply March
- Celebrate: Teams Interest — 19 People have expressed interest in serving with a Team.

**“Repping Jesus in Boston”
1 Peter 2:11-12**

Introduction: Pg. _____

Today I want to talk about how we live in the world where God has placed us, specifically in a world that so often does not share our values or perspective.

I want to us to think about what it looks like to “Rep” Jesus in Boston. For some who may not be familiar with that lingo, that’s REPRESENT Jesus in Boston. (A thoroughly biblical idea... 2 Cor 5:20)

Historically, there have been 3 responses of how Christians should live any given culture:

- 1) Christians *against* the culture (separate, isolate)
- 2) Christians *of* the culture (blend in, become like)
- 3) Christians *in* the culture (live among, recognizing that some things should be received, some rejected, and some redeemed!)

Peter, like Jesus, is a proponent of the latter approach. He knew what it was like to live in a culture apathetic, suspicious, and sometimes hostile to Christ. That is what he is going to address in this next major section of his letter that runs from 2:11 to 4:11, but the theme for the whole section (and many say, the entire book) is covered in two verses we’ll look at right now

1 Peter 2:11-12 (displayed)

The Point: Representing Jesus in Boston depends on living a desirably different life.

How? How can we live desirably different lives? Let me give you five ways from these two verses...

1. Receive encouragement from trusted friends.

Peter addresses them in verse 11 as “beloved.” They are loved by God and loved by Peter. He cares for them. Some translations say: “Dear friends.” We see his affection for them. The church should be a place where friendships form and friendships flourish.

In his book, *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis talked about how friendships go deeper the more two people share the same values and goals in life... as they are walk down the same road, moving in the same direction. How true should this be for those of us have Christ in common?

Friends, love each other enough to encourage and exhort one another toward God’s best for their lives.

Peter says, “I urge you.”

- The word urge means to ask with earnestness, to appeal, even beg. There’s a seriousness about what he’s about to say. This message is not a take it or leave it kind of message.
- Please hear me:
 - True friends are willing to put their arm around you and say, “You’ve got this. God is with you. Bring your best in this situation.”
 - You need friends are willing to sit down, look you in the eye and say: “Tell me what you’re thinking. I’m not sure I see the wisdom of this decision.”
 - But not only that, God is calling you to be that kind of friend.

Hebrews 3:13 says, “But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

T: To represent Jesus in Boston, we need to receive encouragement from trusted friends in Christ. #2...

2. Remember your identity as citizens of a better city.

Peter refers to these friends as “sojourners and exiles.”

- “Sojourners” are people who are just passing through. They are not home.
 - That’s why some versions of the Bible translate the word as “foreigners” or “strangers.”
 - If you have ever visited a foreign country, you know how disorienting it can be to step off of the plane and not understand a word you see or hear. Your eyes see strange sights. Your nose smells strange aromas. Your ears hear strange sounds.
 - If you immigrated to this country, you know what this is like better than anyone.
- “Exiles” refer to someone who has been displaced from their home land.
- The two words are coupled together to communicate one reality: this is not our ultimate home.

Peter encourages us to shift our perspective by reminding us of our spiritual identity.

- You may not be treated well. You may not have all of the privileges as others do, but this world is not your home. You’re just passing through.
- You may not enjoy the same influence as others do, but you enjoy citizenship to a better city!
 - As great as Boston is, if you are in Christ, your most important address is not Medford, Somerville, Wakefield, Woburn or “Revere.” It’s God’s city, where God dwells.
 - Philippians 3:20 says: **“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:20)**

There is something better ahead. Keep looking up. We are in the world but not of the world. This world is often seems so strange to us, and we often seem so strange to the world.

T: Which leads us to the third principle for representing Jesus in Boston. Because we live among people who do not know God or share the same values, we will be tempted to forsake the values of God’s city for the world around us. That’s why we must...

3. Fight for your soul through honorable living.

This is the heart of Peter’s encouragement. As we live as sojourners and exiles, we must FIGHT because “the passions of [our] flesh, wage war against our souls.”

Think about this... as you walk the streets of Boston, hang with friends, play video games, shop at Assembly, attend lectures, work out at the gym, commute to work, go to the movies, or surf the internet, you are going to have thoughts and desires rise up from within your soul that do not reflect your new life in Jesus, but your old life apart from Jesus.

That’s what Peter refers to when he says “the passions of the flesh,” desires in our hearts contrary to God’s will for our lives. Soul refers to the immaterial dimension of our being that relates to God. Theologians refer to this as the presence indwelling sin.

Look how strong his language is... he says these desires “wage war against our souls.” Whoa! Often we don’t think about our endeavor to live like Jesus in these terms.

- In fact, this is part of the way our culture is saying - don’t be so strange... don’t take sin so seriously. After all, it’s not really a big deal. Everyone slips up. No one is perfect. God is love. God will forgive. Be more fun. Live a little. Don’t be so uptight. Have one more drink. Aww man... your wife will never know...
- But God says, this is so serious, it’s like a war within you! The metaphor implies that it is not easy. Ask a soldier if war is easy.
- Romans 8:13 says, **“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Romans 8:13)**
- You think that sounds serious, what about Jesus in Matthew 5? “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away... If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.”

Jesus said this must be our attitude. That’s why Peter gives them the two fold encouragement is to 1) abstain; 2) live honorable.

We fight back by abstaining.

- When I was a kid... “Just say NO” rallies... We all got these green t-shirts and went to the High School football stadium with all the other kids from the 10 elementary schools scattered around the county. The police officers and teachers got us to chant: “Just say NO! Just say NO!”
- We have to learn to say NO. We have to learn to think properly. Sure this looks enticing. It will bring a temporal pleasure but lasting pain. Why? Because it does not build up my soul. It’s not a gift from God. God has a better gift.
- This is one of the beauties of fasting during Lent. One of the reasons God asks us to fast is to build discipline and mastery over the cravings of our bodies. If you can say no to food when you really want it, you can do the same to your sinful desires!

We also fight back by doing the right thing.

- Peter calls it “keeping our conduct honorable” in verse 12.
- God calls us to live an exceptional life, to be distinct but not obnoxious, to shine as we reflect Christ but not isolated where we lose touch with the people around us. Strange but not strange for the sake of being strange.
- Think about some of the priorities we hold that strike the world as strange.
 - Worship on the weekend. The weekend is a time to relax, to do you. Don't give that time to God. There's so many other options.
 - Or what about charitable giving.
 - The average Christian gives 2.5%. During the Great Depression it was 3.3%. What about you? We don't see 10% as a rule to give to God's work through the church, but we do see that pattern of generosity in the Bible, and in Christ, our heart should be to give more than that.
 - I'm thankful I had mentors that taught me: if you don't give at least 10% when you're making next to nothing in a part-time job, it will be much harder when you're working full-time at the peak of your earnings. By God's grace, Marsha and I have maintained and most year's, increased our giving to Redemption Hill, even though the babies are getting any fewer or any cheaper! :)
 - I don't share that for a pat on the back but as an example and testimony: God has some very sneaky ways of blessing you when you hold your treasure with open hands.
 - Let me encourage you: as we shift our online giving platform to Subplash, it's an opportunity to evaluate how countercultural your commitment to Christ is in the area of generosity. If you're giving nothing, start somewhere. If you're giving 3%, find a way to get to 5%. 5%, find a way to get to 8%. It's about growth. There's no judgment here, but there is loving exhortation.
 - What about sexual morality? The world says, enjoy sex whenever and wherever you want. God says, enjoy sex with your spouse. So so strange. So so supernaturally blessed.
 - We could go on about crude jokes and language, volunteering precious time to help those in need, and host of other issues that display how strange but how distinctly good life in Christ can be!

T: Fight for your soul through honorable living, but just know that as you do, not everyone will love. Look at verse 12 again... (did you see it? Speak against you as evildoers.) That's why my 4th encouragement for you as you rep Jesus in Boston is this...

4. Don't hate the haters.

Isn't this ironic: when these Christians were living good lives in the sight of God, the people around them said they were evil.

Why? This is the nature of the human heart. If you say to me... steak is bad, especially one that is cooked Medium to perfection with pink running through the middle, I'm going to light the grill!

If you tell me by your life that God wants you to devote time to him, be sexually pure and financially generous, I'm going to call you crazy, and maybe even evil for not bowing down to the same gods that I do, whether that is the Emperor of Rome or the gods of sex and materialism.

So we will have one of two fundamental options when we are accused, criticized, slandered or mistreated for how we practice our faith: we can put our fists up in anger (and get into a war of words on Facebook - not very smart, by the way.... :)) OR we can put our arms out in love.

T: Peter's plan is this... even in the midst of being opposed, you keep living the life God has called you to live (as we'll see in the coming weeks: as a citizen, as an employee, in your relationship, including marriage), because you will have the opportunity to...

5. Watch God draw more people to his glory.

This is the ultimate goal...

Our lives are to be a window that people can look through to “see” God at work in us and through us.

When people see our lives of “good deeds” of any and every good we do love God and love our neighbors, including them!, our prayer is that it will cause a shift, not primarily in how they see us, but how they see God!

Verse 12 one more time...

Peter is taking about living in such a way that people take notice.

- There is something undeniable about you.
- There is something unexplainable.

- There is something, not just undeniable, but really desirable!

Moving on the Engels scale (describing how someone moves from No awareness of God to surrendering their life to Christ).

1. No awareness of God.
2. Some awareness of God.
3. Contact with Christians.
4. Interest in Jesus
5. Investigation of Jesus
6. Grasping the truth about Jesus.
7. Understanding the implications of the truth about Jesus
8. Accepting Christian truth.
9. Accepting the implications of the truth
10. Decision to surrender to Jesus.

How will this happen? Proximity and Consistency.

- Proximity: getting close enough, doing life, in normal, not very strange ways. And then living...
- Consistency: day after day displaying Jesus, however imperfectly, that he is better, his plans are good, he has life for the whole world!

Proximity gives opportunity for consistency.

Where do you get proximity and consistency? Work. Home (your neighborhood). At Play (Ball fields: Deb LaCamera and Leigh Chasteen)

In verse 12, Peter echoes Jesus words in Matthew 5:16, when he said, **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)**

Conclusion:

So here are a few questions I want you to answer:

- What is your posture to the world around you? Withdrawl and isolation? Or Engagement and witness?
- Do you take sin and temptation seriously?
- Are you waging war against the desires waging war against you?
- Are you shining a compelling light that will make others want to know God like you know him?

Eugene Peterson paraphrased these words like this:

“Friends, this world is not your home, so don’t make yourselves cozy in it. Don’t indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life among the natives so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they’ll be won over to God’s side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives.” (The Message)