

True Church (4)- A People Who Are Holy

(1 Peter 1:13-25)

I. Introduction

- A. One of Barton W. Stone's converts was a man by the name of Joseph Thomas.
1. Joseph Thomas is known to church historians as the “*White Pilgrim*.”
 - a. He saw church division coming from pride, self-interest and worldliness
 - b. He sold his farm and possessions, and travelled preaching in a white robe
 2. So how would you describe the White Pilgrim? Quaint? Naïve? Insane?
 - a. Maybe, but Thomas struggled with something we largely try to ignore.
 - b. According to Bible, the world and church are in tension ([1 Jn 2:15-17](#))
 3. We tend to respond to this tension in one of two opposite extremes—
 - a. **Isolation:** Some seek to preserve faith by basically retreating from world
 - 1) They don't go to extreme of White Pilgrim; don't build monasteries
 - 2) They retreat from relationships outside of faith. “*Christian Ghetto*”
 - 3) They become so isolated from the world that they have no message
 - b. **Immersion:** Some Christians respond by totally becoming like the world
 - 1) They still do Christian things—go to church, worship, give money
 - 2) But their focus and pursuit is basically the same as non-Christians
 - 3) They are so much like the world, they have no message for world
 4. Jesus would have disciples neither isolated nor immersed ([John 17:15-16](#)).
- B. Maybe it is true that our culture once had more respect for Christian morality
1. The great majority of people were decent, hard working, honest and moral
 - a. A person's word was their bond; people shared with less-fortunate
 - b. The culture was much like the welcome sign of one West Texas town—
The home of three thousand good and friendly people--and a few old soreheads
 2. If that was once true, it is not true in our post-Christian, postmodern world
 - a. 40% of HS seniors believe lying and cheating is necessary to succeed
 - b. Just teens? About 40% of adults lying is sometimes necessary at work
(Most people believe that it is OK to lie about being sick to get time off from work)
 - c. Things like promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality are accepted as moral
 3. Christian morality will stand out like a sore thumb in our culture today

- C. We have been looking at what it means for us today to be a “True Church”
 - 1. There was a time we’d have likely answered that question institutionally
 - a. A true church is one with the right organization, doctrine and worship
 - b. But the markers of true disciples in the NT are more relational in nature
 - 1) The world knows we are Jesus’ disciple by our love ([John 13:35](#))
 - 2) We are born of God when we believe in and love Jesus ([1 John 5:1](#))
 - c. Markers of a true church had to do with a connection to the true Savior
 - 2. So far, our study of true church is our relationship to scripture and cross
 - a. To we add another characteristic—a true church is a people who are holy
 - b. To be a true church of God, we must be committed to His holiness
 - 3. That’s was Peter’s message to the struggling church in the first century

II. Peter and the Call to Holiness (Reading: [1 Peter 1:13-16](#))

- A. Peter called the church to an identity as strangers in the world ([1 Pet 1:1](#))
 - 1. Peter here uses two words to stress that Christians were different
 - a. He uses the Greek word “*Diaspora*.” (Diaspora Jews scattered in world)
 - b. We are “*strangers*.” “*exile*” (ESV), “*refugee*” (GNT) or “*foreigner*” (NLT)
 - 1) NET combines the two words “*those temporarily residing abroad*”
 - 2) Peter sees Christians as aliens and stranger—not from these parts!
 - 2. Christians don’t quite fit into the world, even as they live in the world
 - a. Christians don’t immediately stick because of their dress, speech, etc
 - b. The KJV says that Christians are to be a “*peculiar people*” ([1 Pt 2:9](#))
 - 1) So are we different this sense of strange or weird? *Some of us are*
 - 2) “*Peculiar*” in KJV is possession, “*people belonging to God*” ([NIV](#))
 - c. If we live like we belong to God, then yes, we may seem a bit peculiar!
- B. We do “*not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance*” ([1:14](#))
 - 1. This refusal to conform to temptation and desire makes us different
 - a. We know that we have “*inalienable right*” to pursue our happiness!
 - b. It’s practically un-American for us not to pursue our happiness
 - 1) We can struggle with moral choices— “*God wants me to be happy*”
 - 2) Declaration says that; the Bible doesn’t; God wants us to be holy!

2. Understand that Peter is writing at one of the most difficult times for church
 - a. Factors that would become Roman persecution were gathering like storm
 - 1) The church had enjoyed relative peace in much of the empire
 - 2) Peter warns “*you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials*” (**1:6**)
 - b. What will he stress to people getting ready to really suffer? **Holiness**
 - c. The harder the world gets, the more they must remember to be holy
3. The reason for their holiness is simple—the God they serve is holy (**1:16**)
 - a. This is called the “*Holiness Code*” from book of Leviticus (**Lev 19:1**)
 - b. The basis of our obedience before God is that God Himself is holy
 - 1) My dad often responded to my “Why” with “Because I said so”
 - 2) God responds to our “Why” with “*Because I am Holy*”
 - c. What makes Christians different is that we seek the holiness of God!

III. Peter and the Basis of Holiness (Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-19)

- A. Peter calls us to remember who we are and who we are called to be
 1. Peter again comes back here to our identity as strangers in a stranger land
 - a. This word here is slightly different; it means “*an alien residence*”
 - b. It refers to the stay of a foreigner in a country that is not their own
 2. Peter reminds us that God will judge how we live, so live in “*reverent fear*”
 - a. We are to live for God as alien strangers because of the cross
 - b. We know what God did for us, so we live for Him even if we don’t fit in
 3. That’s the way it has always been for people who seek God (**Heb 11:13**)
- B. Peter again comes back to holiness and strangers in **1 Peter 2:11-12**
 1. So we are to live as strangers and aliens. Why? What makes us that way?
 - a. We “*abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*” (**2:11**)
 - b. If you really commit to this idea of holiness, you won’t fit into world
 2. But that is the only way we will ever impact the world for Christ
 - a. Peter’s idea is that our holiness points people to God-- evangelism
 - b. We’ve got different ideas; we’ll fit in and be more like the world
 - 1) We’ll dress, talk, act like world to make it easier for them to convert
 - 2) No, what that does is to convert us to become just like the world!

IV. Conclusion

- A. Lynn Anderson tells of Canadian youth group getting with a group from Texas
 - 1. It was a great time, except that the two youth groups has different rules
 - a. The Texas kids couldn't going mixed-bathing—that was worldly
 - b. The Canadian kids couldn't go to the movies— that was worldly
 - 2. The kids hit upon a solution where no one would have to be worldly
 - a. **Afternoon:** Canadian kids swam and Texas kids made-out on beach
 - b. **Night:** Texas kids went to movie & Canadians made out in the car
 - 3. Both groups followed the rules... and missed the point of worldliness
- B. Church I grew up in was same; we had lists of rules against worldly things
 - 1. We couldn't dance, drink, swim, kiss or smoke (*unless you were a deacon*)
 - a. Felt guilty in elementary school after a square dance (*never told Mom*)
 - b. Avoid the very appearance of evil— unplug pinball at bowling alley
 - 2. Paul says the problem with such rules is that they don't work (**Col 2:23**)
²³ *Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*
 - a. Rules and regulations imposed from without can't restrain indulgence
 - b. Amish can't buy new car; pay someone and buy it from them used
- C. But our problem today isn't such legalistic rules but that we accept worldliness
 - 1. We tend to reason, "*Nothing wrong with movies, dancing, drinking, etc.*"
 - a. So we'll go (or let kids) to any movie regardless of content or message
 - b. So we'll go (or let kids) to any dance, regardless of its setting/context
 - c. So we'll drink alcohol responsibly... even though that can be a fine line
 - 2. **Result:** Pretty quickly we look pretty much like the world around us
 - a. I'm not suggesting a new set of external rules; they still don't work
 - b. But we must decide we are exiles/strangers; we don't fit into our culture
 - c. We must decide what is pulling us to fit into the world—**worldliness**
 - 1) For one blogger, its Techno Rock— raves and Ecstasy of his past
 - 2) For you, it may be something else. *But worldliness isn't optional!*
 - 3. We must be holy as God is holy... and we must be serious about it!