

i. Prayer

ii. Scripture intro

- A. So good to be back at PPC and in the pulpit
1. Last week family and I went to Wash. DC
 2. Had great time; able to see most of museums/monuments
 3. One of my favorites was the Nat'l Museum of Art
 - a. This one picture I was particularly drawn to:
 - Richard Brooke (1881)
 - A Pastoral Visit
 - b. Went from there & saw works of Rembrandt, the master
 - The circumcision of Jesus
 - Jesus being taken down from the cross
 - c. It was so incredible!
 4. I was having my own internal worship celebration when my youngest son, SP, came up with twinkle in his eye and said, "Hey dad, when we gonna get to the Bob Ross exhibit?"
- B. On that note, please turn in your bibles to...
1. OT: 1 Samuel 12:19-25
 2. NT: 1 Peter 4:7-11

iii. Reading

iv. Introduction

- A. Imagine you wake in the middle of the night, & you smell smoke
1. Immediately you realize your house is on fire, and you've got only a few precious minutes to get you and your family out
 2. Now, if you could only grab 4 things, what would they be?
 3. Think about it for a second
 4. In fact, write them down
 - a. At the top of your bulletin, or on a piece of paper...
 - b. **What 4 things would you keep if your house was on fire?**
 - c. **Knowing that these 4 things would be all you have left (everything else in your house will be incinerated)**
 - d. (I'll wait)
- B. In our text this morning, Peter sets a similar stage
1. Look at v 7 (**READ**)
 2. Other ways of translating this are as follows:
 - a. *The completion of all things is coming.*
 - b. *The end of all things is approaching.*
 - c. *The grand finale will be here soon.*

3. **Now why do I associate this grand finale with a house fire?**
- C. Where do I get this?
1. Turn to 2 Peter 3
 2. 2 Peter a great letter where Peter goes back and explains in greater detail some of the cryptic things he writes in 1 Peter
 - a. Look at 2 Pet. 3:7: *But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*
 - b. Now look at 3:10: *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*
- D. Bottom line: **We are living in a world that is soon to catch fire**
1. The end of all things is at hand
 2. As to when the end will be here, Peter doesn't focus on that
 3. Rather, he focuses on *how* we should live in these final days
- E. **Like a house that is about to burn down around us, what shall we keep?**
- F. **In this passage Peter tells us there are 4 things we should keep** (in the spiritual sense)
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- G. Before we look at these 4 things, I want to confess how yet again the Lord has nailed me through this passage
1. He's brought both conviction and encouragement
 2. Too often I'm trying to hold onto empty things that have no value in eternity
 3. Like the people of Israel we just read about in 1 Samuel
 - a. They wanted to look like everybody else
 - b. Image was important to them
 - "Every other nation around us has a king"
 - "We want a king!"
 - c. Did you catch what Samuel said to them?
 - d. v21: *And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty.*
 4. By God's grace, Peter has really helped me refocus on what I need to keep and what I need to let go of
 5. I hope the Lord does the same with your hearts
- H. **So... what 4 things shall we keep?**

The very first thing Peter writes we should keep is...

1. Prayer

A. Explanation

1. We see this in verse 1 (**READ**)
2. Peter writes that in view of the end, we need to keep a sincere life of prayer
3. More literally: Keep a clear and sober mind so you can pray

B. Illustration

1. Tim Keller tells the story that about the year 1999 the stress level in his life was turned up several notches
 - a. His wife was battling Crohn's disease
 - b. The 9/11 attack brought a flood of confused people to Redeemer PCA
 - c. At same time Tim was diagnosed with thyroid cancer
2. In the midst of this his wife, Kathy, said...
 - a. Tim, we need to pray together everyday
 - b. I had a thought. What if someone contracted a rare disease and they'd soon die. And the doctor told them the disease can't be cured, but we have medicine that will keep you alive, but you have to take it everyday. If you miss one day you'll die.
 - c. Kathy said to him: **If we don't pray together every day, we're not going to make it because of all we're facing.** I certainly won't make it. We have to pray, we cannot let it slip our minds
3. Tim agreed, so they began praying together every evening
4. Tim said they haven't missed an evening in over 17 years (even when he travels they pray together over the phone)
5. As a result...
 - a. They've grown stronger (with each other and with God)
 - b. Prayer became a powerful tool in their life and ministry
 - c. Tim wrote a whole book about it!

C. Application

1. I tell this story not to say we all have to make a commitment like Tim & Kathy did (if Lord lays on your heart, great)
2. I am saying that prayer to our Father is something we must keep every day until we see Him face-to-face
3. Let me put it this way: **Failure to pray to God is a sin**
 - a. Sounds a bit harsh, but it's true
 - b. Samuel said it in 1 Sam – *as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.*
 - c. Failure to pray is a sin against God
4. Prayer is our link (lifeline) to the Father
5. As Believers in Christ, our lives are to be marked by prayer
 - a. Is your life marked by prayer?

- b. That's the first thing we are grab and keep, and make a part of our lives

The second thing we should grab is...

2. Love

A. Explanation

1. Look at verse 8 (**READ**)
2. Peter explains that our lives should be marked by love
3. In this short verse, Peter tells us **who we should love...**

how we should love, and...

why we should love

a. Who should we love?

- One another
- This is to say we should love all men, but especially those in the church of Christ
- Our lives are to be marked by love for each other
- Again Peter repeating what he had heard from Jesus
- John 13:35 – *All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.*

b. How should we love?

- Peter writes we should love *earnestly*
 - § Some synonyms...
 - § *Eagerly, passionately, deeply*
- We're not talking about a superficial "I like you"
- We should be able to say to each other here, "I love you!"
 - § Consider Paul's love for the churches (in all his letters)
 - § Peter calls his readers, "beloved" (2:11)

c. Finally, why should we love?

- Peter quotes Proverbs 10:12
- *Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.*
 - § Word "covers" is a beautiful Hebrew word: *kasáh*
 - § Peter writing with a Hebrew mind-set
 - § Means to clothe
- When you love someone, and they sin or do something stupid, your love for them is like a beautiful article of clothing that you drape over them – you cover them
- Crude analogy
 - § If you live with a junior high mentality (apologies to you all in junior high), and someone in the crowd accidently breaks wind what happens?
 - This person feels bad

- Everyone laughs, ridicules
 - They feel worse
- § But if you love someone, and this happens...
- you ignore it
 - you don't magnify it or draw attention to it
 - this person is embarrassed, and you love them
- This is what Peter means

B. Illustration

1. In seminary with a class taught by a wise and respected professor Don McNair
 - a. Had a bowel syndrome where he couldn't control
 - b. Made him gassy
 - c. Throughout semester, there were occasional outbursts
 - d. At the end of the course (last day)...
2. Thanked us for loving him and putting up with his condition
3. That's the church!

C. Application

1. Imagine a church where its members earnestly love each other
 - a. A place where you can go and be free to mess up
 - b. The more someone loves you, the more you can live in freedom
 - c. Not talking about a license to sin or be a jerk
 - d. No, I'm talking about a place where I can say to you:
 - I love you
 - There is nothing you can say or do that will make me love you less
 - You can have a bad day
 - You can mess up or fail, and guess what, I won't stop loving you
 - You are safe in my love
 - And what if you said that to me?
 - What if we all said that to each other?
 - What if we lived it?
 - Well then we'd have the kind of church Jesus had in mind
 - e. Remember when Jesus said this to his disciples (that all would know they were his disciples if they loved each other)?
 - We was talking to a wide range of men
 - Matthew: a former tax collector for Rome (far left)
 - Simon the Zealot: radical far-righter
 - These men were political opposites, yet the Lord used them together to spread the Gospel
 - What will cure the hatred of the world?

- The love of Christ thru us – especially to each other
- Easy to love those who agree with you
- Takes the love of Christ to love those who don't think like you

2. John Calvin: Prov 10:12: *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.*

What Solomon meant by this is abundantly clear when we see that both of these clauses contain statements that are directly opposing one another. Solomon says (in the first clause) that hatred is the cause of men willfully misrepresenting and slandering one another, spreading reproachful and dishonorable words. So it follows that love can be attributed with an opposite effect of hatred, that is, that men who love one another, kindly and heartfelt, forgive one another. From there we see that, by willingly covering each other's sins, one seeks to preserve the honor of another. Peter thereby confirms his encouragement, that nothing is more necessary than to cherish mutual love. For who is there that does not have many faults? Therefore everyone stands, needing forgiveness, and there is no one who does not wish to be forgiven.

- a. Is that not so true?
- b. For who is there that does not have many faults? Therefore everyone stands, needing forgiveness, and there is no one who does not wish to be forgiven.

The end of all things is at hand... So, what shall we keep? Prayer, Love 2 more points to cover, but if it's alright with you I'd like to push those to next week

v. Conclusion

- A. Let me share one more thought...
- B. You may agree with Peter, may be saying...
 1. Yes, I need a better prayer life (mine kind of sucks)
 2. Yes, and I need to love better
- C. So how do we get there?
- D. In his book, *The Screwtape Letters*, CS Lewis describes it like this
 1. BTW: if not familiar with this book, it's written from the perspective of a demon (Screwtape) writing letters to his nephew, Wormword
 2. Encouraging him in oppressing a Christian
 3. Quite ingenious, but you have to read it from that angle
 4. Screwtape says to his nephew
 - a. Your Christian's sense of ownership in general is always to be encouraged
 - b. Teach him the concept of the pronoun "my and mine"

- c. There's a vastly different meaning whenever we say things like my shoes, my dog, my wife, my father, my country, and my God
 - d. All of those have different meanings, and you need to blur them
 - e. For instance, if a child says "my teddy bear" we encourage him to see it not as something to bring him comfort, but something that belongs to him... that he can pull it apart into pieces if he wants
 - f. When your Christian begins to talk about "my God", blur the lines of ownership and get him to think about his God as something that belongs to him
 - g. Something he can try to control or back into a corner
 - h. And then Screwtape says this:
And all the time the joke is on the word "mine" in its fully possessive sense cannot be uttered by a human being about anything. In the long run either Satan or God will say "mine" of each thing that exists, and specially of each man. They will find out in the end to whom their time, their souls, and their bodies really belong — certainly not to them!
- E. Do you see the irony?
- 1. Throughout life we stress over our things, our possessions
 - 2. We hold on to things that are so empty
 - 3. We keep so much and call it mine
 - 4. All the while we fail to see who keeps us
 - 5. Samuel said to Israel...
 - a. Don't cling to worthless & empty things
 - b. Cling to God
 - c. You don't keep Him!
 - d. He keeps you!
- F. On February 9, 1709 the home of the Wesleys caught on fire
- 1. Samuel and his wife moved quickly to get all their children out as their thatched roof burst into flames
 - 2. Once outside they looked up and saw, John Wesley (who was only 5 years old), peering out at them from a second story window
 - 3. He was trapped
 - 4. John's brothers and father made a quick human ladder
 - 5. Just before the house collapsed, Samuel plucked out his 5 year old boy
 - 6. John said he never forgot the image of his father pulling him to safety
 - 7. Later wrote that his heavenly Father had done the same with his soul
- 8. Called himself an ember plucked from the fires of hell
- G. That is who we are
- 1. So forget about whether or not your house is on fire and what you should keep
 - 2. Remember that, like John Wesley, you have been plucked from the fires of hell by a Father who keeps you
 - 3. We serve a God who'll walk through hell or high water to save his child
 - 4. And he did, in fact, walk through hell and high water to save us.
 - 5. The more we understand this – His grace – the more we will want to pray and be enabled to love each other