

A Beginning To To Whom It Does Concern

1 Peter 1:1-2

Introduction - Let's Be Brief

At this stage you're probably glad that Evangeline has only read two verses. Even when we're in church together, in services where we have communion I try to keep my messages slightly shorter. Today, when we've celebrated communion in our own homes and you're just looking at a screen, it's all the more difficult to remain focused.

However, there's a problem. Evangeline may have only read two verses, but they're two very meaty verses. these two verses are choc-full of important truths about the recipients of this letter and also about God. So as to not rush these important insights I'm going to hold most of my message over till next week but I will give you one important observation now from these verses.

Viewed in Circumstances and in Connection to God (vv.1-2)

Read with me again verses 1 and 2:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

What I want us to be aware of is that the author, Peter, the apostle, addresses his readers mindful of both their present circumstances as well as who they are in relation to God.

What does it mean for Peter to address people mindful of their present circumstances? Peter addresses groups of Christians who are scattered over a wide area. This reference to scattering provides only a hint in these opening verses, but it

will be come clear as the letter progresses, that Peter is writing to Christians who are experiencing persecution and are suffering for their faith.

What might it mean for God to to know us, and engage with us, mindful of our present circumstances? Before we quickly jump to saying that we are suffering too, we need to be mindful that in the New Testament suffering normally refers to a direct spiritual attack of Satan or is the result of persecution because of faith in Jesus. Our current difficulties don't directly correlate with the persecution and suffering that the recipients of this letter were experiencing. However, our current circumstances don't need to have a direct correlation to that of Peter's readers. What's important for us to know is that God comes to his people, engages with his people, knows his people, no matter what circumstances they find themselves in and works with people in those circumstances.

For us today, our God engages with us us during this strange time of the coronavirus: God knows us as parents who are wrestling with children, or as grandparents who are aching to have time with grandchildren; as business owners who are watching years of hard work disappear in a moment, or as farmers who clench their jaws at the injustice of a problem for the city receiving instant concern from leaders while drought has been almost ignored for years; and so the list could go on. Whatever our circumstances, God personally knows us and knows how our circumstances are impacting our lives.

As mentioned though, Peter doesn't just write to people identifying them in relation to their current circumstances but also identifies his readers by their connection to God. Peter's readers are those, "who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood."

We'll have more time to look at the wonderful importance of this sentence next week but there is something we can consider briefly. We are not people who are to be mainly characterised by our circumstances under the coronavirus and the present

restrictions, but nor are we to be people who are primarily defined by our job, marital status, whether we have children, our education level, gender, physical prowess, wealth, hobbies, or any of the other myriad of things which we're encouraged to find our identity in. This little verse declares that first and foremost we are people who have our identity in the triune God - The Father, Spirit and Jesus, the Son.

Conclusion

How humbling it is that the God who created the whole universe would care enough to be interested in knowing us in whatever circumstances that we are in and yet how staggering that we are to not be primarily identified by our circumstances but by our relationship with that God who created the universe and who chose to enter the creation as Jesus.