

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

October 11, 2020

Children of the Father

*I Peter 1:13-21*

Pastor Paul Jackson

[music: "No Longer Slaves"]

*Nancy Jackson:*

Let me try that first step! Wow! I can't do that either! I want to be able to provide you some sort of entertainment when we first begin.

[laughter]

Good morning! Yay! My name is Nancy Jackson, and I am the director of children's ministries. We welcome you this morning, all of you who are here and those of you who are online. It is really great to see all of you. Well, I would like to just appreciate how it is a privilege that we can meet and that we can worship together this wonderful heavenly Father who is the Sovereign God of the universe. And so with that, will you pray with me?

Father, just as in the songs that we sang, I am Your child and no longer a slave of fear. You tell us in John 1:12 that You have given us the right to become Your children when we receive You and believe in Your name. And then You remind us in Isaiah 41 not to be fearful, or not look anxiously about us, because You are our God who will strengthen us; You will surely help us and uphold us with Your righteous right hand. Father, You know we anxiously and fearfully look about, and we scramble to control the outcomes in our lives that are truly uncontrollable. And in

that, You are merciful to remind us that through all of our scrambling that our confidence can only be in You, that You are the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Father, thank You this morning for the beauty of the changing leaves, for the way that You assure us through the dependability of the seasons of Your constancy and Your steadfast care for us. And although, as Your Word says, the grass withers and the flower fades, but Your character and Your Words remain unchangeable and true. You are wholly trustworthy, God, and we are confident that You will help us and that You will uphold us with Your righteous right hand. And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

*Ben Rico:*

Amen. Would you stand as we sing, as we approach our holy God in Jesus' name and in the power of Christ. In the Spirit we can stand directly before God and sing His praise, knowing fully who He is as His children. Let us sing together.

[song: "Take My Life, and Let It Be"]

[song: "How Deep the Father's Love For Us"]

Please be seated.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that Your goodness is too good for words. We thank You that in our hearts we can see You for who You are because You have made us like You in rescuing us and adopting us to be Your children. Heavenly Father, we worship You in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Pastor Paul:*

Good morning! It is great to be able to share the Word of God with you this morning. I hope that this last week you had some experiences that you are grateful to God for, some gift, some blessings that He has sent your way. That was my experience this last week. This last week, for the first time, I met my ten month old granddaughter. That's amazing! So I reached for her, and she began to cry! She's pretty skeptical of this grandfather of hers, but that's not going to last long, because I'm going to win her over. I'm going to have time to do it because my son and his wife have moved to the area. So it's a great blessing, it's a great gift for us as a family.

And as I watched my sons and their wives parent these little kids, this incredible privilege of a parent to shape a life, to shape the life of a little one who grows and matures into an adult, it's our prayer that our children, our grandchildren love Jesus early and follow Him always and become like Him. And moms and dads are really critical, integral, important part of God's plan in the shaping of their children, to raise them into adults who love God. And for my part, it reminded me of when my children were young and of the delight that I had in parenting. But it also reminded me of the agony I had as a dad, and that is, I wanted my children to take from me that which was good that God had done in me. But that's it; I didn't want them to have any part of the rest. Thank God for our heavenly Father. In Him, there is no sin. He is holy in that He is totally separate from sin; He is pure; He is right; He's who we want to be like, and He wants us to be like Him so that we would be like Father, like child. God created us in His image to be like Him and to have a right and a good and a pure relationship with Him. But against all reason, we rebelled and we ran away, and then we didn't like the consequences of our actions, but God came after us, and He wooed us, invited us to return to Him, to return to our Father. Eventually He sent His own Son to take our place, to die our death, to be raised to life, so that through faith in Jesus we become daughters and sons of our heavenly Father. And our heavenly Father's vision for His children is that we become like Him through a relationship with His son, that we pattern our lives and our mind and our heart after Him. And that's what we find in I Peter 1:13-21.

If you would open your Bibles. The epistle of Peter, written by Peter in the later years of his life. In many ways it was a wild and crazy time to live. It was turbulent, their political system was not to be trifled with. Nero was totally depraved as an emperor, so that even the depraved Romans began to recognize, "This guy's wacked out." But Nero had power, and the emperor was who the ancient Roman's worshipped. And so emperor worship was the rule of the day, and if you didn't worship the emperor, sooner or later, if you came to the attention of the emperor, then you're in deep weeds. And that's what happened in the mid-sixties in the reign of Nero. They began to persecute Christians, so that if you were to visit Rome today, they would take you to the Coliseum, and they would take you to different places and different venues where the suffering of persecutions was sport. And then around the empire there were all kinds of just normal sufferings that just come from being alive in the first century and hardships and the power of people without the Gospel and the difficult things that they experienced.

And so I Peter is this letter that was written toward the end of Peter's life. And if the early church historians are correct, it's written just a few years before Peter experienced what Jesus had predicted, that Peter would be crucified, and he would be crucified upside-down. Jesus predicted that he would be crucified, but the early church says Peter chose to go upside-down. And so this is written not long--he didn't have long to live. And so he writes this letter to believers, a letter that gives us perspective. It gives us context on who God is and what this world is and how we respond to Him and why we have every reason to exult and to rejoice. And if you were here last week you saw that, in spite of these difficult circumstances, that joy from within is a defining response to who God is, no matter what happens to us. And so that most of us--we've never experienced the kind of stuff that went down in the first century. Most of us have had a pretty easy life in many ways. I mean, we've been greatly blessed by God. And so that gives us a little bit of comparison, a little bit of perspective, that God gives us every reason to rejoice.

And in the opening paragraphs of this letter, Peter says to his audience, to those who are reading the letter in the first century, "It is a great time to be alive." And

he said that not long before he died. Why did he say that? Well, he said in verses 11 and 12 that the people lived at a time that the angels had longed to see. The image is if the angels are trying to peek; they're trying to look; they're trying to discover the redemption plan of God. So my imagination reads that, and I think, "Just imagine the angels!" They see God create a garden, a place of beauty, and they think, "That is so true of God." That He would bless, that He would give us everything that we need for life and meaning and significance and happiness. How good and how great and how glorious are You, God! And the angels would sing, "Holy, holy, holy is our God." And then they see the mess in the garden. And they see Adam and Eve turn in defiance against God, and they disobey the holy God; they sin against the God in whom there is no sin. And the angels wonder, "How are You going to clean up this mess, God? How are You going to deal with these sinful, rebellious people?"

And then Genesis 6 happens. Genesis 6, the days of Noah, and people were doing whatever they wanted to do, and they were defying God, and righteousness just wasn't to be found on earth except in the family of Noah and the person of Noah. You see what God did. Then we see in Genesis 12. We get a little bit of an inkling of "This is what God is going to do; this is how God's going to fix this mess that we made." And the promise that He made to Abraham, that through Abraham all the families of the world would be blessed. And God's redemption plan begins to unfold, and it continues to unfold until He sends His Son, Light of Israel, into a sinful and unholy world, and the Light of Israel, Jesus Christ, would take our place; He would die our death, be raised to life so that He could share life with us. And Peter says the angels longed to see what God was going to do.

It's a great time to be alive because you've seen what God has done and we have His Word that shows us and promises what God is going to do, so that God's redemption plan was something that angels longed to see. And in sending His Son Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ died our death, raised to life to change our life, to save us from sin, and to save us for Himself. And God's gift of Jesus Christ and the transforming power of the Gospel of God and the Spirit of God makes life-change

possible. It is the only way to change a life; it is the only way to change the world. So that you and I can experience God's transformation, this total make-over of our mind and our character and our way of living.

How can we experience a total make-over? How can we experience this life-transformation through Jesus Christ? Well, several ways. First, wake up to the Father's will and ways. I Peter 1:13, "*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" My Bible says, "Prepare your minds for action," and the English translation is pretty tame compared to the actual Greek. The actual Greek says, "gird" - that's right, G-I-R-D - "*Gird up the loins of your mind.*" That's a word picture from the ancient word; it was the way they used to dress. So if you wanted to do anything that required sweating or movement, if you wanted to work, if you wanted to run, if you wanted to move quickly from side to side, then you had to take this long garment and you had to wrap it up around your waist and around your loins so that you're ready now, you're in a position, your head's up, your head's on a swivel, your eyes are open, you're alert, you're awake for whatever's next. In my world, in my history, it was comparable to running the hundred meters, and the starter would command you to take your blocks, and then when everybody was settled in their blocks and they were resting, he would command, "Set!" And then you're up, and you're coiled, and your nervous system is on fire. At the first sound you're gone, and if you're not gone and you sit in the blocks, you're last. So you don't sit! You get ready, you go! That's the word picture, that we would prepare your minds for action.

How do you do that? "*Be sober in spirit.*" Other translations translate it, "*Be self-controlled.*" That's part of the meaning of the word, that a part of the meaning of the word is - to be sober in spirit - is to manage your impulses. It's the executive function of the brain, so that whatever I'm doing right now, whatever I do today, the consequences are going to roll out tomorrow. It's as if I were going to eat pepperoni pizza tonight at 11:30 pm. At 3am I'm going to regret what I did at 11:30 pm. And if I do that everyday, and if I do that as a lifestyle, then someday

the doctor is going to be looking down at me and saying, "Paul, you need to make wiser choices in the food you eat." Because everything that we do, everything that we do has consequences. And so to be sober in spirit, it means that we would be so manage our impulses and--

But it means even more than that. It is a real world awareness that right now is important, because in every moment, every moment has a lot at stake. I'll give you an example, I Peter 4:7, same word, turn to I Peter 4:7. *"The end of all things is near; therefore be of sound judgement and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer."* The finish line. It's a lot closer today than it has ever been for all of us. The end of all things; God is moving His plan forward. God is moving forward in our world and our lives, and so "be of sober spirit" means that awareness of the priority of right now to God for our good. Another for instance, he uses the same word in I Peter 5:8. I Peter 5:8, *"Be of sober spirit."* Why? *"Be on the alert."* Why? *"Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* To be of sober spirit means to look up and look around, and there's a lion circling you. And this lion's intent--he's your adversary; he wants to ruin your life; he is the devil. It is God who restrains him, and God restrains him from doing what he wants to do in our world and our life. But he's looking for an opening; he's looking for an opportunity. So to be of sober spirit means that we would be ready in that moment of opportunity.

To do what? Well, verse 13, *"Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* If you were here last week in verse 3, chapter 1, you were introduced to living hope. We have living hope through the living Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection life, is the life that God gives to us. Same idea here in verse 13. We're to fix our hope completely on what God is going to do next, because what He's doing to do next in His redemption plan is He's going to send His Son to return and gather us so that we will either go to Him when we die, if we live until His return, He will gather us to Himself, and He's going to bless us; He's going to roll out His grace. Grace upon grace. Abundant grace. When Jesus Christ returns, He's going to bless us with kindness and mercy.

Kindness and mercy and grace that we don't deserve; it's God's gift. It's God's gift to those who love the Son. The only way for the believer to stay between the whites lines on this road we travel with God is to look forward, down the road, to look forward to what's waiting for us in the person of Jesus Christ. When we hope in anyone or anything else other than in the grace of God given to us through Jesus that when we see Him He'll roll out in full - that which for which we don't have a vocabulary will one day be our experience - and when we hope in any one or anything else to give meaning or significance and life security that only God can give, then we are headed to the ditch, because we don't have that which it takes to follow after the God of the Bible and to walk in lockstep with Him. When we look forward to what Jesus will give us someday, then we're ready to do what Jesus wants for us this day.

How do we become more like our Father? How do we become more like the Father? Second way, let's remember rightly and truly the Father who called us to Himself so that we can reflect who He really is. I Peter 1:14-16. *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"* Through Jesus Christ the Son, through faith in Him, we become a child of God, and that makes us related to each other through Jesus. Through the blood of Jesus, we are related to each other. We are children together of the Father, and as children--and what our job is, in part, our job is to obey our Father. That's the job of every child everywhere, especially with our heavenly Father. Our job is to obey the Father.

And our obedience to Him is a big deal to Him, and it's good for us. It is a best-case scenario for us to obey the Father. That's one of the major emphasis of the apostle Peter. Go back, I Peter 1:2, *"According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit,"* - to do what? - *"to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood."* So that we're to obey Jesus Christ, go to verse 22, we'll see this next week. *"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart."* So that



as we obey, our soul is, in a sense, purified. And it's out of that obedience to the Word and the ways of God that we can even love each other. So, obedience is non-negotiable for us. And delayed obedience is no obedience. So, the wisest thing you and I can do right now is whatever we know of God says that has to do with us in our family, our marriage, our neighborhood, our singleness. Whatever we know of what He says, that we say "yes" and step toward Him immediately as an obedient child. If we take a day off from obedience--you know, "I'll obey tomorrow." And then tomorrow comes and we take another day off, and we think, "Okay, tomorrow, tomorrow." And tomorrow comes and we take another day off, before you know it, we've gone back to who we were before we knew who Jesus is.

And that's what Peter says, he says there was a time when you were--and this may seem like a harsh word, but it's an accurate one--there was a time where you were ignorant of God, and you didn't know the person of Jesus, and you didn't know the ways of God. But it's a great time to be alive because now you do! And you can really live, and the way we really live right now is by obedience in this moment to the way of God, so that we could pattern our life after God, the God who is holy, and we wouldn't go back to that practice and pattern of sin that is unholy, when we practiced and lived that outside of our faith in the God of the Bible through His Son Jesus Christ. And so those lusts that he talks about here are all those desires that are in us. And they are many; they have many different faces. It's like a kaleidoscope. There's just a zillion different pieces to it. But what lust and desires have in common is that they are in opposition to the Word of God and the ways of God. So before we knew Jesus, we didn't know the ways of God. Now we do know the ways of God.

And so now that we know who God is and we know what God says, that leads to verse 15 which is amazing, because it's possible and that is, "*to be like the Holy One who called you.*" Our Father is holy, holy in this sense: totally separate from sin, pure, undefiled, ethical, righteous, in all He is, in all He does, and that He will ever do. And it is our Father who is holy who called out to us when we were unholy. Let that sink in. So we look around, we read the news, we watch the news, we

listen to it, and we grieve over this unholy world. "What's wrong with these people out there?" Guess what: you know how God looked at us before we knew Christ? Romans 5 says, "*While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.*" That'll change the way we look at the world. That'll change the way we look at the world and the expectations we have for those who don't know Christ. Well, what did we expect? I mean, we can't expect somebody who doesn't know Jesus to act like somebody who does know Jesus. But here's what we have every reason to expect, and that is that those of us who do know Christ will act like Christ. So we don't need to extend our expectations to non-believers so much as we as believers need to step in to God's expectations. And His expectation for us is that the Holy One who called out to the unholy us, that we would, through Christ, that we would increasingly become like our Father. Like Father, like child.

It is the Holy Father who makes our holiness possible. God sent His holy Son into an unholy world, and the angels now know: this is how God's going to clean up the mess that these humans made. This is how He's going to save the world. This is how He's going to change the world. This is how He's going to change the heart and life of the follower of Christ. He makes it possible for us by giving us His Spirit and His Word by the Son who saves us from sin, the Son who saves us from self. He makes it possible for us to become like the Father in everything, in every way, so that increasingly we can be separate from sin and set ourselves separate and apart for the Words and the way of Jesus Christ. And becoming Holy is in every day opportunity, and it is pervasive, it's personal to everything about us. And it is our holy Father who makes it possible for the us, the believer, to increasingly become like Him.

And our Father, God, has always been holy. "*As it is written,*" verse 16, quotes from Leviticus, "*Be holy as I am holy.*" Book of Leviticus, it's about the holiness of God and the ugliness of sin and the extreme that God goes to to deal and forgive sin. And that's a theme throughout the entire Bible, so that Isaiah 6, the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God," all the way through to Revelation, the angels singing, "Holy, holy"--God who is separate and apart, totally apart from all sin - can't stand sin

because of His righteous goodness - forgives our sin so that the unholy us can be made holy in and through the sacrifice of the holy Jesus for unholy people like us. Like Father, like child. We are becoming, through Christ, more like our Father, and our Father is holy.

How do we become more like Him? And the third way is a way that we don't like to think about and sometimes don't talk about. Third way that we become like our Father is to fear His judgement because He loves us because we are His children. Look at verse 17, *"If you address as Father the one who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth."* If we address our Father, if we regularly call upon our Father through prayer, if we claim to be children of the Father, then our Father will judge us. He will judge our work. He will judge impartially. Our Father doesn't play favorites with any of us. And He is fully informed about all that we are, so that it's not at all uncommon, in fact it's normal, for each of us to sometimes fool ourselves. And we put a move on ourselves, we fake ourselves out, we try to scam us, our own selves, so that we can continue to do what we want to do and not feel convicted about it, so we justify and we excuse and we move forward. We can fool ourselves, and we can fool others. We can do this external thing, and we can keep it together while the eyes of others are upon us. We can't fool God. He knows the score. He knows the thoughts; He knows the attitudes; He knows the bitterness; He knows the unforgiveness; He knows the anger; He knows the stuff. He knows it. He knows all of it, and He judges.

Well, what kind of judgement are we talking about? We know that God will one day judge the world, and we know that one day He will judge us, He will judge us for our life on earth. But this is a current judgment. This is an ongoing, right-now, Father's judgement on His children, and we like to think more of it as God's chastening hand or discipline, like in Hebrews 12, *"A loving Father always disciplines his children."* And so in Hebrews 12, we see people who wander away from God, and then He chastens His children to get them back and following after Him. So His children who willfully defy Him, He wakes them up with this judgement,

with this discipline. And that's what Peter's talking about, and he says, "that's why we fear His judgement." And let's not minimize the word, let's not soften it. It's fear, and it's not the sick, "oh, I can't believe I did that" fear, after I did it, although that's a part of it. No, this fear is preventative, and that is that God's judgment for our disobedience is not a pleasant experience. And so this fear of judgement, it becomes incentive for us as children to obey the Father without delay, so that this moment becomes a ripe opportunity for us to fear Him and to obey Him, to take Him at His Word. And so, that fear becomes incentive to obey Him in the moment, and He says to do this during our stay on earth.

And the actual meaning of the word is, "*during your exile on earth,*" and I like that better. It is more picturesque of what Peter intends. To be in exile means you're not at home, that you're not where you ultimately belong. And to be in exile on earth means that we're not here for very long, and we're not yet home in the presence of God where we do belong. And we're not here for very long is-- furthered next week, we're going to see it in verse 24, "*All flesh is like grass in all its glory, like the flower of grass, the grass withers and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever.*" So this life is really not for very long. Nancy prayed at the beginning of this service today, and I didn't know that she was going to use the changing of the leaves in the autumn as a word picture of God's sovereign care, and it's right, and it's true, but as I was preparing for this morning, I thought of a different significance to the autumn leaves. The autumn leaves, as they transition from green to the bright vivid yellows that we have here, they're at the end. They're about to drop, and soon they will be on the ground and brown. And it brings a whole new meaning to the sound of leaf blowers. It's not for long. We're not here very long. This mask thing? That's not very long. Our life! If our life--I mean, we look in the mirror--if our life happens so fast? So, in the moment of opportunity, we can really respond to who the Holy Father is with a joyous response because of our living hope, so that we fasten our hope on the grace that is waiting for us when we see Jesus Christ, and then that becomes the defining expectation of tomorrow as we look forward to His return, so that now I can say yes to Him in a

way that is confident and gives us great delight and delights God. Our flesh flourishes and then our flesh withers. Let's fear God's judgement on us.

But why does God have the right to judge us? I mean, that sounds kind of harsh. Well, it's because He's a loving Father. It's because He's holy in that He is totally separate from sin. He gave all He could to die for us to save us from our sins so we can become like Him. So our sin separates us from Him. And so God judges our sin in the moment because sin does damage. Sin distorts us. Sin makes us unlike God, and so that judgement is intended to make us more like Him, more holy, increasingly like Him. And He gave all He could to address our sin, and to forgive our sin, so that the price of God's forgiveness was all that God could give. Look at verse 18 and 19, *"Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb, unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."*

Conduct ourselves in fear of God's discipline for sin because of how much God gave to forgive us of sin, life with God cost the life of God. Our redemption price costs more than the precious metals of this world. Gold and silver is simply costume jewelry in comparison to the eternal price God gave in His Son, the blood of Jesus Christ, poured out to the point of death for the forgiveness of sin, to be raised from the dead, so that you and I could become followers of Jesus Christ. And that's how God transforms us, is in life with God through faith in Jesus. We are purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are rescued from our sin and saved for a life with the Father through the risen Son Jesus Christ.

Speaking of Jesus, look at verse 20 and 21. *"For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."* There was never a time when God the Son did not exist. The Triune God of the Bible, Father, Son, Spirit, is eternal: always was, always will be. God's redemption plan was envisioned before He created the world. Before the world began, the cross of Jesus was God's idea, so

that when God created us and we defied Him, and we rebelled against Him, God wasn't surprised. And God's redemption plan is not a reaction to our action. Rather, it was God's vision from before He created the world, so that the redemption plan of God, Jesus as Savior, is God's idea.

And now Peter says, "Jesus Christ has appeared; He's arrived; He has disclosed God so that we can know God," and he says, "He did this for your sake." For you, if you know Him. He gave His own Son for our true good. He is our living hope, and through Him, he says, believers know God. And the one true God who raised Jesus from the dead also restored Jesus to the glory of heaven, and the same God who raised and restored Jesus is the same God who will one day send His Son to gather us to Himself. And until then, we're in exile. Until then, we're here. And while we're here, we can really live. We can live a life that is defined by hope, a confident expectation that God is going to send His Son, one day we're going to see His Son, and He's going to roll out His grace, a Niagra Falls of grace. A grace far greater than anything we could ever imagine, way beyond our extensive, most extensive vocabulary. So that's incentive, that right now, while we live, we live for Him, which means that as His children, we obey Him. And as we obey Him, we become amazingly more like our heavenly Father. May each of us be like our Father.

Will you pray with me please?

Heavenly Father, thank You that we can come to You. Thank You that we can use that relational title, that we are Your children. Because of Your gift of Your Child, Your Son, we become your daughters and sons. Father, thank You, Holy Father, for calling out to us while we were yet unholy. Make us more like You. Help us to yield to You in the moment. May Your Spirit be turned loose within us. Help us to forgive as You have forgiven, to trust because You're trustworthy, to be merciful and gracious to others because You are merciful and gracious to us, to love others because we are loved by You. Father, I ask that through Your Son Jesus, and as we become like You, that we would be lights in a very dark place, that we would increasingly be holy in an unholy world. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

*Ben Rico:*

Amen. Would you stand as we rejoice that our holy God has called us to be His children and to live in the light with Him.

[music: "My Life Is Yours"]

May you more fully behold His glory, that You might live as children of God. Go in peace.