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### **31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 Mike Enright's sermon**

[00:00:10] Greetings in Christ to you all. If you are new or newish and you've got no idea who I am. My name's Mike. I'm one of the pastors at WBC here and I've got the privilege and also the responsibility of sharing a message from God and from his word this morning. First of all I just want to highlight something a number of us are participating in this year.

[00:00:44] It's called Read the Bible in one year. And as I see it a number of us are doing that either with a special book or with an app.

[00:01:00] It's called Read the Bible in one year as I see it a lot of a lot of us are doing that and a lot of people from what they've told me are finding it really worthwhile. And I just want to tell you good news you may be thing I missed out. I should have started in January and I missed out. Well now to the end of March it's too late but it's not. We've got a wonderful way of helping you go back in time. And if you download the app then it's possible to go back to the start and start reading the Bible and one year now and you'll finish it at the end of March next year. And if you think I don't know how to do that it's too complicated. Sophie who's in our church office. She said she'll help you. She knows how to do it. She's worked it out. So, if you want to become part of reading the Bible in one year I encourage you to do that. Anybody here who's doing it and would like to stand up and say yes, it's great. I'm finding it worthwhile.

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[00:03:27] Next Sunday we are starting our journey towards Easter. So, it's Easter in three weeks. And over the next two Sundays in our preaching we'll be moving towards Easter and thinking about the Easter message. And Mark who just stood up there before and talked about the Bible in one year. He's going to be preaching over the next two Sundays. Jesus, just a wise man or ... that's next Sunday and the person of Jesus and the Sunday after the resurrection myth or reality. Those are those are two topics that are right at the very core of our Christian faith. Who really is Jesus. And did he really rise from the dead. Can we believe that. So crucial subjects for us to think about and that will bring truth and shine light on those topics great things to invite people to come along with you to hear and then the following Sunday the 21st of course is Easter. So that's what's happening in the next couple of weeks. What about today? Today we are focusing on this question Sandy has already mentioned it. How now shall we live how do we live in this context where we are, New Zealand 2019. And we've been looking at the New Testament book of first Peter letter that was written by Peter the Apostle. And today's our final Sunday in this series. And we've been thinking about the idea of exile because Peter writes this letter to people in exile and he calls them. He calls his readers strangers aliens foreigners people from elsewhere. And he's not talking so much about geographical exile. He's talking about the fact that they are living in a context where they don't exactly fit. They marched to the beat of a different drum. They serve a different king. And the challenges of it. And in many ways, we are in a similar situation. We live in a society that doesn't honour Jesus and we are trying to live by those values and those beliefs. And there's some challenges in that. And that's what Peter's talking about and that's what we've been focusing

on in the last few weeks. This morning as we get to the end of the letter we're going to look at a few verses from right near the end of Peter's letter. Some closing advice before he signs off. And it's interesting what he says when he gets to the end just before he says kind of from Peter or it's a bit longer than that. And it may not seem that that these verses have got much to do with this idea of living in exile but actually they do because what Peter has to say here is central to what it is to be a follower of Jesus and central to what...to what enables us to be able to show to demonstrate Christ's character his nature his goodness the goodness of God to the people we live amongst. And that's our calling in this exile place we call to reveal Jesus to reveal the nature of God to the people around us. They need to see him through us. So, we're going to read from First Peter chapter five middle of this five through to the middle of verse nine.

[00:06:39] He says all of you dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble so humble yourselves under the mighty power of God.

[00:06:55] And at the right time he will lift you up an honour give all your worries and cares to God for he cares about you. Stay alert.

[00:07:05] Watch out for your great enemy the devil.

[00:07:07] He prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him and be strong in your faith. Now it may it may seem that there's just a whole lot of different commands one after another sort of us string of different thoughts he had. Actually, they are very interrelated and it's interesting that that Peter closes his letter with this focus on humility. Probably most of you are at least vaguely familiar with this song by the Rivers of Babylon where we sat down yeah. We wept when we remembered Zion. I could see the older ones among you kind of mouthing the words. There was a song that was made famous by a group called Boney M. It's been sung by numerous others.

[00:07:58] It's actually a Bible song. It's the words the song was written thousands of years ago and it was recorded in the Old Testament not recorded in the way Boney M recorded it. But the words are written in the Old Testament Psalm 137 and it's an exile song. It's an exile lament. The words come directly from the Book of Psalms in the Bible and the song was written about the grief of being in exile. Grief over a way of life that is lost. The psalm says we wept. We wept when we remembered Zion when we when we remembered the way our lives used to be when we remembered how it how it was for us when we remember how we enjoyed and loved the life we had.

[00:08:51] We wept. And then it asks the question how we can sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

[00:09:01] In this in this exile place in this place that's not the way we wish it was. It's not the way it used to be. This place that is hard to live in how can we celebrate the Lord. How can we worship the Lord. How can we sing and rejoice in God's goodness when we live in this place of exile.

[00:09:20] And that's our question. That's that's what we've been focusing on in recent weeks. How now do we live, how do we sing the Lord's song in a strange land that that word strange could equally be translated Pagan.

[00:09:33] How do we sing the Lord's song in a pagan land. As I said it's interesting that Peter's closing advice to his readers in this letter written to first century followers of Jesus living in a strange land, a pagan land, a place of exile. His closing advice centers on humility not choosing to live in humility is very different from being humiliated being humiliated as something that's done to you. Peter's calling his readers to live in humility to make that choice. It's not about weakness. It's not about gentle Jesus meek and mild. Humility is very strong. And learning to live in humility is crucial for us as we seek to be ambassadors for Jesus. Here in New Zealand in 2019 and Peter quotes from his scriptures the old testament the Hebrew scriptures the book of proverbs and he says God opposes the proud but he favours the humble. A literal translation actually of what Peter wrote is this God opposes proud people but to humble people he gives grace. The implication is that receiving grace from God requires humility on our part. You see that God opposes the proud but to the humble he gives grace in order to receive God's grace. We've got to be in a place of humility. Human pride is opposed by God because it gets in the way of us receiving his grace.

[00:11:16] A Couple of verses later Peter mentions the devil. And why does why does he bring that in here. And who is this devil. I mean we kind of read about him we hear about him. The truth is we don't know that much about the origins of this being called Satan. The Bible doesn't say too much explicitly but what we do know is that the fatal flaw in this character is pride. Jesus himself said I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning and there's a couple of Old Testament prophets who give further insight into that Isaias says how you have fallen from heaven. Oh shining star Sun of the morning for you said to yourself I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars. I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the most high. I'll make myself God. I'll put myself equal with God or above him. Pride ...And Ezekiel says you were the model of perfection full of wisdom and exquisite as exquisite in beauty.

[00:12:34] You were in Eden the garden of God. You had access to the Holy Mountain of God. You were blameless in all you did.

[00:12:40] From the day you were created until the day evil was found in you your heart was filled with pride.

[00:12:51] Pride was the issue. And at the very core of every human sin. At the very core of every temptation the devil places before us is the temptation to pride. The temptation to take the place of God in your own life. The temptation to be your own god, the temptation to follow your own plans, your own desires, your own will, the temptation to decide I know best. I don't need God. I know best. I'll do it my way rather than humbling yourself in submission. The reign of God acknowledging your need of God's grace. The one who fell from heaven like lightning. The one who was perfect and beautiful and wise and blameless and in the presence of God. He became proud. That was the problem. And right from the beginning he's tempted human beings in the same direction. What are Satan's words to Eve in the garden when he tempts her.

[00:13:59] Disobey God he says to her. You will be like God.

[00:14:04] It sounds good doesn't it. You will be like God. You don't need another god besides yourself. You don't need to humble yourself before anyone else. You don't need to battle before some other being be your own god do it your way. That's all you need. The temptation to pride. Temptation to self-sufficiency, self-centeredness, self-satisfaction, the temptation to put self right in the middle of your universe. Core human sin actually is idolatry. It's the choice to worship something else rather than the God who reveals himself in Jesus. That's always been at the core of

human sin idolatry. And right at the heart of idolatry is pride. I do not need you God. Let's think for a few moments about Moses. Moses was the great leader who was used by God to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt out of captivity, out of bondage, out of suffering, to lead the people of God into freedom into a new land, a new experience, a new beginning, a profound experience of God's grace and listen to these words that Moses spoke to God's peoples just before he died. And it's just before the people are about to enter the Promised Land. This land they've been longing for, just before they go into it. This is what Moses says to them. This is from Deuteronomy. Be careful to obey all the commands I'm giving you today. Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these 40 years humbling you, and testing you, to prove your character. Yes, he humbled you. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone. Rather we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. You know what the problem is. When you try to live by bread alone. Bread is what we make. It's what we produce. It's what we earn it's what we achieve. It's what we do.

[00:16:24] There's no life in what we do. Life comes from the Word of God. The life-giving words that come from God's mouth. He did this to teach you that people did not live by bread alone.

[00:16:40] Rather we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. So, obey the commands of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and fearing him for the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land. It is a land where food is plentiful, and nothing is lacking. When you have eaten your fill. Be sure to praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. But that is the time to be careful. Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the Lord your God and disobey His commands for when you have become full and prosperous.

[00:17:19] When you've built fine homes to live in, when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else. Be careful. Do not become proud at that time and forget the Lord your God who rescued you from slavery.

[00:17:37] And those are words for our age aren't they. When you've become full and prosperous when you built fine homes to live in your flocks and heads a large as silver and gold and multiplied. Be careful do not become proud at that time. Do not think I can live by bread alone. I've achieved all this.

[00:17:59] Moses goes on. Do not forget that he led you through the great and terrifying wilderness. He did this to humble you and test you for your own good. He did all this so you would never say to yourself, I have achieved this wealth with my own strength and energy. Remember the Lord your God.

[00:18:23] Pride forgets God. Pride imagines it can live by bread alone. Pride closes the door on God's grace because it imagines it doesn't need God's grace. Pride makes self-God. Remember the Lord your God. If we claim to be followers of Jesus. Then we need to actually follow Jesus. We need to do what he would do. We need to live as he would live. And his way is way of humility, not of pride. The Apostle Paul when he gives his beautiful definition of love and 1 Corinthians 13, one of the things he says about love, is love is not proud. And of course, it's not because pride is all about self and love is the exact opposite of that. That old testament prophetic picture of what Satan was originally like. Perfect beautiful wise blameless in the presence of God. Sounds like a description of Jesus doesn't it. Beautiful wise blameless perfect in the presence of God. But where as that led Satan to a place of immense pride and he fell from heaven. Jesus did exactly the opposite. Jesus was totally humble in his humility. He chose to leave heaven. See that difference.

No, I'm not for a moment suggesting that Satan is the equal opposite of Jesus. That's not the case but Satan chose the way of pride and it caused him to fall from heaven. Jesus was absolutely humble and is in his humility. He chose to leave heaven. Bible says you. You followers of Jesus. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus say. That's what following means. Though he was not God. He did though he was God he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead he gave up his divine privileges. He took the humble position of a slave born as a human being and when he appeared in human form he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. And when Satan tempted Jesus. When Satan said move from that place of humility. That place of submission to the father when Satan urged Jesus to use his power and his position for self-centered reasons to meet his own needs to build up his fame and reputation to put himself at the center of his thinking and attitudes. What did Jesus say to him in reply. It is written.

[00:21:27] Men shall not live by bread alone. That's not the way of coming to life. Men will live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Remember the Lord your God. So, humility or pride one opens you up to receive God's grace and live in it.

[00:21:50] The other closes you off from God. Puts you in a place of opposition to God. So, Peter's advice to his readers in exile is humble yourselves under the mighty power of God.

[00:22:03] Remember the Lord your God. Remember who God is. Remember what he's done what he's done for you. Remember how much you need him.

[00:22:12] Remember that you can't live by bread alone by your own achievements your own success. You can't live by that. Continually humble yourselves before God and. Serve each other in humility.

[00:22:29] Follow Jesus follow his example live as he shows you how to live and out of your humility before God and the grace he pours into your life humble yourselves before each other. Serve one another.

[00:22:44] And then he says but stay alert. Watch out for the devil. Your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Looking for someone he can lead into the place of pride. It's so easy to be led into that place. Pride is such a subtle temptation, such a subtle sin, and it seems that we have a natural disposition towards pride. You know when I'm being the most humble I can be when I'm seeking to humble myself before God and seeking to serve others and put them first, is a little thought that comes into my mind and says you are doing very well with this humility. And I become proud of my humility.

[00:23:36] Stay alert. Watch out. Remember the Lord your God and humble yourselves under his mighty power.

[00:23:47] And a very practical expression of their humbling of yourself before God is that you will give all your worries and cares to him because he cares for you. See holding on to your worries and cares is actually an expression of pride.

[00:24:06] So I need to sort these things out. I'm not going to do it. Who is.

[00:24:11] Stuff that I'm worried about these concerns these anxieties. I've got to hold onto those and fix them. Bringing all your worries and cares to God and trusting them to him it's an act of humility.

[00:24:26] I can't cope with this God. I need you. Here it is. I hand it all over. And you're immediately opening yourself up to receive his grace because you're not standing in the place of pride.

[00:24:43] So Peter's closing words to these first century believers living in exile. Humble yourselves under the mighty power of God.

[00:24:52] Humble yourselves before each other and serve one another, in humility bring all your cares to God acknowledging your absolute need of Him who cares for you and in so doing open yourselves up to receive his grace.

[00:25:07] Stay alert watching out for the devil's tricks as he tries to convince you that you don't need God. Stand firm against him and be strong in your faith. This is following Jesus and living as a Christian in the land of exile. Humbling yourself before God. Out of their humbling yourselves before one another and serving each other. In Humility bringing all your cares to God acknowledging in need of him and in doing that opening yourself up to God's grace and staying alert watching out for the devil's tricks as he tries to convince you there's another way. Do it your own way. Stand firm against and be strong in your faith. This is following Jesus. Augustine of Hippo who is one of the great early church fathers says about seventeen hundred years ago he wrote this pride is the commencement of all sin. Pride is the commencement of all sin. The devil only seeks for the door of pride whereby to enter. Let's pray. And in some moments of silence. I want to invite you. As you reflect. On what may be God has been saying this to you this morning I wanna invite you. To choose again to humble yourself before God.

[00:26:46] And to say to God living in humility what what's it gonna look like for me today. This week. It's going to look like.

[00:26:57] Amongst my family with my workmates at school or at university amongst the people that I spend time with. What's it gonna look like for me to live in humility and follow the example of Jesus. Just think about it and ask God to show you to speak to you.