

Go Ahead – Be a Little Strange

1 Peter 1:17-21

Easter 3A April 23, 2023 Pastor Pufahl

Are you strange? Do you stand out? Are you different? Travel to a different country, or just travel down south. You may think you don't have an accent until you hear all the y'all's. Then you will quickly see that you are different, don'tcha-know?

Is it a good thing to stand out? Is it good to be different? I suppose it depends on who you talk to about this. Perhaps a high school student who feels that those who "stand out" are the ones who get picked on the most, may say it is best to just fit in like everyone else and not stand out. If you are trying to get a job and everyone's resume is very similar, then it may be a good thing to try to stand out so you get noticed.

So, are you different? Do you stand out? Or do you just blend in with the crowd? Here are some words from our lesson: **Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.** I really want to stop there because I feel this one verse really lays the foundation for the rest of our lesson. So, let's pull this verse apart a little. *Since you call on a Father.* We do that daily. We call or pray. To whom? Peter really points out what Jesus already pointed out in the Lord's Prayer...God is our Father. So, these words are being spoken to children of God, believers. You, me.

What is this Father going to do? *Judge impartially.* You see, God cannot be bribed. He cannot be fooled. He won't look at us and think, "Oh, they are clean shaven. Oh, look at their fancy clothes. Oh, look at how they present themselves...they must be good people. They must be worthy of being judged according to the curve." Nope. Not this God. There is no "slipping him a \$20" to look the other way. He is impartial. He is fair, more than fair. He judges according to perfection.

Now to the rest of the verse: *live out your lives as foreigners.* Foreigners could be translated "aliens" or "strangers." This is where I got my theme – Go Ahead. Be a little strange. I mentioned it already...just travel to a foreign country and you will stick out. We dress differently. We move differently. We talk differently. We are different. Depending on where you travel, that can be good (some resorts will treat you like kings and queens...because they want the tips) or it can be bad (they will take advantage of you). Either way, you will stand out. You may even seem strange to them.

God wants us to live this way and do that in reverent fear. FEAR?! Now, that doesn't sound good. Remember, God is our Father. Now we are to live in fear? Is this the same fear as when a mom would say to a child, "Just wait until your dad gets home"? So, our God, our Father will judge us, no bribes allowed, and we are to live in fear? There is an element of this word which would give us fear. If you feel that you can do what you want, when you want, and expect zero consequences, then you should live in fear and be afraid. If you are "Christian" and yet refuse to repent of your sin, then yes, you should live in fear and be afraid. Because in those cases, you are not a child of God. He is not your Father. He is a vengeful God who can shake mountains and snuff out stars. And if you think that you can escape his sight, remember, he judges impartially. He sees all. Just the thought of that should cause us fear. But should it really? Listen to the end of the lesson: **For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.**

I've bought a lot of stuff in my life. Mostly I pay for it with money. There were times when I made a trade. There were other times when I worked for it. I can tell you, the items I purchased after I worked hard to earn the money, were the ones I treasured the most. I wanted to keep them as new as possible. No one would be able to touch my stuff unless they washed their hands...twice. Do you know where those items are? I don't. Sure, I still have stuff, but some of those items I purchased growing up...they are trash. Why? I bought something new, different. Plus, I bought those things with money, something which is also perishable. What did Jesus use? His blood. The very thing which flows through our bodies to keep us alive...Jesus gave that. Because he gave his blood, he had nothing to keep him alive. So, that means of course, he died. And for what? For you! I don't know what that is like. I have never wanted something that bad. I never have given that much for something. I would just use money, something they say you can always earn again. You can't earn blood again. You can't earn life again. Once it is given, it is given and gone. But that is what Jesus gave for you. He wanted you that bad! Of course, God raised Jesus, just like our lesson says. And our faith is in that same Jesus who took those sins, gave his blood, and rose again.

So, go back to that first verse. Knowing Jesus gave his very blood so you would have life, now look at that first verse again: **Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.** We call God our Father, and rightfully so. He is! And he is a Father who loves more than any father could love a son or daughter. Yes, he will judge impartially. But think that through. If Jesus gave his blood to remove our sin, if Jesus gave his life to give us life, then how does God judge us? According to the truth...Jesus' truth. According to what Jesus has done. There is no need to bribe God because Jesus is perfect. Now what? **Live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.** That fear isn't being afraid anymore. God our Father isn't a vengeful God, waiting to punish us. He is our Father who waits for us in heaven. This "fear" is more AWE of how much God loves us, how much Jesus was willing to suffer for us, how permanent our place is in God's eternal family. And, since we are part of God's eternal family, what does he ask of us? **To live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.** We are foreigners, strangers, aliens. Yes, other people who are not yet a part of that eternal family may look at us in a weird way. We may stick out of the crowd. We stick out because we don't live for this world anymore. We live like we are just aliens, strangers walking around. We live like we know this isn't our home. We live as one who looks forward to seeing that Heavenly Father, and that dear Son he sent to save us, all thanks to the faith the Holy Spirit has given us.

Will it look strange to other people to live this way? Yes. To that I say...go ahead – be a little strange! After all, this isn't where we belong. No, we belong in heaven with our Father! Amen.