

Sermon 7, A Little Reminder, 2 Peter 1:12-15

Proposition: Christians need to remember, Christians need to remind.

- I. Peter will keep on reminding because. . . , vv. 12-14
 - A. Getting to Heaven depends on it, v. 12a
 - B. Already knowing the truth doesn't exempt you from reminders, v. 12b
 1. You know the truth
 2. You're standing firm in the truth
 3. You have the truth
 - C. It's the right thing to do, v. 13a
 - D. He's about to lay aside his tent, vv. 13b, 14
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- II. Peter will make every effort so that you can recall the truth when he's gone, v. 15
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Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, why did you come to church this evening? I well remember my days in college. Every Sunday, I would go to church morning and evening. My roommate would then ask me every Sunday whether I had learned anything new. And almost every week, I would say "No." He never outright told me to quit going to church, but he didn't go himself and his thoughts on the subject seemed rather obvious. Well, Peter addresses this question in our text tonight. Is church primarily about learning something new? Is the knowledge of Christ mostly going to be new knowledge, additional information about Christ that you didn't know last week? Of course not. Rather, the knowledge of Christ is mostly going to be what you already know but acted like you had forgotten. The knowledge of Christ is something we need to remember, and it's something we need to remind each other of.

I. Peter will keep on reminding because. . . , vv. 12-14

Our text this evening begins with five reasons that Peter will keep on reminding us about the truths that he's already stated, and especially in general of the truth that his whole letter centers on — viz., the need to grow in the knowledge of Christ. He will keep on reminding us of this because it's really important.

A. Getting to Heaven depends on it, v. 12a

How important is it? Getting to Heaven depends on it. That's what the "therefore" at the beginning of v. 12 means. If you formally consent to your salvation, if you ratify your salvation and practice the virtues that come through knowing Christ, then you will have a rich entrance

into Christ's eternal kingdom. The need to obey this way in order to reach Heaven is the first reason Peter gives for reminding us. He wants us to know the truth so that we can have a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom!

Why does getting to Heaven depend on being reminded? Because we are forgetful. If you've ever met someone who walked away from church and Bible reading years ago, you know how different that person's thinking and actions are from yours. He stopped getting his reminders, and even though he may still know the truth, it's probably obvious to him and to you that he's no longer on his way to Heaven. So don't walk away from reminders.

B. Already knowing the truth doesn't exempt you from reminders, v. 12b

Anyway, Peter next addresses our common idea that if you already know something you don't need to be reminded of it. I know that light travels 186,000 miles per second, or did when I was young, and if you tell me that it does I might get all huffy and tell you that I have a *graduate degree*, thank you very much. Or perhaps your car beeps when you don't buckle your seatbelt. Maybe you've thrown a few choice words at it from time to time when you didn't feel like buckling in. Anyway, we tend to think that being reminded of what we know is rather pointless, or even downright insulting. But the apostles didn't think so. Mature Christians don't think so! A wise believer is delighted to be reminded because that's how we stay the course and arrive at the Celestial City.

1. You know the truth

Well, to soften the blow of this reminder, Peter reminds us that it is in fact a reminder. He describes believers' relationship to the truth in three ways. First of all, you know the truth. Brothers and sisters, you and I know that Jesus is Lord, that He is God, that He came to earth to save us from our sins. We know that we need to obey God if we want to be saved. We know that it's good to be good and bad to be bad, and we know that God's power will help us be good when we trust in Him. All Christians agree on these truths; all Christians know these truths. These are the kinds of truths that Peter has just been discussing. The bottom line of his letter here is that you and I need to know Christ, and every Christian already knows that.

So you know the truth. I know you know the truth, because I talk to you and hear you speak it to one another and to me. You know the truth; indeed, the very fact that you are here at evening service is huge testimony to your maturity as believers.

2. You're standing firm in the truth

Next, though, Peter tells his readers that they are standing firm in the truth. They are established. They aren't going to be pushed off the truth. I know that this statement is true of you all, too. That's why you're here. I know none of you are going to believe the lie that abortion is not murder, that the Bible is not authoritative, that men can become women and vice-versa, and so on. You are standing firm in the truth, not believing the distortions and lies that our culture throws at us. Praise God for that! Keep up the good work, my brothers and sisters. Don't turn away; don't fall off the truth on which you've built your lives. It is true, and the reward for sticking with it is great indeed.

3. You have the truth

Finally, Peter emphasizes to his readers that the truth is right in front of them. It's "present," as the KJV says. Do you feel this way about the truth? Do you regard it as a big part of your life? I know you do. Peter knew that you would. He had been around mature Christians for much of his life, and he knew that they — people like us — know the truth, stand on the truth, and have the truth. That's who we are.

And yet given all those characteristics, he steps right up and says "I'm going to remind you anyway." Brothers and sisters, people like you, the Sunday night-Wednesday night crowd, need reminders. In fact, we probably need them more than the Sunday morning only crowd, and that's why we spend the time and effort we need to get them!

Knowledge of the truth about Jesus doesn't exempt you from reminder. Rather, it is in one sense a precondition for reminder. You can't be reminded of something you didn't know in the first place! But since you know it, I'm going to remind you and Peter's going to remind you.

C. It's right, v. 13a

Besides, it's only fair that you be reminded. Peter uses the standard Greek word for "justice" or "righteousness" here to explain that he considers a reminder to be the right thing to do.

Is this how you make decisions? Do you do your best to make decisions based on the outcome you guess will take place? Or do you make decisions based on what is unquestionably the right thing to do? Brothers and sisters, take it from an apostle. We need to do what's right, even when it might seem a little silly. These were mature Christians, yet Peter reminded them of the truth. He did it because it was right, and it's still right.

D. He's about to lay aside his tent, vv. 13b, 14

But though it's right to remind, the question might arise, "Why now, Peter?" And here's his answer. He's reminding them now precisely because he is about to lay aside his tent. That's what he calls his body — a tent. The whole idea of a tent is that it's not permanent. It's a temporary shelter. If you really want something to protect you from the wind and rain and snow and mud, you're going to need more than a thin sheet of nylon with a door too low to walk through. All of us live in houses rather than tents, and there's a reason for that. But we don't get to opt out of being embodied in this life. Sometimes the fragility and tent-likeness of our bodies hits us hard. Sometimes we start thinking they are very durable, and then it really hits us hard. But the bottom line is that Peter knows his days are numbered, as Jesus also told him. Perhaps the apostle was in jail at this point, facing a trial date. Perhaps he was deathly ill. Anyway, he also knew that Jesus had predicted his death in the famous scene on the beach at the end of John 21. And so, knowing his time is short, he determined to write to the believers about the most important thing in the world: the knowledge of Christ. Brothers and sisters, that's why we're looking at the book together now. No, I don't anticipate dying soon. No, I don't have any plan or desire to leave this church for another one. But I have a desire to impart to you the most important truths that I can for as long as the Lord graciously calls me to pastor here. And that's what led me to 2 Peter. I want you to know Christ. I want you to grow in the knowledge of Christ.

E. You need to wake up, v. 13c

Well, the last reason the apostle gives for reminding them is that they need to wake up. This verb rendered “stir you up” means “wake you up,” as we would say in contemporary English. Peter doesn’t want you to snooze your way through the Christian life! Instead, he wants to wake you up. Wake up and smell the coffee. Wake up and know Christ. Paul said something similar in Ephesians 5. Brothers and sisters, if I asked most of the people I know to describe their life in one word, they would probably choose the word “busy.” I fear that that is the American condition, though not the human one (yet). And when you’re busy, you get tired because you’re too busy to sleep. Peter doesn’t want you to snooze through this, though. He won’t let you. He’s going to wake you up by reminding you of the truths about Jesus that you once knew.

Are you sleepwalking through the Christian life? What would that look like? Going through the motions rather than having your heart involved. Being a different person at home and work than you are at church. Habitually capitulating to some besetting sin and making no real plans or even resolutions to fight it. Never reading the Bible, never learning about the faith, never praying or practicing the other spiritual disciplines — any and all of those are signs of the sleepwalking Christian. Don’t be that guy! Wake up.

II. Peter will make every effort so that you can recall the truth when he’s gone, v. 15

So, in case you missed the last three verses, Peter repeats that he’s going to remind you. Just as he called on us to make every effort to show Christian virtue in our daily life, so he promises that he will make every effort to drill these truths into our heads so hard that we will be able to remember them anytime.

Do we do that for ourselves? For our children? When you get dementia, what will be the last thing to go: Your memory of old *Seinfeld* episodes, or your stash of hymns and Bible verses? Peter was making every effort to get these truths out there, in writing and in human memories.

III. Application

Well, I’ve spent the sermon talking about what Peter was going to do. Peter was going to remind everyone about the truth. Peter was going to make every effort to let people remember the truth when he’s gone. But brothers and sisters, Peter stands as an example to us. First of all, we need to hear his command. We need to remember. And then second, we need to imitate his example. We need to remind each other.

A. Remember

Why should we remember? Well, because of all the reasons Peter gave. We should remember because unless we remember, we can’t get to Heaven. Without remembering, how will we know the truth and be firmly established in it? Without remembering, how can we know Christ? Right? If I say to you “You should know Christ” and you say “Who’s that?” something is wrong. To be a Christian is more than cognitive but it’s not less. It’s more than relational, but it’s not less.

Ultimately, the best reason to remember is because you love Jesus! Imagine living with a spouse with dementia or Alzheimer’s. Does anyone here think it would be fun to have your beloved husband of fifty years tell you to get out of your own house because he doesn’t know you? Well,

obviously it hurts but you can at least comfort yourself by saying, “He’s losing it. His mind is going. He doesn’t know what he’s saying. My real beloved hubby is gone, and this is all that’s left in his place.” But imagine, if you would, how much it would hurt if your non-mentally-ill spouse forgot you. Imagine your beloved turning to you and saying “Who are you and what are you doing in my house? Get out!” No matter how much you try to persuade your spouse, or what evidence you bring forward, your spouse insists that s/he doesn’t know you and tells you to leave. Nonetheless, all the evidence suggests that there’s nothing wrong mentally and your spouse simply has forgotten you. How would you feel? How crushed would you be?

And how does Jesus feel when we forget Him? When we walk away from Him? When we stop talking to Him in prayer, stop calling Him beloved, stop worshipping Him? That’s why you should remember — to please your Savior.

B. Remind

But in addition to remembering, you should also remind one another. Peter did this because it was the right thing to do. He knew the truth, and He made every effort to share the truth with those who already knew it and those who didn’t already know it. But specifically, as we see in our text, he sought those who already knew the truth and reminded them.

How have you reminded a fellow believer of the truth this week? What have you said? What verses have you sent someone? What ways have you helped reinforce and brother’s or sister’s belief?

To know Christ, we need to remember Him and we need to remind one another of Him. He’s worth it. Amen.