

God's Own People: A study in 1 Peter

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Published by Augsburg Fortress

Session 2: A Trusting People

1 Peter 1:[13-16] 17-23

Sermon Reflection: What did you hear in the sermon on Sunday that stood out for you? Did you read through the whole of 1 Peter? Any impressions or questions?



Focus Activity

Reflect on the Focus Image. Who or what do you trust? Finish the following sentences.

- I'd trust you with my personal belongings:
- I'd trust you with my money:
- I'd trust you with my family:
- I'd trust you with my health:
- I'd trust you with my future:
- I'd trust you with my spiritual sensibilities:

Pray

God of re-birth and new life, your Son, Jesus, trusted you and was obedient unto death on a cross, and you glorified him by raising him up. Give us the faith and hope we need to trust in you above all things, as Jesus did. And by our obedience to your truth, make us holy as you are holy. Be with us as we study your word, that we might come to know you more deeply. Amen.

Open Scripture

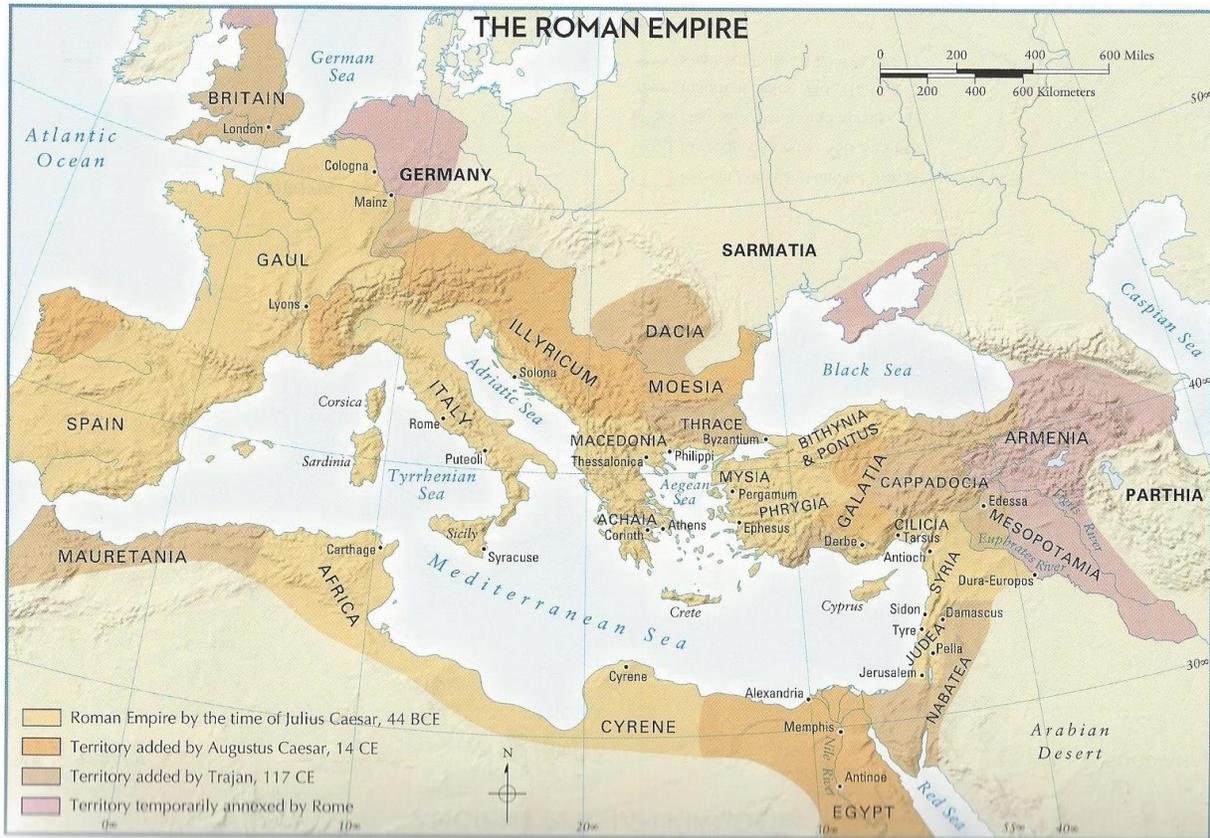
Devotional Reading: Read 1 Peter 1:13-23

- What reasons do those addressed have for putting their trust in God?
- If you were the one receiving this epistle, what stands out to you as being most important in this section?

Historical Context

1. Though Peter's epistle is thought to have been for distribution to all the early churches, it is addressed to the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, all found in what we generally refer to as Asia Minor, part of Turkey. The writer says these fledgling churches are in "exile."

- Find the churches addressed in 1 Peter on this map. What do you notice about their locations? Why do you suppose churches were planted in this area? Why might they have been persecuted?



2. Some biblical scholars discern the presence of a baptismal liturgy behind the structure of an epistle. Today's text contains words and phrases that suggest this was part of the letter's Sitz im Leben or "setting in life."

- Read through the passage again, underlining words or phrases that remind you of baptism, and circling those which call to mind other liturgical dialogs or ritual actions. If you were an early Christian suffering persecution, how might the use of baptismal imagery in this letter affect you?

Literary Context

1. Epistles were written for a purpose, not just to say “hi” (although many do include personal greetings). The purpose was generally pastoral—the writer was concerned about a situation in the church and wished to address it. He would do so using up to three types of arguments structured by the rules of Greco–Roman rhetoric.

1 Peter uses each one: approving or condemning action (see 3:15–16), encouraging what is good and discouraging what is bad (see 1:3–13), and persuading people to follow a certain course of action (see 2:11–13).

- In 1 Peter 1:17–23, what most inspires you to understanding or action?

2. The session Scripture text uses a “judicial” image to describe what Christ did to save us. He paid the price with his blood, and God’s justice was upheld.

- What is your reaction to this image?
- Is there another way to describe what Christ did to save us, according to the text?

Lutheran Context

1. In 1 Peter 1:17, the writer advises the churches that if they invoke as Father the one who judges all impartially by their deeds, then they had better live in “reverent fear.” This sounds like Luther’s explanations of the Ten Commandments in his Small Catechism. Each explanation begins with, “We should fear and love God....” In the epistle and the catechism, the meaning of fear is about respect or holding something in awe.

- Why should the people live in reverent fear? What are the futile ways mentioned in 1:18? What makes trusting in God possible?

2. As Lutherans, we hold scripture up to scripture to better understand its meaning. Let’s hold 1 Peter 1:17–23 up against a passage from one of Luther’s favorite epistles—Romans 12:9–21.

- As the Romans text is read out loud sentence by sentence, give a thumb up when you hear something close to the same advice as the 1 Peter text.
- Give a thumb down if you hear something in Romans that contradicts 1 Peter.
- How does hearing Romans 12:9–21 help you better understand the 1 Peter text?

Devotional Context

1. Look over 1 Peter 1:17–23 again. What reasons are they given for trusting in God?

- If you wrote an epistle to your own church, what issues would you address, what advantages would you point out, and what reasons would you give for trusting in God?

2. Scripture is transformational—it changes you. Our response to hearing the gospel proclaimed in scripture is not passive. It involves action words—go, tell, share, serve, etc.

- Make a list of the top five or ten action words implied by 1 Peter 1:17–23. (The subject can be God, us, or the church.)

Wrap-Up

This session was about the call to fully trust God. Imagine you have a drinking glass in front of you, and the liquid within it represents your trust in God. Is your glass of trust near the bottom, about half filled, or full to the brim?

Pray

God, you are worthy of trust, more than the things we own, more than the rulers who rise and then fall away, more than retirement accounts, market portfolios, and IRAs, more than even ourselves. Help us to trust in you, not only in times of trial, but in times of joy, so that we might enjoy life abundantly. For you are our God, and we are your people. Amen.

Go with God. Trust in God's grace. Thanks be to God!

Homework

- Read next week's text, 1 Peter 2:19-25.
- Think about: What does it mean to you that scripture is the "living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:23)? What songs or hymns also talk about scripture in this way? (Browse through a hymnal or do an online search on "hymns songs God's word.")