



3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – April 22-24, 2023

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1: 13-21

Preacher: Pastor Scott Oelhafen

Sermon Theme: *Christians Dare to Be Different*

1. **We're made different by the blood of Jesus**
2. **We're called to live different lives**

***13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."<sup>1a</sup> 17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. 18 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.***

Dear fellow believers of Jesus, still basking in the warm glow of Easter,

How would you classify today's fashions and hairstyles? If you'd walk into the Boutique in downtown New Ulm or through the CAF on MLC's campus, could you really define which fashion describes this generation? I'd have a hard time doing that. To me, it seems like almost anything goes. Today seems to be a time when people dare to be different. Not everyone chooses to dress or look the same. Some want to be different by wearing clothes and styles from previous decades. It's not uncommon to see someone wearing *Brady Bunch* bell-bottom pants or tie-dyed t-shirts. Guys may not sport grease in their hair like they did in the '50s, but many like to use hair gel. Styles from previous decades pop back up on those who want to be different. And if your closet, or repertoire of clothes and shoes are considered hopelessly out-of-date, just wait a few years. They'll be back in style. Then you too can "dare to be different."

So is there anything wrong with daring to be different? Of course not the Bible says. God's Word tells us: ***whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10: 31)***. This passage gives us a tremendous amount of Christian freedom. It tells us that as long as we're serving God and His people in love, we have freedom within reason to dress any way we'd like. Obviously, I'm not talking about wearing suggestive clothes or slogans that undermine God-given

authority. And actually, being different for the Christian is what our lives are all about. God hasn't put us on planet earth to blend into the ways of the world. We're not here to blend in with selfish attitudes and the me-first mentalities of the world around us. God has called us to be like Him – holy, loving, and kind. So Christians really are different!

In our sermon reading today, Peter doesn't dictate the latest and greatest fashion styles for us. Instead, He simply reminds us of the timeless truth that Christians do stand out. It's important that we remember that we are different from everyone else. Peter wants us to remember that **Christians Dare to Be Different**. Based on the words of 1 Peter, chapter 1, We'll find out that 1: We've been made different by the blood of Jesus. And 2: we're called to live different lives for Christ.

Remember the people who Peter was writing to? These weren't people who were worried about the weather. They were real people with real-world problems. They were persecuted because of their faith and needed real assurance. And Peter gives it to them in the opening words of our sermon reading.

***18 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, Yes, Christians Dare to Be Different.*** We've been made different by the blood of Jesus. Look at verse 18 with me again. Peter says that *we've been redeemed (or "bought back") from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,*. The Greek word that Peter uses for "empty" means: "void of any purpose, truth, or value." Peter is referring here to that sinful part of us that has been transferred to every human being in the family tree of history since the Garden of Eden. We're born empty, spiritually empty. And the sin Peter is describing here doesn't just mean wearing plaid colors with stripes. Sin doesn't just mean wearing fucia pink with red. Sin means crossing the line of God's Word in our thoughts, words, and actions. By nature, all of us are in the same boat of sin. We are spiritually empty, blind, and evil. And this only leads to eternal separation from God and eternal punishment in hell.

But don't forget, what Jesus did for us that made us different. Don't miss this point. Peter says: ***Jesus redeemed us with His precious blood.*** We're forgiven because Jesus died for ours ins on the cross and rose from the grave. Have you thought about that lately? We've been redeemed. Let's talk about what that means. I'm sure you've seen movies or TV shows where someone has been kidnapped and held for ransom? Did you ever wonder, just for a second, how much ransom a kidnapper might ask for you? How much are you worth ... alive? \$20, \$2000, \$2 million dollars? When I think about that for myself, I always come up with about \$20 bucks. I suppose that's why I'm not a big target for kidnappers. I guess it's hard for me to see someone paying millions of dollars for my release. So when I come to verse 18 here, I see Peter agrees with me. He says that: ***you know that it wasn't with perishable things such as gold or silver you were redeemed.*** No one would ever

pay that much ransom for us, right? Wrong Peter says. Someone has paid MORE for us. Much more.

What was the ransom price? Look at verse 19: ... ***with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.***” Do you know your blood type? Are you AB negative? If so, you have one of the rarest of all blood types. It's precious and valuable. It's hard to come by. And it can save lives. Just ask any one who has needed blood. But, as precious and valuable as AB blood is, the blood of Jesus is even more precious. And only His blood saves us. Jesus lived that holy or perfect life that God demanded from us and gave that life on the cross as the lamb of God. He shed His perfect blood to pay the ransom price for our sins. We can't possibly comprehend that price. But, rejoice with me that our sins have been paid in full. How do we know for sure? That's why Easter is so important. On Easter, ***God raised Jesus from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*** Easter means that Jesus was telling the truth. He is the Son of God. Our sins have been forgiven. In the future, eternal life is ours guaranteed. And right now, we're free from the devil's power and sin's control. That's why **Christians Dare to Be Different.** We're made different by the precious blood of Jesus.

Now, Christians have an important role in the world. Until we get to heaven, God's Word tells us to thankfully serve and share Jesus. **Christians Dare to Be Different.** Peter tells us to live differently in reverent fear of God. He put it this way: ***" 17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.*** Peter says here that God doesn't play favorites. He's impartial and fair. And He commands us to fear Him. Fear has a negative meaning for most of us. God doesn't want us to be afraid of Him, and run away from his Word. Instead, he wants us to respect what He says as our loving Father in heaven.

**We Dare to Be Different.** When pressured to go along with the crowd when we know that the crowd is wrong, we can stand up for what is right. Christians have problems and troubles too. (In that respect, believers are no different from those around us). But, we're different in that we now call on our Father in prayer and know He hears us and answers us every single time in his perfect time and way. Christians even cry at funerals. Jesus cried at the grave of His friend Lazarus. But, as the Bible says: *we don't grieve like the rest who have no hope.* Only when we hear His Word, God comforts hurting souls with the promise of help now and a reunion with our Christian loved ones in heaven.

Finally, God's Word tells us to be His witnesses, to share with others the Christian hope we have. So what does this mean? Years ago, I remember seeing a poster in my Lutheran Elementary School: *If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence of convict you?* Thought provoking, don't you think? In other words, do other people see Jesus in our daily lives? Do they see us willingly going to God's house to worship Him and study His Word? Do they see us expressing our faith with patience and random acts of kindness? We may be the only Bible that others may

read. No, Christians aren't better than anyone else. We're not perfect. But, by God's grace, we're perfectly forgiven. And that means that we **Dare to Be Different**. With His Spirit, God helps us witness for Him through our silent examples and our intentional invitations to our friends, family, and neighbors to join us for worship next week. In that way, we **Dare to Be Different**.

If you ever feel that you don't quite fit in with the world around you, take courage from Christ. You don't. We are only strangers here, that heaven is our home. But, until we get there, I pray, you will seek to be different than the world around us, and more like Jesus Christ – the one who loved us and gave himself for us. Amen.