



BETWEEN 6:00 AM—9:00 AM: A TRUCK AND THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

I was driving to church last Sunday with 1 Peter 2:13-17 on my mind. It's about submitting to civil authorities as long as they don't tell us to sin. Then I stopped at a red-light behind a truck with the license plate, "RBL DAD." This hefty Dodge Ram with the defiant attitude captures the present times perfectly. Everyone's a rebel. It's the preferred identity for Americans. It's cool to oppose, go against and defy. To present ourselves as "RBL [insert name here]."



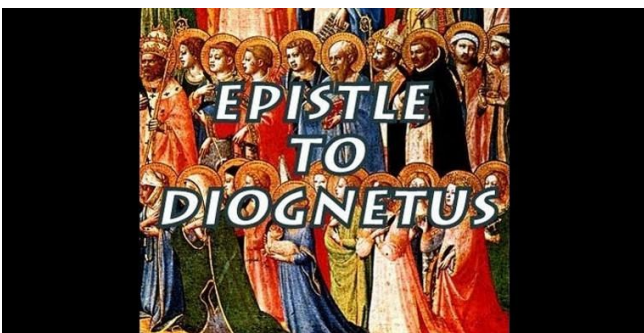
But Peter tells Christians not to be James-Dean-Rebels-Without-a-Cause. Do you know that saying? You might not if you weren't born in the U.S. It comes from a famous movie and refers to a person who is unhappy with society but doesn't have a clear idea of what he's fighting for. Rather, Christians aren't to be fighters but fortifiers. We're to shore up our cities until our King comes and overturns all existing kingdoms. Yes, we're to be a civic-minded family of polite, resilient and generous believers. Again, this starts with obeying the law — assuming compliance doesn't collide with our King's commands. (And, of course, we resist legislation and movements that dehumanize and destroy. We'll have to talk more about the so-called Equality Act working through Congress.) After obeying as best we can, we then do all we can to bring good to others and to bless our cities and towns. We do that with prayer, hospitality, gifts, reason and respectful truth-telling. Let's look again at one verse from last Sunday's message:



1Pet. 2:15 *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.*

Joel Moment has had a lot of lamenting, confessing and repenting over the last 11 months. As we've humbled ourselves, we've only been lifted up by God who is quick to forgive and restore. Let's talk to God about any rebellious thoughts or actions against the authority figures in our lives, whether in government, school, the workplace or the home.

BETWEEN 9:00 AM—12:00 PM: GET A LOOK AT THIS SHINY LITERARILY "PEARL" WRITTEN BY ONE OF OUR OWN



Who doesn't love a detective tale about a mysterious book? As the story goes, a college student named Tommaso d'Arezzo bought lunch from a fish seller in Italy in 1435. The fishmonger was using pages from an ancient manuscript to wrap the fish sandwiches he sold. The student sensed the paper was special and rescued the rest of the book from the unknowing fishmonger. Boom! What a find! The book contained an anonymous letter called the "Epistle to Diognetus." It's not equal with Scripture but can benefit us.

What is it? It's an anonymous second century letter (called an "Apology") written to enlighten the world about Jesus and the Church. The word comes from 1 Peter which says that believers should be ready to give a "speech of defense" (apologia) to those who ask us why we're not walking around with sad faces (1 Pet. 3:15). One scholar called this letter the "pearl of the Patristic [Church Fathers] age." Another called it "the noblest of the early Christian writings." I'm looking forward to exploring it more fully and getting some devotional benefit from it.

Who is the recipient? The letter claims to be addressed to a man named Diognetus. He's referred to as "most excellent," which doesn't reveal much because it was a common title of respect.

What does the letter say? It touches on many interesting topics, but I want to point out aspect that inspires us today. One intriguing section discusses the strong public role that Christians were taking in the second century. Though they were waiting for their special city to appear, they weren't sitting on the sidelines (Heb. 11:10). Instead, they were in the heart of the action, participating and helping their communities. Check out this excerpt:

"[The Christians] are inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities...and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, [yet] they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives."



What a winning description of our spiritual ancestors! Notice that the author writes that "As citizens, they share in all things with others." Admittedly, this is a tad vague, but Dr. Bruce Winter argues that it proves Christians were actively engaged in society. They played a role to enhance the wellbeing of their cities.

Interestingly, 1 Peter says the same thing, and the author of the Epistle of Diognetus must have studied Peter's first letter in his own fellowship. Again, we're not just citizens of heaven, but citizens of all the unholy cities that dot the earth.

Let's do our best to flood them with tangible goodness and irrefutable truth about King Jesus until he appears.

BETWEEN 12:00 PM—3:00 PM: FRANK CHEN MAKES A SPLASH AT VALLEY

I walked into Frank's office for our Monday morning meeting and this is the scene that greeted me. Frank prepared tea for us. I had never seen this wooden apparatus for making it, being a dip-the-Lipton-bag-in-the-paper-cup" guy. I thought of this unexpected hospitality and was reminded that we've had an impossible time offering it over the last twelve months. But conditions are changing. Let's thank the Lord for welcoming us into his presence and feeding our souls with spiritual food and drink (*"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies"* (Ps. 23:5). Pray for Frank as he continues to initiate cross-cultural evangelism and outreach at Valley.



BETWEEN 3:00 PM—4:00 PM: Join the AFTERNOON Joel Moment Prayer Gathering. Go to Zoom.com and enter Meeting ID and Password.

BETWEEN 7:00 PM—8:00 PM: Join the EVENING Joel Moment Prayer Gathering. Go to Zoom.com and enter Meeting ID and Password.



3:00 PM Prayer Gathering

PASTOR RICK COUNTRYMAN *[This long-time senior pastor of Big Valley Grace Church in Modesto (and one-time candidate for mayor) will charge us up for prayer by talking about Scripture and his concern for his city. His wife Erin is to his left.]*



Gen. 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,

Psa. 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Matt. 4:4 But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

2Tim. 3:15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

7:00 PM Prayer Gathering

TIM GILDERSLEEVE *[This guy knows that the King’s heart is for the poor, the elderly and the disabled. He’ll share his testimony and how God has led him to seek the welfare of our city. Tim has also run for office many times. He’ll touch on that.]*

Matt. 25:40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’



GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #1 (7min.): 1Pet. 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Let’s glorify God now. Praise him in your own words. Give him credit for every good thing in your life. Thank him for the bad things, too, because he uses all for our training and eternal glory.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #2 (7 min.): 1Pet. 2:12 *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

We have to stay away from bad stuff (“abstain from the passions of the flesh” — 1 Pet. 2:11) while piling on good for others. We’re learning this in 1 Peter. Christians should lead the way in helping and serving. Let’s pray about this. We need projects. We need people. We need COVID to clear so we can step out.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #3 (7 min.): I hope this isn’t too weird for you, but please pick a theme word below and let the Holy Spirit inspire you to pray according to what pops into your head: parents, love, patience, confusion, grandchildren, President Biden, schools, sickness, athletes, sadness, prisoners, foolish people, peace, children, depression, and the homeless.