

Sermon: Elect Exiles Scattered

Text: 1 Peter 1:1-2

Discussion Questions:

What does it feel like to move? To be the new kid on the block? To be a stranger in a place where you don't know a soul—and have no family?

These are questions that many folks in Franklin County, PA might struggle to answer. We live in a place that truly values and embodies rootedness.

- Talk about this a bit. Put on your “sociologists” hat for a minute, and examine our Frankly County culture and demographics. In your experience and view, what percentage of people over the age of fifty were born and raised right here in the Cumberland Valley? What about the younger generations? What percentage of those in their thirties and forties? How about their twenties?
- What is YOUR story? Have you ever moved...or were you born and raised right here near 17201? Have there been times in your life when you've had to adapt to being an unknown—and dealt with those feelings of isolation and being an “outsider”?
- How do you think the Franklin County demographics compare with other parts of the US? Is this non-transient culture more of a rural trend? What do you think the percentages are in the larger cities—or regionally (say...the West, or the South)?
- What are the UPSIDES, or advantages of a more rooted culture where people are born, live and die in basically the same place and never have to experience what it is like to move and have to adapt to a new place?
- What are the DOWNSIDES, or disadvantages to a local culture that is very non-transient? What “negative” issues can this create in a given society?
- Here's the \$10,000 question that is especially relevant to our study of 1 Peter—Peter is addressing all followers of Jesus (both then and now) as aliens, as strangers, as exiles. His point is clear: If you're a Christian, then this world is no longer your home. In fact, as a Christian, you should EXPECT a significant measure of push-back and even persecution from the non-believing world around you.
 - How do you think this message is received in a culture that places such a high value on rootedness, family, and belonging?
 - What is it like for a person who has never experienced what it is like to be a “stranger”—to be told that they are, in fact, strangers on this earth... that the people they have known their entire lives are “foreigners”—if they don't have a relationship with Jesus?
 - If you're a follower of Christ, have there been situations in your life when you have, indeed, felt like or been treated as a foreigner?

Examination:

- Read **John 15:18-19**

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."

- Does this verse apply strictly to the twelve disciples of Jesus—or is this a verse that applies to all believers in all places at all times?
- How did the world hate Jesus? WHY did the world hate Jesus?
- How does the world love its own?
- What does Jesus mean when He says that we are not of the world?
- What does it "look like" for a Franklin County—born and raised—lived here all my life—know people everywhere I go—person to be "hated" by the world? In other words, how does this verse apply to us—here—today?
- How important is it to know that Jesus chose you out of the world? What difference does that make?

- Read **John 17:13-19**

- What does Jesus mean when He says, "They are not of the world even as I am not of it." (v. 16)?
- Why does Jesus ask for the Father to protect His disciples?

- Read **Philippians 3:20**

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

- How does this verse give you hope (or not)?
- Why does being a citizen of heaven result in our waiting for Jesus to return?

- Read **Hebrews 11:13-16**

- Who are the people that the writer of Hebrews describes as strangers & exiles?
- What does it mean that they were "seeking a country of their own" (v. 14)?

- Read **1 Peter 2:11**

"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."

- What impact does understanding that we are aliens and strangers on this earth have upon our daily choices?
- What are "fleshly lusts" trying to "do" to us?

Application:

A missionary named Jim Elliot once said, *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain that which he can never lose."* What do you think he meant by this? Do you agree? How can you apply this?