

“Raising Aliens” 1 Peter 2:18-3:7

“In a forested area overlooking a sprawling suburban neighborhood, an alien spacecraft had landed. The creatures aboard have come to observe and collect specimens. One of them wanders some distance away, when strange lights and sounds cause him to hide. Scared, the creature takes off running, with the men in pursuit. The creature attempts to get back to his spaceship, but it leaves without him. Eventually, it makes its way down an embankment into the suburban housing development below. In one house, a young boy named Elliot is sent out to pick up a pizza being delivered for his brother Michael and his friends. Elliot is about to return inside when a strange noise in the backyard catches his ears. Elliot traces the noise to a garden shed in the backyard and throws a baseball into the shed, and is scared when something inside throws it back out. Elliot rushes inside to tell everyone, but when they all come out to investigate, they find nothing in the shed, except for some strange prints, which Michael assumes must belong to some type of coyote from the nearby woods.” Later that evening, Elliot again hears noises outside in the backyard but this time he encounters E.T., an extra terrestrial or that beloved long fingered alien so many have grown to love since the movie was released in 1982. (Source: www.imdb.com) ET looks odd, sounds odd, thinks different and always seems to be getting into trouble. The only possible thing I can relate it to... is... well being a parent. And according to Peter it may be truer than you think.

We been told more than a few times and reminded by the apostle Peter on a number of occasions that we are foreigners living in a strange land. Yes, we exist as Christians living in a non Christian world. And we most certainly live with different beliefs and a very dissimilar worldview than those around us. We are called to “incarnate” Jesus, that is, be His hands and feet at our places of work and here within our community. But if it is solely our responsibility then does it cease when we are gone? Or is there something more? I remember holding Lily (my daughter) for the first time. Like all other children and all other parents I realized the great responsibility I was now entrusted with. I was not only responsible for the safety and security of this little one but her very life. On one particular Sunday at the Ice Palace my Dad held Lily and asked Allyson and I questions that I have since asked numerous parents, even some of you this morning and then my Dad baptized Lily. What I did not know at the time, but what I now know and want to share with you this morning is that we aliens (foreigners in a strange land) are responsible to **raise a generation of aliens**, whether you have children, grandchildren or no children at all.

I know it may not seem like this is what our passage may be saying to us this morning, but I think if we look closer, we may just see that how we live in community, in family and at our place of

work does in fact model and how we raise future aliens among us. I know we use that term “slave” far too loosely today as if we can somehow relate to Hebrews or more recently African American when it comes to the objectionable practice of dehumanizing certain peoples. We are not slaves to a boss or indebted to a company but most of work or have worked or will work one day and how we live as aliens while we work speaks volumes to those who employ us, those we work with, those who look on as we work as well as those two little peering eyes that we often fail to notice. Bosses are not always good bosses just ask Debbie, (our church administrator). Yes, some are “kind and gentle” as Paul says, while others are “harsh” but all share something in common: “They have authority over us.” And we are to endure. So what kind of life do we model as we raise a generation of “aliens”? I spoke not too long ago to a young man who told me about working for the region. He worships at another church and shared very openly about his struggles at his work. You see he is a Christian, a very committed Christian, in fact a very brave Christian who is not silent when it comes to talking about his faith. But in a political culture, like working for the Region, such a thing is not just shunned but disciplined. But this young man served God and not the region and for that he took great pressure from his boss and silence from his co-workers. I could tell as he told his story this was painful for him to talk about. Yet, there appeared to be a glimmer in his eyes, like he was saying but this is not the “end” of the story. And it wasn’t. He told me that work is now much better. So I asked him what had changed. He did not change the way he lived or speaks but he and he continued to work hard. Well it seems to have paid off because his colleague began speaking with him but maybe most interesting was that his boss, the boss that was so hard on him, is now having trouble with his boss and has begun confiding in my new friend because he knows and understand how he treated my friend and asked him how he got by. His job is now great, not perfect but much better. He know sees, he told me, God’s approval. So if the story I was told by a stranger about his place of work is making a difference with his co-workers and even his boss imagine the difference it can make in those little alien eyes who look at us across the table at suppertime. How we endure, deal with hardship, how we speak about colleagues or even our boss either raises a generation of aliens or monsters. We endure because we see how Christ endured, Peter reminds us. When we follow the Saviour, the “sinless” One who suffered for our sake and brought us “healing” others will follow us as we follow Christ so that yet another generation rises us to help incarnate Christ for the next generation because of how we handle work.

But we are not always at work, are we? How we live at home and relate to one another, especially as couples is also vital as we raise aliens. The first seven verses of 1 Peter 3 are hard words but good words for wives and husbands nonetheless. We often skip over, what many consider

“patriarchal” verses from a time long ago, but they are in truth, “timeless” words for couples here today who again have little aliens watching them at work and at home. The first word is for wives. We may get caught up on the word “authority” which transitions from servants to wives but let’s see the entire passage before we jump to conclusions. And let me say right up from the opening few words on authority is by no means relating to “authoritarian rule” of a husband over a wife or the justification for some kinds of “abuse” in those relationship. Instead this is a narrative about wives modeling for little female (and male) aliens in their lives, especially when it comes to how wives relate to their husband. For example, there is a necessary understanding that many of us could easily overlook, unless you are a GROW woman. In our passage the context for these believing wives and the way they were living was because of their unbelieving husbands. We know this because of one particular phrase of hope that their husbands would be “won over.” In other words the actions and choices of these women would model Christ so that their husbands would have an undeniable encounter with Jesus because of these wives. Is this not what we also want for our daughters? Certainly first and foremost we want our daughters to find men who loves Jesus. But some of our daughters will not chose so wisely so then our prayer becomes one that our daughters will model Christ for their husbands but even more that our daughters will love Jesus in their youth. We often make our daughter’s happiness, our daughter’s success, our daughter’s health our number 1 priority but in truth our primary task is to make sure our daughters love Jesus because they see their mothers loving Jesus and loving their husbands into God’s Kingdom. To be honest that has been the most exciting thing I have seen about GROW Women and now GROW Men. So as Peter encourages you wives, I also implore you to live lives with “purity” and “reverence.” Be gentle and quiet and “adorn your inner self.” Could any ancient manuscript be more relevant for today? In a world that tells our young girls their self worth is only found in an outer beauty is it not out of this world we say that is exactly the opposite of God’s way? What if more girls saw their mothers or older women inner beauty was more prevalent than their outer beauty? What if we saw our Christian women model Christ to their non Christian husbands and also to their children? You may not only “win over” over your husband but you may also “win over” your daughter, granddaughter or if you have not been blessed or have chosen children then model that for someone else’s daughter.

But let’s not end our lesson there because you husbands are not off the hook. Yes, there is advice for you husbands as well. Only half the verses of instructions to husbands though may cause some to think it’s because there were twice as many women in the early church than men. Others may say women needed more advice and still others (of whom I am more inclined) will say men can only handle so many instructions because our attention and retention is far less than a woman. But

the amount of advice does not really matter nor does the challenge with some of the concepts in the opening verse to men (like with the women) do as well. I am sure many of the women here cringed when I read the word “weaker sex” in 1 Peter 3 which has more to do with the first century understanding of physical strength or the benefits of being a man over a woman in first century Palestine. So let’s instead focus on other words and even radical words for ancient times that speak of the “inheritance” that is shared – whether you are husband or a wife. When Peter encourages husbands to acknowledge that their wives are “heirs of the gracious gift of God” together he is telling husbands that they are to treat their wives as equals – loved, valuable, fellow heirs. So if you’re a dad or a husband or a man wanting to be a man of God to model Jesus to our KesPres Kids then treat your wives or all women here at KesPres as heirs of Christ. Nothing could “honour” your wife or women more. When those future aliens see you living, working and loving “together” then you are modeling Jesus not just to the world but the little eyes at home or even here on a Sunday morning.

How we react and act with one another. How we speak to one another. If we are independent or interdependent with one another speaks volumes to those looking on, especially little ones who we are training to be aliens. We are aliens called to raise aliens. It therefore matters at work and it definitely matter at home. You see I take those vows seriously I made about 17 years ago at an Ice Palace when water was sprinkled in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I am not the perfect “employee” or minister and I am certainly not the perfect parent but I want, above all else for Lily and other children I know to become as I am, aliens who follow Christ as I follow Christ. Let us pray...