

AMBASSADORS

THE LESSON: 1 PETER 2

Many important moments in Israel’s story came at times when they were aliens and exiles, living in foreign lands controlled by regimes that were hostile to God. The early Church faced similar persecution. The New Testament epistles describe believers as “aliens and strangers” in this world, suggesting that we do not really *belong* here.

Instead, even if we are living in a country where we are legal citizens, our true citizenship is somewhere else. The Apostle Paul wrote, “You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”. And “our citizenship is in heaven”. What does that mean? It means that we don’t belong to this world, but rather we belong to God. And yet, for those of us who are reading this right now, it means that God hasn’t taken us out of this world.

We are here as “ambassadors for Christ”. In the very first book of the Bible, when God called Abraham, he declared his intention of using Abraham’s descendants to bless all of the nations of the earth. In the book of the prophet Isaiah, God said to Israel, “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth”. God’s intention for his people was always that they would act as a living embassy, reaching out on his behalf. When Jesus ascended into heaven following his resurrection from the dead, he commissioned his disciples saying, “You will be my witnesses... to the end of the earth”. So we belong to God, and have the privilege and responsibility of representing him in a world that does not acknowledge him.

Many of the New Testament epistles are concerned with helping believers understand their relationship to God, the world and each other, as well as providing practical advice for living in this tension of being aliens, citizens and ambassadors all at once.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow the rule of prayer that you created for yourself.

(If you didn’t make one, try saying the morning and evening prayers from the “Forms of Prayer to be used in Families,” which begins on page 728 of the BCP. If you don’t have a copy, you can look it up here: <http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer>.)

Spend some time quietly considering what it means to be an alien in this world, and an ambassador for Christ. Ask God to enable you to live out your identity as a citizen of his kingdom. Close with this reading from Ephesians 2:13-22: ***“You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”***
Thanks be to God!

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O Lord God, when thou givest thy servants to endeavor any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory; through him that for the finishing of thy work laid down his life, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR STEDFASTNESS FROM THE FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED AT SEA, BCP PAGE 635)

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1 PETER 2: **WHERE WE BELONG, WHAT WE PROCLAIM**

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

¹¹Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹²Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

¹³Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.