1 Peter 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

 Did you notice that one phrase in this text, that when I first read it, it just seemed to jump out at me. It is found in verse 18 and it just set my mind to whirring away with thoughts. That little phrase: **“the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.”**

 I believe that this phrase is really addressing the other great religion of this world. Remember what I have been telling you for years. There are only two religions in the world. There is the Christian religion where God has done everything necessary for your salvation, by grace through faith. Then there are all the other religions of the world, the religions of work righteousness. Where you are taught what you must do to earn salvation, what you must do to get the gods to smile at you and be happy with you. What you must do in order to have a happy and wholesome life for yourself. This religion of work righteousness is what I believe is being spoken of here. And please note it is called: **“The empty way of life.”**

 And isn’t it! If I live this way or that way, why then the Lord (or the gods) will smile upon me. So which way is that? The life of the ascetic, those who deny earthly wants and desires, who live on mere basics, who abstain from this or that and spend endless hours in contemplation or meditation on some mountain top sleeping on straw mats? Is that the best? Or is the person who has determined to eat, drink and be merry, who wants to have all their basic desires met, the better and wiser person? How about the person who believes that the whole point of life is to be happy but yet they don’t have clue as to what that really means and you can see that as they go from this to that or from one relationship to another always with the mantra: “I want to be happy!” I find it interesting that those who live this way often times end up dying younger than others simply because the drive to go for the gusto is often a very destructive one for the body, not to mention the soul. Seriously, which way of life, which way of works, which way is best for you to earn your “salvation” before the god you admire?

 So that phrase: **“the empty way of life”** really pops out at me. Sometimes we think that “activity” is the way to go. Just be busy, do as much as you can, be involved! But I do kind of chuckle because the venue that God gives us for our goodness and happiness is often times the very last thing that people think of. God has given us “church.” Through the church we have people who care about us, God’s loving guidance so we don’t destroy ourselves, and the greatest medicine there is: Jesus and his redemption. Yet the trend in the world today is to despise church and the gift of God found within. And have you ever noticed that when people start drifting and making bad choices and doing it their way that the first thing to get left behind is “the Church” and Jesus! Such is the empty way of life!

 What do we have in Jesus? That’s a great question to ask during this season of Resurrection. “What do we have in Jesus?” Our text helps us to address that question. Our theme will be: **LIVING AS STANGERS HERE. 1st. Calling on the Father. 2nd. You were Redeemed. 3rd. Your Faith and Hope.**

 Did you notice that first line? It said, **“Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here…”** A deep look at those words reveals a whole lot more than you might think. First, note that we are told that the impact of God in our lives is that we live as strangers, or as aliens here in this world. In other words, we are in the world but not a part of the world. We live, eat, move and survive in this world of ours but we don’t make the world and the things of the world our hope and desire. Because of God our Father, we view the world differently and approach life differently. All of this is the natural result of faith in God or calling on God. It is a gift that God has given. A gift that changes us.

 By the way, I have visited different countries, but I must confess that in truth I have only really visited democratic cultures or western cultures. So what I have experienced as an “alien” in a foreign country was not really that different than what we have here. What this line is saying to us on a spiritual basis is really what is behind the immigration debate in our country. The debate can be summed up in this way: “You are leaving your country because of its serious problems and because this country provides an economy and measure of freedom your country does not have. Then come and be a part of our culture. Don’t come and try to make our country your culture, to make our country the place of the same problems you left.” Apply that spiritually. If you are going to be of God’s culture do so. Don’t try to make God’s culture the destructive culture of the devil! So, yes, live as strangers to the world. Live to the Lord!

 Why? There are a number of reason given. First, God is impartial. That means that God is not going to be artificial in his judgment of you. He is not going to consider your wealth, status, reputation, rituals or pious façade in life. Nothing will deflect God from evaluating your heart and life just as God has determined to do. God knows lip service and what a shallow, superficial religious righteousness is. God will not be fooled into ignoring the facts of your life. Well, almost!

 Do you know why I say that? Because the word that is used here can mean that favoritism or partiality can be shown. We tend to think of that as a negative thing and yet when applied to God it is a beautiful thing. Because God is not going to take you for who and what you are! God has decreed that through Jesus he is going to show favoritism, he is going to be partial to us and every believer in Jesus. So, instead of dealing with us based on the facts (That we are lost and condemned creatures, sinners who fall far short of the perfection God demands in thought, word and deed. Because we based on the measure of the Law are clearly and righteously damned!) God in Jesus is going to show favoritism! He is going to consider us as Jesus. He is going to, because of your faith in Jesus, no matter who you are, consider you holy and perfect in life because that is what Jesus is. So, yeah, God is partial….every believing sinner is and will be forgiven and blessed forever in Jesus!

 Why? There is verse 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 forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”** Here is what Jesus has done for us. He has redeemed us! That’s the biggest thing to get here. Jesus has purchased and won us for the Father. Jesus has bought us back for the sake of the Father.

 You did note that this redemption was not with perishable things? Just contemplate that for a moment. Perishable is basically anything that will rot, decay or finally cease to exist. Name one thing of this world where that isn’t so? Reward, accolades, trophies, riches, homes, cars, sports, children…I sure you can keep the list going…all of these things are perishable. The point is that not a single one of those things or even a big combination of those things has any impact on my spiritual eternity. Now, you can deny there is a spiritual eternity (wrongly deny that) but all that does is make your life and what you are doing here pretty pointless and meaningless. If there is an eternity as God reveals, then your denial of this will mean you get looked at impartially through the Law (instead of Jesus) and you are going to be in deep trouble…forever! Nope, nothing perishable will save you.

 Thus the wonder of Jesus. He was raised from the dead. He lives and rules forever. He is imperishable and did what perishable could not do. With his blood, with his suffering and death Jesus paid for our sins and redeemed us. Our only need is to believe in Jesus. Believe that he is the Lord. Now if you believe Jesus the Lord, then I would suggest that you go back to that idea of reverent fear. That word has two bents to it. First, that you stand in total fear of Jesus. That you understand He is God and Lord and He sets the standards and rules for redemption. He says He will forgive you just because you believe in Him as the Lord. But is it really faith to dismiss Him? Is it really faith to tell him by your life that you don’t care for him and don’t have respect and honor for Him? Actually, all of us really do know this. If we have a spouse who claims to love us and yet who goes out of his or her way to make us miserable and even slaps us around (verbally or physically) you would really know that this love is not love at all but some sort of twisted and cruel view of life. Now if you treat Jesus this way, “Jesus I love you…but you slap him around…what are the implications of that? Get what I mean? You need to show fear of Jesus as the Lord God!

 And then second, you need to be filled with awe and honor of Jesus as your Savior. To realize what He has done for you. His complete sacrifice for you. His payment of your debt to the Father. His willingness, to forgive and bless, even when our sinful nature can’t be perfect, just because He looks into our heart and sees that attitude that we are strangers here in reverent fear! In that case, God looks at us through Jesus and since His Son was holy and perfect, so are we judged partially to be the same! This is the wonder of our faith. This is the wonder of redemption in Jesus and the precious blood that has bought us.

 The end result? That very last line: **“so your faith and hope are in God.”** Think of what that means. Because of God, you have hope, you have a sure and certain confidence in the promises and wonders of God. You know that God forgives in Jesus. You know that heaven is your home and that Jesus has prepared a mansion for you. You know the joy of salvation and the peace of God which surpasses everything. All of this because of Jesus and the hope He gives.

 But note that this line also speaks of faith in God. Your faith needs to be what God says faith is. You don’t get to make it up, you don’t get to declare “this much I will hear and no more God!” You are to believe in Jesus and what He is. You need to grasp his wonder and marvel in every way and then this faith you have has an impact in your life. Did you know that God defines faith as “sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”? Your faith needs to grasp the fact that Jesus is God and Savior. And then you will find you will call on the Father. You will give Jesus worship and praise, honor and glory all in and with God the Father. This is what faith is. Amen.