

“When Jesus is Number 1”
1 Peter 3:13-16 (NRSV)
October 2, 2011

The college football season is in full swing. Now the top ranked teams are playing each other. Its so early in the season many fans claim their team is number one. Only time will tell who is number as the true power house teams play against each other.

We are wrapping up studies of passages from 1 Peter. In the passage we’ll look at today, Peter tells the church we are to keep Christ number one, first in our heart and he gives examples of how we’ll know we are keeping Christ first. Lets read his words.

Read 1 Peter 3:13-16

Peter said, “sanctify” Jesus in your hearts. The word sanctified means something is set aside exclusively for a certain purpose. Like when the desert in the refrigerator is set aside for guest; not your afternoon snack. Like the water that is left in the Gatorade thermos is set aside to dump on the winning coach. **To sanctify Jesus in our hearts means he is to have the utmost of our devotion to him and he to have ultimate leadership over our lives.** When Jesus is number one the way Peter describes, it will show in us. I want to use some news stories from this past week of Christians who demonstrated how Jesus was number one to them.

Suffering for him still brings blessing v.14

Peter said in verse 14, evidence that Jesus is number one is when we are suffering for Christ’s sake, **we’ll still find God’s favor or blessing.** The word blessing means we suffer some how but yet there is within us a peace and strength in the midst of the hurt.

There is a story out California about a couple who were fined because they had invited people over to their house to have a bible

study. They were fined because assembling at their home to have a bible study was considered a violation of having an unlawful assembly as church in a residential area. Or as some would suggest this could be nothing more than hostility and discouragement toward those who have a love for Jesus Christ and want to assemble together privately in their homes. One of the members who passed the story along to me a good point. They said, **“I bet they would not have received a fine for having houseful of people over the watch a football game. But they invite people over to study the Bible, and they get fine.”** Last word is the couple plans to continue to invite people into their home to pray and study the scriptures, and challenge the fines. Their love for Jesus continues to find the blessing in what they face.

Peter said in verse 14, “even if you do suffer for doing what is right you are blessed.” But remember Peter said, blessed for doing what is right. Were blessed when we stand for what matters to God. **Suffering in that way leads to internal peace because we are connected to God’s eternal strength and purpose.** But in order to be open to that type of blessing, Jesus has to be number one in our hearts. There needs to be willingness to pay the price for doing the right thing, whether that price if financial, emotional or relational.

Someone asked author and theologian, C.S. Lewis, “Why do the righteous suffer?” “Why not?” he replied. “They’re the only ones who should be able to take it.” (Quotegarden.com)

We don’t fear what the world fears: v.14

When Jesus is number one we won’t fear what the world fears. Peter wrote to the church and said, **“Do not fear what they fear...”** Peter meant Christians will not fear the same influences and outcomes like the world fears. We should want to please God more than please and fear people.

Here is another story in the news about a pop star Rihanna. She had gone to Ireland to shoot a music video. The location for the shoot was on the farmland that belong to a local resident and farmer. I guess there were concerns by the farmer of how things would be done because after all Rihanna is in the secular pop-rap music artist. Some of her outfits on stage are a bit skimpy to say the least. Well news broke this past week that the farmer was on hand for the shooting of the music video to make sure things were kept in order. At one point, he stopped the process because he didn't like how Rihanna was exposing herself. The man stated he was a Christian and if she was going to shoot her video on his land, Rihanna would have to be a little more modest in front of the film crew as she changed from one outfit to another.

Now this man could have remained silent so he didn't loose any money for use of his land. He could have been intimidated and not said anything to a celebrity. But he was willing to loose money and be ridiculed as out of touch with the times for insisting on certain behavior standards being honored as long as they were filming on his land because he is a Christian. Sounds like to me Christ is sanctified in his heart and he didn't fear doing what he thought was right.

When Jesus is number one we won't fear the talk and the reactions as we live out Christian principles for the sake of Christ. Or at least we won't stop because we are afraid. Someone once wrote a book entitled, "Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway." Peter said in verse 14, "**do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated.**" We often hear concerns that political correctness has removed the Christian perspective from our government, we don't say prayers in school, and the Ten Commandments have been taken out of our public building. But have we removed Jesus out of our conversations and relationships out fear. When Jesus is number one it will at some point require taking action that will not

be popular with your spouse, parents, kids, coworker or church member. Peter said, when Jesus is number one, doing what we believe is God's will should lead us; not fear.

We have a reason for our hope in Christ: v.15

When Jesus is number one, Peter said **“be ready to give anyone a reason for the hope that lies within you.”** There is nothing more personal and more powerful than when we clearly know why we believe, and know that we have experience God, and desire others would want to know Jesus. Peter said be ready to share about Christ. When Jesus is number one, sharing him will be as natural as the reason you don't mind talking about your favorite football team, restaurant or movie. We'll have a readiness, reason and excitement to share Christ whether we're young or older.

I sadly read about a young girl named Brittany Bevin, who in 2003 died at age 17 in an auto accident. A minister was asked to conduct her funeral, but the minister didn't know her very well. He asked her parents, that since she was a devoted Christian if he could read her prayer journal to get to know her better including the entry she had written the night before she died. Before you is a picture of Bethany on a mission trip in India serving children. **(Can the picture be ghosted with text over lay)**

Here is what she wrote in her prayer journal to God the night before she was killed.

“You hold the only piece that can fill the deepest hole. But how do I get it. You said ask and you shall receive.” I am asking and I know that you will give it to me. Every week you bless me so much and teach me lesson after lesson. I know that once again you are showing me your love. I can't fathom how much you feel when one of your children suffers, but I've had a glimpse of your

heartache. Please fill me with your wisdom that I won't just watch others suffer, but that I'll be able to say what they need to hear. As a new week approaches, **my dangerous prayer** is that you'll place broken hearted people in my path and fill me with you so that I can let your love heal their pain." (I'm Not a Fan, p196)

The pastor also mentioned that Brittany had opened up a checking account. When her dad was closing the account, he found that she had written only one check. It was to Compassion International to support a child. (Ibid)

That young lady was mature in Christ beyond her years and made it clear Jesus was her hope; it wasn't just talk. Her life might even reveal that we aren't keeping Jesus number one in our hearts like we should.

The mission statement for the United Methodist denomination is to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel for the transformation of the world.

But there will only be transformation when God's people are ready to give a reason for our Christian hope. When Jesus is number one its is different than just having religion or a set of beliefs. It's like one pastor put it, **you don't go to church you are the church.** (Greg Groschel 221) We don't come for church; we are the church.

God can use any of us indifferent ways to reach out with hope to others. As on preacher put it, **"if your not dead; you're not done."** (Greg Groschel, p.137) God is an awesome God.

I am learning that this year Dyer County's junior and senior high football teams are pretty good. I know this because people are talking about them.

Marlene wants to go see the movie called The Help. She really wants to see it after hearing some ladies in the church who were

bragging about the movie.

If Christ is really number one, we'll talk him up, we'll brag about how he is active in our lives.

**We share the good news instead of inflicting it upon others:
v.16**

But there is a caution from the Apostle Peter. We are to share the good news; not inflict it upon others. Peter said in verse 16 **“do it with gentleness and reverence.”** His words are a breathe of fresh air in this culture of in your face journalism, and Jerry Springer high confrontational entertainment. If we are really striving to live for Christ chances are two responses are going to come from people. They we'll be interested and want to know more or they will challenged and wrestle with what they see in our lives. Peter said when Jesus is number one our sharing is to be done with gentleness and reverence.

I had a call from a close relative Friday morning. They are going through some very difficult times. They were really hurting about what they perceived was the source of their emotional pain. After they talked for a while, I asked permission to offer some feedback. They agreed. I told them I understood how they we're being mistreated. However, I shared my observation how I saw this person thinking and acting in ways that also was adding to their own misery as well. Jesus is number one in my life and he said the truth sets us free, period. It would have been easy to only sympathize with them and hear their words of appreciation for my listening. But on the other hand they were really hurting and I didn't want add to their. I hope I demonstrated a balance between speaking truthfully but showing gentleness and reverence like Peter taught.

It's one thing to claim Jesus is number one in our lives; its other another thing to live it. In the next four weeks we'll start into a

sermon series looking at some of the hardest things Jesus said for anyone who would follow him and be his disciples. The only way we really experience that Jesus is number one is when we'll follow him even when it means embracing the hardest, toughest most demanding of his teachings and truth.