



Taste the  
difference

## 1 Peter 1:13-22

VIVE

I've just come back from holiday and we had to travel through France to get home. The French have a saying – Vive la difference.

WOMAN

It's usually meant to refer to the fact that men and women are different and it's this difference that enriches the human race – which was the point of this advert.

FRENCH & BRITISH

That said we often use it to express the difference between the French and others.

TASTE THE DIFFERENCE

Variations on it exist such as the Sainsbury's ad Taste the Difference. And that's where we are going this morning – to see how God has made us different and how important being different and doing different is for our lives as God's people and in our witness to a world which desperately needs Jesus.

So, taste the difference. Let's start by stating something obvious GOD IS DIFFERENT

I suppose that's rather obvious but He's different to us in a very particular way. Here's what we read this morning. BE HOLY AS I AM HOLY. Peter actually quotes this from Lev 11:44. Our God is a holy God.

GOD IS HOLY

The word holy in the OT is qadosh and in the NT is hagios. Both words broadly mean “set apart” in the sense of being different. They are usually translated as holy. Unfortunately, a word like holy has a mystique to it where as set apart or different doesn't.

Blasting the mystique out of a word kind of spoils it. But that's the nature of theological words like “holy”.

They convey mystery. But once we get rid of the mystique the word brings we find truth. We are called to be different like God is different. We are called to be like Him.

It spoils our hymns as well I guess. “Different! Different! Different! Lord God Almighty”, “I want to be different, set apart for You Lord”, “When I look into your differentness”.

God is different from us - how is He different?

John Piper puts it this way: *Holiness has the root idea in the Old Testament of being separated from what is defective and evil and separated for God. So the Sabbath is holy to the Lord: separated from the pursuits of other days and dedicated to the Lord (Exodus 31:15). Priests are holy to the Lord, set apart from ordinary pursuits and dedicated in a special way to the Lord (2 Chronicles 23:6). And things could be holy by setting them apart from ordinary use and dedicating them to God.*

There is another idea of holiness that comes out of both words is that God by His nature is different from us. Who He is and the glory He lives in sets Him completely apart from us. You'll see soon that has a bearing on how we think about holiness in our passage from 1 Peter this morning.

WE'RE ALREADY DIFFERENT

So God is holy, set apart, different. If you are a Christian this morning, if you have accepted Jesus, then you are in relationship with God as your Father, you're different too.

VERSE

Here's what Peter says in the second chapter of the same letter: *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Pet 2:9*

Just as God is holy, set apart, different; in Christ He has made us special people – these are quite amazing words – God has already made us different – a chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, belonging to God.

We are a special people – never forget it – we have already been set apart, made holy in Christ. And here

is the challenge of this passage – if we are all these things in Christ then - live like what you are!

#### SO LIVE LIKE WHAT YOU ARE AND VERSE

Peter could see in the lives of the churches he was addressing in Asia Minor, something that has been only too apparent down the ages in the church of God and prevalent now – that even though we are all these things, our lives do not reflect that.

What is really going to make the big difference in Felixstowe in the second decade of the 21st Century is that our faith is life changing, both for us and for the community around us. Let's look at verse Peter 1:14 *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

*Be holy as I am holy.* The phrase Peter quotes from comes three times in Leviticus. It was a call to the people of Israel to holy living and it is a call to us to live holy lives too. Being holy?

What is holiness? The main problem is that we tend to associated holiness with something that is untouchable and unreachable. But as we saw earlier that isn't what it's about. We need to be different as God is different. The first part of that different was this: *God is holy in that he is set apart from all that is evil and defective and impure. He is absolutely free from any taint of evil or deficiency. (Piper)*

Peter makes it easier by telling us what we should be different from: *do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.* also  
*18 For you know what was paid to set you free from the worthless manner of life handed down by your ancestors.*

The world in which we live, the values of our society, the morals of our society, the hopelessness of our society, the cheapness of relationships; its lack of grace, mercy and love. We are called to be everything God is: set apart like He is. Different. Different. As simple word and unlike holy has no mystique about it. We know what it means. We live in a world of uniformity, sameness. Keep your head down. Blend. Different means something else. It means standing out from the crowd. Being noticed. For what? Being like the One whose name we own. When people see us they should see Jesus – different.

We can see our differentness in three ways.

#### LIST

We became different the day we believed  
We are becoming more different  
One day we will be truly different like Him

#### **We became different the day we believed**

We saw earlier that in Christ we are already sufficiently acceptable to come into the presence of God. That's why we can welcome Him as we worship.

Have a look too at Hebrews 12:10 *And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* We are fit for God's presence already because of Jesus. The day we came to Christ was the day the Holy Spirit set us apart. He made us different; set us apart into the family of God. For what purpose? For obedience to Jesus Christ.

So live like who you are, which brings us to the second point.

#### **We are becoming more different as we desire to be holy**

How?

#### ***Different perspective***

*So then, have your minds ready for action. Keep alert and set your hope completely on the blessing which will be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 Be obedient to God, and do not allow your lives to be shaped by those desires you had when you were still ignorant.*

Being different means having a different aim in life. Our hope is in what's coming. Peter uses interesting words here. Set our hope on the blessings to be revealed.

That perspective is an important one. We live in a world where people live for today and for what we can get.

It's not surprising in a world where we have a foreboding about the future. We worry about our finances, our jobs, our prospects now. We look at the news and wonder what sort of world we have brought our children into. There's a real hopelessness. It's no wonder people live for today, why they don't enter into long-term commitments, plan for the future. They can't see anything different ahead.

But we are God's people. We see the bigger picture, we see eternity and the hope laid out before us. And we have a God who is not a victim of history, but one who has shaped it and will shape it through His people. We are world changers. And until Jesus returns, we bring hope. So we can make plans and have expectations because the Spirit of God desires to use us to be life changers, world changers.

So what difference does our hope make to those we know without Christ? Does our certainty of the future, our confidence about death impress and inspire them? Or do we have the same fears because we have forgotten our hope. If we don't then let's pray for that assurance this morning.

### ***Different responsibility***

*17 You call him Father, when you pray to God, who judges all people by the same standard, according to what each one has done; so then, spend the rest of your lives here on earth in reverence for him. .*

*"The world is not my own - I'm just passing through".* We are responsible for our actions and one day we will be called to account for them. That's how it is. If we are called to be holy, different; then God is going to bring us to account for that.

We have entered God's family and we have a Father to whom we are accountable as children - therefore live in in reverence to God. It's about respect for the One who has rescued us and whom we follow. We are responsible to Him for our actions. We are called to obedience to Jesus Christ because we've been made different. So let's live by His standards. That makes a difference in a world where different standards destroy relationships, destroy families, destroy people's health, destroy livelihoods, destroy friendships.

### ***Different morals***

*13 So then, have your minds ready for action. Keep alert and set your hope completely on the blessing which will be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 Be obedient to God, and do not allow your lives to be shaped by those desires you had when you were still ignorant.*

The bottom line here is that we are called to be holy as God is holy. Different as he is different - like Him. We saw in an earlier week that the Spirit in each believer is there to perform that transforming work. We are called to be different and that means we are not the same as others. It's depressing when we see people who seemed to run well falling into problems, it's saddening when Christians gossip, it's upsetting when Christians are in sharp disagreement with one another, it's concerning when Christians lose their tempers with one another, it's disappointing when Christians think that it's OK to say and do what they like "in love". But the biggest tragedy is that non-Christians look in at us and see nothing relevant and commendable.

They just see that Christians hurt people and they hurt one another. Consider these words Peter gives us 1 Pet 3: *Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't be afraid and don't worry. 15 Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. 16 But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak evil against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. (NLT).* The only evidence that Christ exists is YOU.

### **One day we will be truly different like Him**

Being holy is a challenge but let me end with a promise – one day we will be like Jesus. Here's the promise in 1 John 3: *2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

I said earlier that when we think about the holiness of God, we think of how He is different in a moral sense and we are called to be like Him in our life here on Earth. But the other aspect of the holiness of God is His glory. One day we'll be like Him. And he's holy. So if we have this hope what do we do? *Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

Prayer of Confession