

1 Peter 2:2-10 – Easter 5 – Grow Up to Salvation – April 26, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

There is one specific moment I want us to think about this morning. It is that moment when we know the right thing to do, and yet we still choose the wrong thing. I think you can see this most clearly in the Cain and Abel story. God even warns Cain. He says, “Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” And yet, we know how this story ends.

For us, we’ve read the Scriptures. We’ve heard a lot of sermons. We can even explain the truth to someone else in some detail. And yet, in the quiet places of our lives, when we think no one is watching, we find ourselves doing the very things we know are pulling us away from God. Now, maybe it’s not murder, like Cain. And that’s something. I am glad we are not murderers. But we still rebel against our Lord. We give in to pride, lust, selfishness, resentment, or criticism.

Now, this tension isn’t just hypocrisy, at least not in the way the world defines it. It is something far deeper. It is the revelation that knowledge alone isn’t enough to transform our hearts. Cain knew the right thing to do. He knew God’s will. Everything was clear.

We live in a culture that believes if we just understand more, we will become better—that clarity leads to change—that information produces transformation. We are always trying to raise awareness. If we just watch the right YouTube video, we will overcome our flaws.

But that is not the witness of the Church. Something more is needed. The Church Fathers never treated the spiritual life as a mere intellectual exercise. They did not believe salvation came through explanation. They understood that we can speak about God—we can sit in Church every Sunday—and still not know Him at all.

And this is where the real battle begins. The struggle is not just between what we know and what we do not know—as important as that is. The struggle is between what we know—and what has actually taken root in our hearts.

Until truth moves from our minds into our lives, we are missing something. This is why the Church places such an overwhelming emphasis on repentance. Remember that this is the nature of John the Baptist’s ministry. And then Jesus begins with the same command, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

And this emphasis on repentance is deeply embedded in our own tradition. Remember the first of Luther’s 95 Theses, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

And by repentance, we don’t just mean guilt, shame, or simply saying, “I’m sorry.” It isn’t willfully doing the wrong thing and then apologizing after. Repentance is the reordering of our entire being. It is the renewal of our minds, hearts, and lives.

It is the painful, daily work of aligning our thoughts, desires, and actions with the truth we already confess. It is slow. It is often uncomfortable. And it exposes us. It is a work of discipline. It is a daily giving ourselves over to the Word of God. It is believing that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

But without repentance, the truth stays external. It is something we can hear on Sunday morning and then ignore during the week. It is that difference I have been talking about these last few weeks between being called Christians and actually being Christians. So, the question is not just whether we know the truth. The question is...has the truth actually changed us?

We have been working our way through 1 Peter as our Epistle readings here in the Easter Season. When we see that our reading is 1 Peter 2:2-10, we should immediately ask, “Well, what is verse one?” And I am so glad you asked. And this is a good reason to bring your Bible to Church.

1 Peter 2:1 says this—and I will continue on through verse 3 for context. St. Peter says, “So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

Some translations begin this passage with “Therefore.” Ours uses “So.” Regardless, this should cause us to look back even further—into our reading from last week. Here, the Apostle says, “You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”

So, because we have been made new in Holy Baptism—and because the transforming Word of God is preached to us—we should long for—we should crave—as some translations read—the pure spiritual milk. I like this Word *crave*. It means we are passionate about something. There is something that we really want. And this is the central exhortation for this section.

Here, St. Peter describes the spiritual nature of our cravings. And this craving is contrasted with the former fleshly cravings, “the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul,” as St. Peter says in the verse that follows our reading.

The Word of the living and abiding God regenerated us. And following this renewal, we long for that pure spiritual milk. This refers to the very things that nourish us as His people—the Word, Sacraments, prayer, fasting, obedience, discipline. The desire for spiritual nourishment is the desire of those who want to know Jesus Christ—and live in light of His will.

And this desire is lived out as we “put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.” St. Peter makes this emphatic. Notice the repetition. He doesn’t just say “put aside malice, deceit, hypocrisy, and slander.” Instead, he says, “Put aside *all* malice, *all* deceit, and *all* slander.” St. Peter’s point is that we cannot “crave the pure spiritual milk” or be “built up into a spiritual house” if we tear one another down.

These are problems that arise when our affections are misdirected—when our longing for true spiritual things is lacking. We see lists of vices often in Scripture. Romans 13, Galatians 3, Ephesians 4, Colossians 3, Hebrews 13, James 1—all present such guidance.

The Apostles present these lists of destructive vices we are to strip off. In fact, that is the verb St. Peter uses here—one that describes casting something aside—like taking off dirty clothes at the end of the day.

Good habits—and a holy life—are things we put on. And they come as we crave pure spiritual milk. When we as individuals—and as a Church—yearn for spiritual nourishment—we will not be involved in bitter disputes. We won't hold life-long grudges. We won't be critical of our neighbors.

Our lives will be consistent with the faith we confess. We fill our lives with Christ. He is our life. Because we know that He is good, we desire His good, and it shows in our attitudes and actions—toward Him—and toward one another.

By this pure spiritual milk, we “grow up to salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” Spiritual growth is in the direction of salvation. In life, we are always drawing nearer to Christ—or we are pulling away. There is no neutral ground. And for St. Peter here, salvation is also something future. Salvation is something to be carefully guarded until the end. Remember what he says back in chapter one.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Thus, through spiritual nourishment, we grow towards what God will do for us in the end. This means that we should grow in our faith. Our lives should be more and more conformed to Christ. We should work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

St. Peter is recommending that we grow in our union with God. Thus, we strive each day to grow, repent, to seek God's face, to seek His favor, to reduce the chasm between Him and us. We eliminate every part of our lives that is out of communion with Him. Remember what he says in 2 Peter 1.

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

And so we ask, “What in me is not aligned with Christ?” Let me ask that again, “What in me is not aligned with Christ?” That's the question. That's where the real battle is. And that's where real freedom begins. Christ has atoned for our sins. He has given us the mysteries—His Word and Sacraments. He has given us His Spirit—to put to death our passions and desires.

And for St. Peter, this is just what it means to be a Christian. At the end of our reading, he says it this way, “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 marvelous light.”

Peter's concern here is spiritual formation. And you can see that in the comments He makes about Christ and the Church in our reading. Christ is the Cornerstone—chosen and precious. The Church is being built into a spiritual house.

And one of the fundamental images of our lives in the New Testament is to be *in Christ*. We are called Christians just three times in the New Testament. We are said to be in

Christ more than 150 times. This is salvation. And this is the life to which He calls us—union with Christ.

So what is that sin that comes so easily to you? What in you is not aligned with Christ? What part of your life doesn't align with the Scriptures? And what are you doing to put it to death?

Let me invite you to take up that battle. Don't just ignore your sin—especially those St. Peter speaks about here in our missing verse—malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander.

Don't toy with such things. Confess them. Hate them. And through God's Holy Word, find the life that He designs for you in Christ. It isn't a mystery. The Scriptures are remarkably clear about where He is taking us.

Romans 12, says it this way, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

St. Peter says that we are Christ's royal priests. And not just me. We believe in the priesthood of all believers. And this means that our whole life is consumed with the things of God. His Word is on our minds and in our hearts all the time. We crave His Sacrament.

And we "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." We worship God according to His Word. We don't mumble under our breath about how long the church service is taking. We don't frown through the whole service—waiting to get back to real life.

We long for what God gives us here. We crave the life of Christ. Our chief vocation is to repent—to turn from sin and to believe the Gospel—to love Him heart, soul, mind, and strength. Worship is all of life—and it is the most important thing we do.

We are who He says we are. His Word defines us. And His Word endures forever. We are rocks, living stones in His holy temple, the Church. We are a royal priesthood, offering to God sacrifices of praise. We are Christians. We are in Christ. In Christ, we long for the pure spiritual milk. And we let nothing else get in our way. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+