

“Growing into Salvation”  
Acts 7:55-60; 1 Peter 2:2-10;  
John 14:1-14

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Pastor Norman Fowler  
First Presbyterian Church of Moscow

At the beginning of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, there is the suggestion that we can taste the goodness of God. I think it's an interesting concept to think about using the sense of taste to think about how we might experience God. There are a number of things that come to mind when I think about taste. Some tastes are an acquired thing—an acquired taste. So perhaps in the midst of all of this there's a sense where we have to notice, that we have to taste and see. Although sometimes I wonder if I'm not a little like a child who experiences something new for the first time and simply doesn't want to taste it. Sometimes, at least I know with our own children, we had to invite them to taste what was put in front of them and try it, experience it, before it was rejected. Sometimes they found out it really was something they wanted to eat. There is that sense of tasting the goodness of God, an experience of God's grace, a taste of God's goodness that begins a journey—if we are willing to taste and see and begin.

I often think about how we enter into our faith and how we often think about it as something that happens overnight—a huge transformation, a conversion. And sometimes people do change incredibly overnight. But even then, there's the next step. What Peter is talking about in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter is beginning to take the next step. He's saying that at the beginning you don't get it all. You don't get the full meal right away. It wouldn't do any good to give a baby a Thanksgiving dinner. It needs some milk.

I don't often like to think that I'm that childish, but I recognize that God, at times, has to deal with me much like a child. I can't always receive the fullness of God's grace all at once, or understand completely what it means to follow Christ. It's interesting how in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter there are these words “growing into our salvation.”

Peter then begins to change metaphor from taste and having liquid food before we can have the solid, to building. I guess you could say food is, in a way, another way we have building blocks we need for our lives. But he then begins to talk about it in terms of shaping our faith by building. When I think about building, I think about a hammer right away. After all, Jesus was a carpenter, right? Or was he? The word that we translate as “carpenter” could mean he was a stonemason. It's kind of the word for “contractor.”

Starting a project with a hammer means I want to get it done quickly. I just wonder if there might be a little bit of difference if we think about Jesus as a stonemason. After all, this passage goes on to talk about Jesus as a cornerstone. As I was thinking about that process of laying bricks, they just don't go up quite as fast. You have to put them one by one, and it grows over time. It feels like that's the invitation that we're having to faith. As we begin to taste and see that God is good, that God's grace in Christ is for us, we begin to get to build something. Peter talks about it as a spiritual house. Our faith develops, it grows, it becomes something that shapes our lives. That's pretty vague—something that shapes our lives.

If I were going to start building with bricks, it might be useful to learn from a stonemason or a bricklayer who knew how to do it. It's that conversation that I think Jesus is having with the disciples. They are asking, “How do we go with you?” He says, “You know the way.” Thomas was first to say, “No, I don't know the way.” There's a sense in which it feels like he wants it so laid out that it's almost cartoonish, that it's very clear that there are no choices even to be made, really. It's just handed to us on a platter.

As I began to think about how Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” I began to think back on Jesus’ life. He said he was the way. Well, let’s look at his life. Is that the way of our life? He was born not in a hospital, but in a stable. Within the first two years his parents had to rush off to Egypt to save his life. When he was 12, he disobeyed his parents and stayed in the temple when he wasn’t supposed to. They had to come searching for him. We don’t know a lot between 12 and when he started his ministry sometime in his early 30s, perhaps. Perhaps he was building buildings.

But when we think about Jesus being the way, and I began to think about his life, it began to feel to me like he was saying, “And it’s your life. The real things of your life are part of the way that I’m calling you.” Just like his life was real and the variety of things that happened. Some of the things surely were good. Some things weren’t. We see as he begins to do his ministry how he draws people together, creates a community. We see his compassion for the folks who needed to be healed, be fed. We see how much he cares for his friend. The shortest verse of the Bible—“he wept” at hearing of the death of Lazarus. He shows us a pretty real life and he goes on to encounter his own passion, to give his life for us. He is the way?

It took me back a little bit when I thought about how real his life was and is in retrospect. His being the way invites us, I think, into our own lives and the way we build it as we follow God, follow Christ. He is the way. It’s a way through and into a life of caring, sharing, and sometimes of suffering.

I am the way, the truth. It’s real. Sometimes when I think of truth I just think of it as a fact. I think this truth is really more about it being real. And we think about Jesus’ real life. It was pretty gritty. There was a lot to it.

The way, the truth, and the life. He’s inviting us to this life, and in it to follow him, to do the same kinds of things he did. His life was one of teaching, he shared himself, he did for others. Same thing we talked about last week really: teaching, gathering community, pointing to God in worship, and staying in communication with God. Through that, he was the way, the truth, and the life.

Now the one piece I’ve left out is that it doesn’t end. He goes through this life—sometimes it feels like through the fires of life—and shows us the fullness of the love of God in the resurrection, the fullness of what God is calling us to. We may only know that fullness completely in the final resurrection, in eternal life. Yet in the process, he is inviting us to engage with each other and with God, to stay together in worship, to point to God, and to stay in communication with God. And through that, we really develop and we understand. I think we grow into a spiritual house that recognizes that we are on the way with the truth into the life God gives us. Amen.

Let’s pray:

Lord, it’s interesting how many steps along the way there are to this. The tasting and seeing that you are good, beginning to trust in you that you are taking us on a way through the real, the struggle, the joy of life, inviting us to serve one another and to stay with you in worship and prayer. Lord, go with us. Guide us. May we know the wonder of the life you are leading us into, the life eternal you are setting before us. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.