

**Theme:** Faith in Exile – I Peter 1:17-19

**Title:** Connections – I Peter 4:10-11

**Aim:** Exhort us connect w/God thru His Word & w/each other.

**Intro:** Today's message will be a little different in that I want to revisit 2 verses of last week's text, from which Pastor Derek preached. It's not because I think he did an incomplete job in covering that Scripture, nor that he presented any kind of heresy or other incorrect information. As a matter of fact I believe he did an excellent job presenting & expounding upon the text. Normally, I would just proceed to the next passage, I Peter 4:12-19 (which I will next week) but this passage is personal for me. Even while Pastor Derek was speaking last week, I felt a strong prompting from God the Holy Spirit to come back to these 2 verses this week. I've entitled this communion meditation "Connections" because I believe this passage reveals ways we can connect w/God & w/each other as fellow exiles in a world not our home; & the importance of those connections. I believe these verses align w/our theme for this year: Faith in Exile & hopefully that will become clear as we go. I Peter 4:10-11 [READ]. My 1<sup>st</sup> point is not found in the text but for me the point is realized in this text: I) **As exiles we need an anchor & connections along the way.** You might imagine these exiles to whom Peter wrote might have felt disconnected from God & each other/the Church. Part of Peter's purpose in writing was to urge them to stay close to God & each other. He had already told them that God hadn't abandoned them & had urged them to "love each other earnestly." Stay connected. Jesus is our anchor & He has given us each other to be 2ndary anchors. And He has given us His word to anchor us to truth. I Peter 4:11 is my life verse, since I was in college over 48 yrs ago. God has been gracious to me throughout my Christian life to shoot some arrows of truth into my heart & this verse has been one of those arrows. I realized in college that what I was being called to do w/my life

was to speak God's "oracles" – His word – to the Church, wherever I was. I have endeavored to do that for 48 yrs, however weakly it has been. It's not what you from me that is important, but only what you hear from God through me (or Pastor Derek or any speaker/teacher). I have also learned, sometimes the hard way, that apart from Christ I can do nothing. I can only serve in the strength that God supplies or else I will be quickly spent. So that's my life verse & it has been an anchor for me throughout my pastoral ministry. A life verse speaks specifically to us, providing an anchor, keeping us aligned & connected w/God. We connect w/God thru His word. Thank you to those of you who submitted your life verse this past week! If you have one but didn't submit it, I'd like to hear it, perhaps at sharing time, during communion. If you don't have a life verse, as you read God's word, ask God to give you one & go to it often. II) **As exiles we need to recognize & enjoy God's gifts from His varied grace.** That word "varied" can be translated "varicolored," perhaps like a prism or rainbow. The light is displayed in various colors. God's grace is multifaceted; His gifts are delightfully varied. As Pastor Derek said last week, for each of us, if we are in Christ, God has gifted us w/a means of serving the Church. It's beautiful to watch the Church functioning in those gifts, building up one another, carrying out God's work in the world together. I loved the way Pastor Derek put it last week: "The body of Christ has no useless members!" We connect w/God by recognizing & receiving those gifts. We connect w/each other as we use those gifts. Which leads to III) **As exiles we need each other & the gifts which God has given to each.** We need to learn to receive as well as give. Sometimes that's hard to do. Perhaps we're too proud. Humbly receive just as you humbly give. Recognize what God is doing thru someone else & appreciate His gift thru them. Whether it's an act of kindness or a word of encouragement or a promise to pray (& really doing it) or teaching or leading or otherwise

serving in some way, God wants to & will use you to minister to your bros/sis in Christ & those outside of Christ. What a privilege! And He wants to use others in your life as well. How good is our God! We connect w/each other thru mutual service, either serving one another or serving side by side. IV) **As exiles, we need to serve (made to) but we must recognize it's not our own strength that carries the day, but God's.** We must serve "by the strength that God supplies." In the Greek, that word translated "supplies" speaks of chorus or orchestra director, procuring & supplying all things necessary – all the instruments, music, etc. It means "to furnish abundantly." That's what God does when He wants to use us. He supplies everything needed. He is the source of strength for those He chooses to use. When we try to muster up our own strength we will give out. It won't be enough. Burn out comes from trying to do it in our own strength. And, there's no or little fulfillment in doing it ourselves. The fulfillment comes from working together w/God & flowing in His strength. We may still get physically & even mentally or emotionally drained, but at the same time we will be energized by the Spirit of God w/in us & His gifts flowing thru us & His results in our & others' lives. Jesus said, "I have food to eat that you do not know about. My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me & to accomplish His work" (John 4:32-34). We connect w/God when we depend on Him for strength, when we're His instruments skillfully used by Him. As one who has all too often been one who doesn't know how to use a tool properly, I know how clumsy that can be. But when someone is skillful w/any tool, it's like a hot knife thru butter. That's how the Holy Spirit works in/thru us as we rely upon His leading & His strength. V) **As exiles we need to do all to the glory of God.** If God planted these exiles where they were for His purposes (& obviously it wasn't easy for them), & if God has planted us where we are for His purposes (again not always easy for them), & if everything

God does or has ever done is aimed at His glory, then as He carries out those purposes in/thru us, He will be glorified, He will always deserve that glory, & we will be blessed. The Westminster Confession declares that "The chief end of man is to glorify God & enjoy Him forever." That's why we're here in this life at this time, to glorify God & enjoy Him. He deserves all the glory we can give Him & more. The point is, we're at our best when we glorify God in all we do, & we enjoy Him most when we glorify Him. No one who seeks to glorify God will ever lose. They may even take our lives, but they can't take God's glory or our blessed enjoyment of Him. Again, that's not to say the life of an exile for Christ will be easy. As exiles, we need to stay connected w/God & w/each other in Christ. It takes a lot of faith to be an exile in this world not our own - faith in God; faith in exile.