

Make Every Effort
2 Peter 1:3-11

Brothers and sisters, when I think about someone who is single-mindedly focused on making every effort... every effort... to achieve a particular goal, I can't think of a better example than Wile E. Coyote, Genius Extraordinaire!

If you didn't grow up watching Wile E Coyote attempting and failing... to capture the speedy Road Runner bird, I suggest you take some time this afternoon and catch up on Wiley's legendary exploits and you will see he is an excellent example of someone who makes every effort to achieve a goal.

He's tried chasing the Road Runner, he's tried going faster, he's tried traps, he's tried magnets, he's tried dynamite, he's tried rockets, he's tried... whatever that was! Indeed - he is working at making every effort to try and catch the road runner – and no matter how many times he fails, he will never give up – he keeps on making every effort!

And perhaps you know someone who is like Mr. Wile E Coyote in this way... They are single mindedly focused on doing everything they can... to do well in school, or pursue their career goals, find that Mr. or Ms. Right... or lose weight and put on muscle and get ripped – it's pretty easy to spot those guys when you're at the gym.

And I would guess that most of our friends and neighbors, and ourselves, are also single-mindedly pursuing some sort of goal in life as well – maybe not trying to get ripped at the gym, but doing all that we can to have, and live, a good life.

Not just trying to be good people, but also making sure that what we're doing in our lives brings us happiness and fulfillment, as well as financial security, good health and a sense of meaning and purpose, making a difference for others.

And maybe part of that good life for us involves going to church and getting some religion because its good and it helps us to be good people – gives us a sense of what's right and

wrong and a higher purpose and so on. Maybe that's part of what brings you here this morning?

But brothers and sisters, I wonder if we've ever considered single-mindedly making every effort to pursue a godly life...? Not simply a good life - but a godly life? And what would that even look like? What comes to mind when you think of a godly life and making every effort to pursue it? Being a monk or a nun, or a pastor or a missionary or living like the Amish?

And would you have what it takes to really live such a godly life – and make every effort in pursuing it?

Well, these aren't just rhetorical questions for us this morning brothers and sisters. The Apostle Peter has just informed us in vs. 3 at the start of his second letter that Jesus Christ's divine power has given us everything that we need for a godly life!

And the good news is that making every effort to pursue a godly life is not a futile endeavor like poor Wile E. Coyote trying to catch the Road Runner, because Peter announces to

us at the beginning of our scripture passage, that Jesus Christ has called us by **his own** glory and goodness and that by these means Jesus gives us His very great and precious **promises**.

Brothers and sisters, it's important that we always start out with the realization and emphasis that God is responsible for our salvation, and that's what Peter is reminding us of. Jesus doesn't call us to be his disciples, to be his followers, to be faithful covenant partners with Yahweh and do our basic training for Christian living because of **our own** glory and goodness, no – He called by **HIS** glory and goodness.

His goodness is His perfect obedience to God's law, which He willingly and gladly desired to fulfill, even when it caused him to suffer. Remember our Lord said to the Father as He prepared in prayer for His death on the cross "*Not my will but yours be done*" (Luke 22:42) and on the cross, He prayed for those who crucified Him saying "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!*" (Luke 23:34)

And His glory is His divine nature which enabled His perfect obedience and desire, and also the state and position to which He has ascended as He now sits at the right hand of God. As He prays in John 17:5 *“Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”*

So, because Jesus has called us to salvation on the basis of His own glory as God and His own goodness as the perfect covenant partner – there are promises given to us in that.

And because it is Jesus, as God, giving us these promises... we can be confident that they will be fulfilled for us! Because God keeps His promises - in spite of our failures and disobedience.

Now there are lots of promises for us in Jesus Christ – and we’re probably most familiar with the forgiveness of our sins, going to heaven when we die, and having the assurance that God hears our prayers when we ask in Jesus’ name.

But Peter says something interesting here that we might miss if we’re not looking closely at the text. Peter notes that Christ

gives us His promises, as in promises that were made to Him and for Him by God the Father – He passes His promises on to us. That’s interesting isn’t it....

What might those promises be? Well, because Peter says that through them we are able to participate in the divine nature and to escape corruption caused by evil desire, I’m going to suggest they are the promises made to Jesus that He would be empowered by the Holy Spirit, resurrected and then glorified, and then raised to heaven and given all power and authority.

Now Jesus gives these promises to us. First, with the Holy Spirit being poured out upon us at Pentecost, to connect us spiritually to Jesus Christ and apply all the benefits Christ achieved as Yahweh’s faithful covenant partner to us; forgiveness, new and eternal life, new desires in our hearts, overcoming our sinful nature and making us holy, set apart for God’s work.

The Spirit is our connection to Christ and transforms us to be like Christ.

Secondly, we are to be resurrected as well. In Romans 8:11 Paul explicitly says *“he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”*

And we will also be glorified! Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 15:42-43 *“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory;”*

And thirdly, we will reign in authority with Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 2:6 Paul confirms that *“God [has] raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms...”* And this is not just a symbolic position.

Paul clarifies it in 1 Cor 6:2-3 by asking *“do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world?... Do you not know we will judge angels?”* and in Revelation 5:10 it is revealed to John that Jesus has made his people *“to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

So, because of the amazing promises given to Jesus, which have now been given to us we participate in the divine nature in three ways.

First through having the Holy Spirit live in us, and thus being connected to Jesus and to the Heavenly Father and being able to know the love and intimacy between Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three in one and one in three.

Second through becoming like Jesus in receiving a divinely glorified body when we are resurrected and perfected at His return, completely free from the power and effects of sin.

And thirdly, it is part of God’s divine nature to rule over that which He created, and when Christ returns and we are perfected and glorified we will **fully** participate in that, reigning and ruling with Christ - just as God originally intended for us when He made us in His image.

Now, the big question brothers and sisters, does the reality of having the Holy Spirit poured out upon you and living in you

excite you and make you enthusiastic? (*pun intended*) Do you long for the triune intimacy of really knowing God – as Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Does the prospect of being resurrected to a glorified body make you eager with anticipation?

Are you looking forward to reigning with Christ in the new creation at His return – trying to imagine what that would be like? Do you find yourself distracted or daydreaming about all this as you're going about your daily routine?

Or are you just looking forward to getting a few extra days off for Easter break and maybe getting out to the mountains? Because... we are making every effort to ensure our good life includes some rest and relaxation and time away.

But when was the last time you put in every effort to take time off and get away just so you could be enthusiastic in God, cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, grow in His gifts and power, contemplate resurrection living and what it will be like to have a glorified body and dream about what you would do reigning with Christ?

Brothers and sisters, the sad reality is that we become so horizontally focused in our life. We are concerned and consumed about the right here and now, the immediate – so much so that we predicate following Jesus based on how “*relevant*” He is and how He can help us live our best life and become the best version of ourselves.

And I get that – this life is important, we have needs, cares and concerns and this world and this life can be an amazing, wonderful, beautiful thing – and that should be no surprise, this is our Father’s word, and our life is a gift from God.

However... every so often we need a shake-up such as Paul gives us in 1 Cor 15:19 where he scolds us saying “*if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.*”

Because that means we didn’t pay attention to what Jesus said in Matt 6:33 “*your heavenly Father knows your needs, but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness all these things will be given to you as well*”

So, brothers and sisters I've spent a fair bit of time this morning describing and illustrating the amazing reality of what it means to participate in the divine nature because I want to help you find it attractive and winsome and desirable.

I want to help lift your eyes from the day-to-day and see the heavens and a greater divine vision of how much more you already are and what you will become. I hope that I can make every effort in this message to make that happen.

So, I pray that the Holy Spirit will take my human words and infuse them with divine power so that just as Peter, James and John got a glimpse of Jesus' divine glory when He took them up the mountain to show them who He really was...

You will also get a glimpse of the glory of participating in the divine nature, and see who you truly are in Jesus Christ, and be drawn to it like a moth to the flame.

Experiencing the presence and power and the unconditional love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, eager for your

resurrection and the glorification of your body - like a kid waiting to open presents at Christmas time, and chomping at the bit to start reigning, governing with Christ – like a minor league player who wants to get called up to the big leagues and show them what he's got.

Brothers and sisters may the Holy Spirit open your eyes to see this is reality for those whom Christ has called by His own glory and goodness, and may the Holy Spirit light your heart on fire with desire for it, and blow your mind... with the realization of what is in store for us – when Christ returns.

Because when the Holy Spirit does this brothers and sisters, then you will switch out pursuing the good life - for a godly life! Because participating in the divine nature, being resurrected and receiving our glorified body and reigning with Christ is the very definition and picture of a godly life.

You see It's not being a monk or a nun or a priest or even a pastor – the godly life is not defined by a specific job or lifestyle, the godly life is participating in the divine nature,

resurrection, glorification, reigning with Christ and its not even something that we have to achieve... the godly life has already been fully achieved by Jesus Christ.

Because in Jesus Christ, human nature has become incarnate with divine nature, human nature has been resurrected and glorified and ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty!! And from there human nature will come to judge the living and the dead.

Brothers and sisters this is what the Word of God made flesh has done with our human nature AMEN! That is the godly life! This is what is for us! Amen? So now what?

Well, maybe you've seen social media posts like this one, that says *"I won't tell anyone if I win the lottery – but there will be signs..."* And that's kind of what Peter is encouraging believers to take responsibility for in this passage.

We've just looked at the amazing reality of winning the lottery in Christ that Peter describes in vs.3-4 and maybe as a believer

you don't have the capacity or the giftedness of being able to describe the divine reality and resurrection and glorification and reigning with Christ that you've just received – but... there will be signs! There had better be signs! For Peter's sake – you've just won the lottery in Christ!

This is why Peter exhorts us in vs.5-7 that we are to make every effort to add the following qualities and characteristics; goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love.

Now, please don't misunderstand this as a command to make sure these seven virtues are on display at all times in your daily life, so that you are spending every effort you have on trying to be good, learn knowledge, show self-control etc... that would be Wile E Coyote level futile.

How this works brothers and sisters is that you first truly grasp the godly life that Christ has lived and is living, that you see it and that you understand it is yours in Him through faith.

So, in that capacity is it already achieved – you’ve won the lottery, however until Christ returns that godly life is not yet fulfilled in you, its not yet brought to completion, it is not yet fully on display – and so it requires faith to believe it is already completed in Christ.

So, when Peter talks about adding goodness, godliness, perseverance, mutual affection and so on to our faith, what he means is we’re getting an advance of those qualities and characteristics from the future.

We’re borrowing from who we are going to be in the future, in order to become more like that now, and point towards that reality of who already are in Christ.

And these characteristics that Peter gives us here show us that there are many aspects in our lives where can show the signs that we’ve won the lottery in Christ. It’s not just restricted to what you confess to be true theologically or the facts you know about God, its something that permeates all of our

person and character and actions – so that other people know who we are.

Let me give you an example. It’s like that person who is just going to graduate from Law school and become a lawyer. And even though they aren’t completely finished and they haven’t passed the Bar Exam yet, they start buying expensive suits, nice shoes, a fancy watch and weird socks.

They go and buy a Mercedes or a BMW because that’s what successful lawyers drive, and they start hanging out at the bar where other lawyers go after work, acting in every way like a lawyer, to let everyone know what they are becoming.

In the same way brothers and sisters, we must add to our faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love because we want people to know in every aspect of ourselves - who we already are in Christ. We want them to know we have a godly life, even when it is not yet completed in our life now.

So, just as up and coming lawyers don't buy their dress shirts from Mark's Work Wearhouse – but from the high-end stores like Harry Rosen, we don't exhibit just any old goodness or knowledge as signs of our status in Christ... no! we go for specific high-end divine brand name goodness and knowledge.

Listen to how Jesus describes such virtue and characteristics in Matt 5:44-48, he says *“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect [complete], therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect [complete].”*

Brothers and sisters, this example is the ultimate divine brand name for us to emulate and exude in our lives. This is not any-old goodness right?? Love those who love you, greet only your own people – even the tax collectors and pagans do that.

No! Instead, brothers and sisters, make every effort to exude the divine goodness displayed in loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you. This exudes that you really have knowledge of God's character – you know Him and He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good..

In fact, every one of the virtues and characteristics Peter mentions is illustrated here. Does it not demonstrate divine self-control to continue to pray for those who continue to persecute you? Is that not divine perseverance, and the very essence of godliness in doing what God himself does? Is it not a higher level of mutual affection to treat your enemies in this way, and the very definition of agape, self-sacrificing love?

Or as Peter says in his first letter 2:20 *“if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”*

Or as Jesus says when he watched the widow who was giving her tithe at the Temple, *“this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”*

Brothers and sisters this is how we take an advance from the godly life already accomplished in Jesus Christ where we are participating in the divine nature and we put it on display in our lives right now so that people will know who we are – because this is who we see ourselves as, it is our identity... We might not tell everyone that we've won the lottery... but there will be signs.

So brothers and sisters, I pray the Holy Spirit will work in your hearts this morning to leave behind the Wile E. Coyote futility of chasing something that you can't catch in the good life, which isn't all that good in the end... and receive, in faith, the far better godly life that has already been achieved for you by Christ.

Participating in the divine nature, resurrection life and a glorified body, and reigning with Christ in the new creation.

I pray you will borrow from the future, in order to invest in the now and show the signs of who you already are in Jesus Christ. And here's the thing about borrowing from the future to

invest in the present brothers and sisters, it pays out interest and dividends. Remember Jesus' parable of the talents? (Matt 25) The servant said to the master *"you gave me five bags of gold and see I used it to gain five more!"*

As a result, the master said *"You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"*

So brothers and sisters, if the mind-blowing vision of participating in the divine nature hasn't already inspired us, if we haven't already been motivated to avoid futility, ineffectiveness and being unproductive in our efforts, may you be reminded of the reward that awaits you from investing in godliness and finishing well in a godly life.

Vs. 11 promises us that *"if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

Make every effort brothers and sisters. Every Effort. Amen.