

1 Peter 2: No Substitute

You've seen the recipe titles. "Try this super delicious lasagna with healthy ingredient substitutes." And then you read this treatise and autobiography on how this person has toiled for years in laboratories and climbed mount Kilimanjaro to find the perfect, perfect substitute for mozzarella and beef to create a delicious, healthy, lasagna. And so you go to 8 different stores and spend \$55 dollars on ingredients, and you make it and finally get to try it, and viola, it's horrible. You went through all that and the stoffers boxed one is way better and we all know it.

And it just goes to show, in life, sometimes there are no substitutes.

That theme, I believe, comes out in our texts today.

Peter encourages his hearers, you and me, to long for the pure spiritual milk of Jesus and his Word and his gifts. And with milk he's calling to mind a hungry baby. And if you have ever dealt with a hungry baby before, well, you can change them, you can swaddle them, you can bounce them, you can stand up and hop around with them and sing them their favorite song, but, sorry, you are not quieting that baby until it gets some food. Nothing else substitutes. (And even after that they still might fuss, isn't parenting fun?)

Peter longs for his people to be filled up, but with what we need. I daresay he longs for us to have a God-given formula to strengthen us and grow our faith. We fill our

bellies, our eyes, our minds, our ears with so much worldly junk food. The sitcoms are fine... (maybe?). But don't pretend that they don't have a subtle effect on us and our worldview. What's a "modern family" nowadays? Check the show out with that title. That's "normal." And they want you to believe it is. They are teaching you, they are forming you, and your kids and grandkids.

This is not to say we can't consume entertainment that doesn't have a cheesy Christian production company making it. We aren't just doomed to Amish, Christian love stories forever. But we do need to be discerning. And to use this cheesy illustration a bit more, for the garbage that comes in: 1. Are we able to be discerning? Is it impacting us, or can we separate it from reality and God's truth – which are the same? And 2. Is there some healthy spiritual milk coming in to offset it, and help us grow?

And what is that offsetting healthy nourishment? You already know. It's hearing or reading that Bible. It's the encouragement of other Christians. It's literal bread and wine that is Christ's body and blood coming to us. It's time in prayer and reflection and quiet. Folks - for these things, I think Peter is clear, there is no substitute.

A great sign that you have an unhealthy diet is what's coming out of you, no? No need to push that illustration any further. But It's the same spiritually. Why is so much anger? Why so much bitterness? Why so much lust and greed? Well

probably because the news that you are sucking down is making you angry. Maybe because the social media is making you jealous. Maybe because the substances you consume are making you unhealthy and aren't getting rid of your grief, or regret. Maybe your obsession with the rat race is sucking your joy and making you tired. So get something wholesome, something hopeful, something with beauty, meaning, and something that makes things new in you. Get some Gospel for a change.

The illustrations don't just stop here. Peter goes on to use a building metaphor. He uses the cornerstone. There's a bunch of engineers out there who probably get this even better than I, so I won't belabor the point – the point is: you can't substitute a good cornerstone. You can't substitute a good foundation. If you don't have that you don't have a secure structure.

Peter's point of course is that, a whole lot of people do reject the cornerstone, Jesus. "I'll substitute him with fame, money, sexuality, money, popularity, money, entertainment, money, pride, money, sanctimonious narcissism, and more money and now I will find my security, my meaning, my purpose."

Folks, that structure is not sound. None of those can save. None can bring forgiveness. None can conquer death. There is no substitute for the cornerstone,

Jesus. He is the only one who fulfills the law, pays the debt, and conquers the grave. He is the only one who builds a lasting house.

Now we in Idaho are well aware that lots of people are building lots of houses, ya? But Jesus has promised he goes to prepare a place for us. In the Father's mansion. He knows your heart better than even you do. He knows how to keep you safe. He knows what you need. And he knows when and how to get you there.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

There is no substitute for a builder like that. And, again, as Peter states, you are living stones, already a part of this household that he uses, that he takes joy in, that he stands up for.

Stephen stands up for Jesus, Jesus stands up for him! And sees him through the valley of death to an eternal home. To the Father. “I am the way, the truth, and the life no one comes to the Father, but by me.” No substitutes.

No substitute for a Savior who looks at people like us, so much inferior to the likes of the martyrs like Stephen and Peter, and yet he says, “I love you. I stand at the Father's side and intercede for you. You who confess my name, who have my name on you in baptism.” Do you think he has forgotten to prepare a place for

you? Do you think he won't stand and intercede for you? Why? Because of your doubts and fears and sins?

Folks, let us remember. He has done more than stand at the Father's side for us. His intercession there at the right of the Father is on account of the fact he has first laid down his life for us. The cornerstone was rejected and cast out of the city and pierced for us. He was killed. The only Savior, no substitutes, but in that death he accomplished forgiveness, and in his resurrection he showed forth his power, his victory, and the eternal life he has and is able to bring us into.

There is no substitute for that. Nor are there substitutes for his Word and promise which will keep us steadfast until the day we are brought into his victory feast where, I assure you, the food will need no substitutes.

God be praised for his work and his sustaining nourishment, for sinners like us.

Amen.