We’ve been singing songs like that for a long time, songs that are only … half-true. “This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through.” Well that’s … half-true. “I can’t feel at home in the world anymore.” Now that part is pretty good. I hope that is true for you. Maybe some of you haven’t heard that second song before. “All I know is I’m not home yet.” That’s not bad. “Take this world and give me Jesus.” I like that line. “This is not where I belong.” … Really? I think that just half-true. I hope that line makes you squirm a little.

Okay, if you have a Bible or a Bible app with you, open up to 1 Peter 2. We’re going to get there in a few minutes. 1 Peter is a little letter near the end of the New Testament, written by the apostle Peter – which is why it is called, 1 Peter. We’ll be digging in at 1 Peter 2.11. Now this the last sermon in a short series we’re calling “Identity Crisis.” Here’s the big idea: You are not who they think you are; and you are not who you think you are; you are (your reality is) who God thinks you are. His opinion is the only one that really counts. Anything they believe, anything you believe that clashes with God’s opinion is a myth, a fantasy, a delusion.

Now last week I got to talk about the coolest part of our real identity. If you are a Jesus follower, if you have bent your knees to Jesus you have become God’s kid. You have been adopted into God’s family. No matter where you’ve been, no matter what you’ve done, he makes you his kid. Now that part of our real identity is flat-out cool. And it changes us. But this week … this part of our identity is a whole lot tougher. Last week was the cool part, this week gets more difficult. Because, sometimes being what God calls us to be is hard.

Now it’s kind of cool to be different, it’s kind of cool to be unique. The amusing thing is, most people are only comfortable with being different as long as they are different like everyone else. I got a kick out of watching Morgan’s softball team – she’s 10. I didn’t say I got a kick out of watching her softball game … that’s one of the levels of hell. I said I got a kick out of watching her team: all these little girls making their personal statements by wearing wild socks. You see, you can be different at 10, as long as you
are different like everyone else. Kids do it all the time. When we were
young we made our personal statements with long hair, and bell-bottoms,
and tie-die shirts, and rather odd sunglasses – like everyone else who
wanted to be different. There used to be all these “goths” who would
express themselves with black clothes, and pale skin, and boots and
leather and lace. I guess that’s still an acceptable way to be different for
some. Now there are several “acceptable” ways to be different.
• There are the “plastics.” They want to look popular; they love
designer tags, and designer bags; perfect hair, perfect makeup,
perfect nails – kind of like the mean girls.
• Then there are metalheads: they wear denim jeans, and band shirts,
and they either have long stringy hair or they shave their heads (I
guess I’m a metalhead wannabe). Lots of tats and piercings.
• Or the hipsters: with their vintage clothes, their skinny jeans or
leggings, converse tennis shoes, iconic glasses (in fact hipsters wear
cool glasses sometimes even if their eyes are perfectly fine), slightly
androgynous hair styles – edgy, cool, bohemian – a bit pretentious.
• When I go to a Christian leadership conference I discover that to
make a statement as a student minister or a music minister requires
skinny jeans, a plaid shirt, Toms shoes and disheveled hair (think
Logan).

You see, we say we want to be different, as long as we are different like
everyone else. Because, in reality, we are terrified of being too different.
We want to fit in. We want to be accepted. We are terrified of being too
different, of standing too alone. Which is exactly what God calls us to be,
and do. 1 Peter 2.11: (This is from the New Revised Version) “Beloved, I
urge you as aliens and exiles (I urge my alien children) to abstain from the
desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.” I urge you “aliens.”
Now he’s talking to us Jesus followers. If you are a Jesus follower, God
says you are an alien. Well, I guess that’s kind of cool!

Now what kind of an image does the word “alien” evoke to you? Now I am
a sci-fi buff. I’ve loved stories about aliens my whole life.
• I didn’t hear the original “War of the Worlds” broadcast in 1938 (I’m
not quite that old), but I’ve heard snips from it. Any of you old guys
actually hear that broadcast?
• Now I grew up on aliens like this one. You Boomers out there remember ET, don’t you?
• You younger guys grew up with Men in Black. There are some pretty cool aliens in those movies.

Star Trek, Alf, Predator vs Alien, V, Defiance, Falling Skies, Enders Game. Those are the kind of pictures most people attach to the word alien. But that’s not what Peter is talking about, that we’re from another place, that our DNA is fundamentally different. What he means is that “this world is not my home” … kind of. What he means is that “this is not where I belong” … kind of. But not the way you think. You see, in one sense this world is my home, and this is exactly where I belong. You see, in the beginning God created this world for us. Then it says God formed us from the dust of the ground – we are creatures of this world. Then it says he gave us the responsibility to fill this world, and tend it. We are creatures of earth, created from earth, created for earth, this is our Father’s world, this is our home. And – this may surprise some of you -- despite what you hear in some of our music, we Jesus followers will not be spending eternity in heaven. The Bible says that God will create a new heaven and a new earth. God is going to fix what is broken in this world, and this world will be our home again, but perfect, next time. Of course this world is our home, it always has been, and it always will be.

And yet, in another sense, it’s not. In another sense, we have become aliens in this world that God created for us… Not because we are in the wrong place, but because this world has become the wrong place. Our world has changed. Our world has broken. Our world is caught up in an identity crisis, a delusion. Our world has forgotten its God. In that sense, “this” world is not our home, anymore. It was once; and it will be again, someday; but right now we Jesus followers are aliens in our own world … at least we are supposed to be.

Now let’s go back to 1 Peter and unpack this a little. I’m going to go back to 2.9. The apostle Peter says to us,
• “You are a chosen people.” That’s so cool! You didn’t earn your way into God’s family. Do you know what that means? It means you’re not excluded because you’ve been bad. And it means you’re not
chosen because you’ve been good. It’s all grace. You are a chosen people.

- He says, “You are royal priests.” You are a priest of God. God didn’t make you a spectator. You are a priest. You have a job to do. Your job is to serve God and to lead people to God. You can lead people to the presence of God. That’s a powerful responsibility, guys.

- He says, “You are a holy nation.” That isn’t about being perfect; that’s about being different. That’s what holy means: it means to be separate, to be different. We are to think differently, and talk differently, and live differently; and love differently. He wants us to stand out in this world, he wants us to be weird. Some old Bibles say that we are to be a “peculiar” people. I kind of like that; since most of you are kind of peculiar, already.

- He says, you are “God’s very own (God’s special) possession.” Do you know why? Do you know why we are chosen, holy priests? This is so big: Because our job is to “(So you can) show others the goodness of God.” We are priests, we are holy, we are chosen, so we can point people who are not Jesus followers towards something better. Guys, if we are not different, why would they ever listen to us when we point them to Jesus? If we are just like everyone else, why would they ever listen to us?

I love the next verse, verse 10. The apostle Peter says, “Once you had no identity as a people” -- in the past you were ... no one, really -- but “now you are God’s people” – now you’re something amazing. “Once you received no mercy,” now you bathe in it... Can you imagine, guys, if we actually believed this stuff? I’m not talking about believing it up here, I’m talking about believing it down here. This identity stuff would change us.

Then he gets to the verse we’re bearing down on this morning, verse 11: “Dear friends, I urge you as aliens (as) and exiles.” I urge you as aliens in your own world, a world that has become hostile to its God. You see, we Jesus followers are not tourists, just taking in the sights and buying some souvenirs as we pass on through this world. And we are not immigrants, trying to get too comfortable in a world that has lost its way. We are aliens. The Message puts it like this: “This world (the world the way it is now) is not your home, so don’t make yourselves (too) cozy in it.”
That song we sang a few minutes ago said, “All I know is I’m not home yet.” Well, that’s kind of true. Because this world is still messed up, it has still lost its way. But then it says, “This is not where I belong.” And that’s just wrong. This is exactly where I belong, right now; this is exactly where you belong, right now. Because God has a job for us “aliens” in this world. We are an outpost of God’s Kingdom in the middle of a world that has lost its way. We are ambassadors of the real King of this world, the King they have pushed aside, or forgotten. We are a resistance movement. I think that’s my favorite image – the resistance.

I dug around on the internet a little, looking at pictures of the French resistance during World War 2; fighting against the occupiers – the Nazis. Stunning pictures: farmers and shopkeepers; ladies in skirts and shorts with rifles and machine guns. Outgunned; facing execution if caught. I was struck by this picture of Georges Blind, a member of the French resistance, facing a firing squad – smiling. Extraordinary. Well guys, our world, God’s world, has been occupied by the enemy, and we are the resistance. We are here, guys, fighting a war for people’s souls.

In fact, this idea that there’s a war going on is right there in 1 Peter 2.11. Peter says, “I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.” Now some Bible translate it, “the desires that wage war against your soul.” But that word “your” isn’t there. The idea is this: This world that has lost its way is going to pull on you. If it wins, you will not only lose your soul, but you will lose theirs. You will lose your ability to rescue others who are being pulled away from God. Guys, the stakes are infinitely high. It’s about our souls, and theirs.

Okay, let’s start getting to where the rubber hits the road. There are two things that will destroy our ability to be an effective resistance. The first danger is assimilation, and the second danger is isolation. Now I think assimilation may be the biggest danger for most of us. We forget we are supposed to be different. We forget that our values are different. We start thinking like they do, and acting like they do, and pursuing what they pursue. And before we know it, we are no longer the resistance, we’re one of them. We’re not aliens anymore. We get taken in, we get taken over, and we risk losing our souls, and theirs.
You see, here’s the deal about being part of this “alien resistance.” We’ve got to stand out; we’ve got to be different. How we think, how we act, what we value has to be different. Let me show you.

- To them it’s just sex. As long as you are careful (which is impossible when the hormones are raging), and as long as both are willing, they think, go for it. For us it’s more than just sex, and it belongs only in the marriage bed. That alone will make you seem peculiar to them.
- To them it’s better to kick the tires before you buy the car, so go ahead and live together for a while first. For us, living together is all about after the ring, and after the “till death do we part” part. And I’m telling you guys, they’ll see that God’s way works a whole lot better.
- To them, if the love goes away, just give the ring back. You’ve got to follow your heart. For us, we made a promise, “Till death do us part.” And love is something we choose, and love is something we build, not something we chase. And in this world marriages are a mess; in God’s Kingdom, when we do it God’s way … what a gift!
- To them, a parental win would be a kid who is decently behaved, successful in school, successful in sports, finds a decent spouse, a decent job, and gives you perfect grandkids. That’s all cool, but for us, the biggest parental win is a kid who follows Jesus. We’d sacrifice any of the other wins for a kid who follows Jesus. By the way, if that really is your parental win, then your parenting strategies will appear pretty peculiar to a world that has lost its way. That’s okay – we’re aliens; aliens are supposed to be weird.
- To them, a win at work is good paycheck, and some recognition when deserved. We like that stuff too, but we won’t sacrifice our integrity, our values to get it.
- To them, retirement is about finishing comfortably. To us, retirement is about finishing well.
- How we play is different. We like to have fun, we like our hobbies, we like our entertainment. But is not as important to us as our worship, and our families, and our service. And there are things we don’t do for fun, places we won’t go, websites we won’t surf. So sometimes we appear peculiar. That’s cool! We’re aliens.
- How we spend our money is different. We are not obsessed with newer, and better, and more. We like stuff, but it’s not our God. And we are way more generous with our money than they are, because we recognize – after all, it’s not really ours.
• Our words are different. There are words we don’t say. There are tones we don’t use. We always tell the truth, but never without grace. And we are really good at gratitude, and praise. People like that stand out in this messed up world, don’t they. They are kind of like aliens.

• And we worship our God. While they sleep in, we worship. While they go to the lake, we worship. Because giving God the honor and the praise he deserves, because coming to a place where God’s Spirit teaches and convicts and encourages us, because coming to a place where we pick each other up is more important to us than our Sunday morning escapes.

You see, as aliens, as members of the alien resistance, as outposts of God’s Kingdom, we have to show them a different way, a better way. We refuse to assimilate, because we’ve got to stand out, because we are in a war for their souls, and ours.

But other Christians choose isolation instead of assimilation; and that’s just as big a danger. A lot of Christians drift into uncaring abandonment. We abandon our post, because we don’t care enough, anymore. We are no longer the resistance, we just hole up and try to get through this war as comfortably as we can. We forget what we’re here for. We forget we are on a mission from God. Guys, our job is not just to make it through this world as Jesus followers, it’s to drag as many of them with us as we can. So a lot of Christians get all self-centered and mean. Instead of loving this broken world that God still loves, we begin to hate it. Instead of doing everything in our power to win them over, we erect these holy barricades and cluster inside and hide. Or we peek over our walls and mock, and vilify, and berate those who are not like us. Guys, God didn’t call us to withdraw from this world, to hide from this world, he put us here to engage it, to serve it, and to do whatever it takes to bring them back. We are the resistance. Guys, if we forget our mission from God, we are worthless as his resistance. And eventually in our self-centered fear we will not only lose their souls, we will lose ours, too. We can’t withdraw, we can’t cocoon, we’ve got to engage.

I need to show you the next few verses of 1 Peter 2. Listen to what Peter goes on to say after calling us aliens.
• He says, verse 12: “(You aliens) Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors.” We are not supposed to withdraw, we are to live among them, with them. “Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.” They watch us, they see how we are different. And when they admit that God’s way is better, they’ll have to give the honor to him.

• Peter says, verse 13: “For (God’s) the Lord’s sake, respect all human authority -- whether (he’s the president, or a senator, or a governor; whether he’s republican, or democrat. Now that can be really, really hard, can’t it? As we have discovered over the past few weeks) the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed.” He doesn’t tell us to go off and set up our own little countries. He tells us to live respectfully within the kingdoms of this world, so we can show them a better way.

• Verse 16: Peter says, “As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil.” The truth is, as aliens in this world, as part of the resistance, God’s law always supersedes man’s law for us. I don’t care what they say, if it violates what he says. We are aliens in this world; he is our real King. But we don’t use our freedom as an excuse for misbehavior. Because we are trying to point them to Jesus.

• And I love verse 17. I love how it sets our priorities. Peter says: “Respect everyone (Jesus follower or not); (but) and love your Christian brothers and sisters.” Love goes way deeper than respect. He says, respect them, but make sure you have each other’s back. And then he says, “Fear God, and respect the king.” Do your best to respect the authorities of this world, but guys, don’t fear them. There’s only one we fear.

These verses are all about engagement. If we cocoon, if we isolate we can’t be the resistance. We don’t assimilate, and we don’t isolate. We don’t become one of them, but we don’t withdraw from them either. Because if we do, either: at the least we lose their souls, and quite possibly, we lose our own.

Guys, these are pictures of us (French Resistance) … with a few rather significant differences. We are not armed with weapons that kill; we are
armed with something far more powerful: weapons that give life. Taking life is easy; offering life ... now that's cool! And we don’t hide in the shadows; we don’t try to become invisible. We stand tall, we stand out, because if we don’t show them a better way to live, if they don’t see Jesus in us – how will they ever see Jesus?