

But in your hearts, reverence Christ as Lord.

I need your trust for a few moments, I'm going to ask you to close your eyes for a few moments, to visualize ~~what it is like~~ reverencing Christ as Lord. As you do so, I'll be speaking to you, to help guide and direct your thoughts.

Please close your eyes and imagine yourself in the presence of Jesus. See him as you know him to be, looking upon you, in love. See his face. A human face? A face shining with the glory of God? Is he tall and mighty and great? Or ~~is~~ he your size? Do you see the marks of his suffering, his dying for you? Do you see the power of his rising, his ruling on high? Follow your heart in this.

Now see yourself falling down before him, deeply respecting him, reverencing him. He is your Lord. Offer him ~~your family~~ ^{yourself, your ~~work~~}, your work, your words, see yourself giving to him lordship overall that you have and do. ~~But~~ See yourself falling down before him in worship. In obedience.

Open your eyes.

In your hearts, reverence Christ as Lord.

~~Having done that,~~ ^{then} our text continues with these words: Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with ~~reverence and~~ gentleness and respect.

Are you prepared to share with others ~~what you have seen and heard~~ him who you reverence in your heart? Can you tell those who feel so small and insignificant of your Lord who said, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child, shall not ~~enter~~ enter it.

Are you prepared to say to one whose life has been filled with Godforsaken suffering, Jesus, God's only Son, suffered as you have suffered. He knows your life, he has been there, not only as he died on the cross, but he has been there even as you have suffered. Your pain, your discouragement, your dis-

appointment he knows.

Are you prepared to speak to one who is grieving of the ~~sp~~ hope that is in you, of Jesus Christ who died, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. Can you tell of how God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life? Are you ready to tell you the women and the disciples ^{of} ~~who~~ had only grief and despair in their hearts on that easter morning until God surprised them with J^usus.

In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect.

No one has ever been argued into the kingdom. Though I think many have been listened and compassioned into the kingdom. Sometimes I find that I sit for a half and hour or an hour, listening to the pain and disappointment of another before I mention Jesus name. And still far too often I rush in with my answers too quickly. Gentleness and respect ~~demands~~ that I realize how deep are the thoughts of those to whom I listen, and how serious have been their efforts to understand their lives and their God. Yet as I listen I do so ~~that~~ with the confidence that Jesus will not disappoint ~~max~~ them. Jesus is the joy and hope that God has given for every human heart. I want ~~that~~ everyone I encounter to know him whom I reverence in my heart as Lord. If they have heard of Jesus, and have turned away, I am certain that it is because they have not heard enough of Jesus.

These words that we have been considering this morning, written in 1 Peter were not written only to preachers and evangelists, but to each of you. Where you live and where you play and where you work, people want to believe in Jesus. They need you to listen to them, to hear how hard faith may be for them, to receive what they speak with gentleness and respect. Jesus command to go into all the world and make disciples is spoken to you, because today and tomorrow you are able to touch lives through listening, and telling of the hope you

have in Jesus. You may be the only one God can use to touch those lives, you are the one that God will use to turn despair into faith in Christ.

In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. ~~He died for your sins, he was raised as your hope.~~ He sends you to your neighbors.