

Theme: **“Living through Unjust Suffering”**

Text: 1 Peter 2; 15 – 25

Date: May 17, 2017

Season: May Circuit meeting

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, Co.

May the Grace and peace of the living Hope of Easter grow in you, from God, our Father, our RISEN Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Over the past three weeks as we have been reading the words written in the 1st Epistle of Peter, the Epistle of Hope. So far in this letter the Apostle Peter we have been told about the living hope and unchangeable inheritance given to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have been told about how important it is to share our living hope with others so that they too can know and have the living hope and unchangeable inheritance given to all mankind by God through His love, mercy and grace. And then last week we learned about how important it is to encourage and work together in this living hope and unchangeable inheritance given to us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today, as we continue in the second chapter of the Epistle of Hope the Apostle Peter tell us how we can live in this living Hope given to us even when there is unjust suffering as he goes on to say, **For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.”** (1 Pet. 2:15-16)

As people living in the living Hope of Easter we know that God is in control and enable us to live at peace with others. Oh there are time in everyone life when our sins and the sins of others are going to stop us from listening to God’s wisdom, but God will still be in control and though bad times may occur because of our lack of following God’s Word He will bring us peace even if it is only in our holding onto the living Hope given to us and sharing the love of God with others.

This is the Good News and the Bad News of our living hope and unchangeable inheritance that God has given to us. The Good News is that because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, on that first Easter morning, we have been given a guarantee to a living hope and an unchangeable inheritance that will last for all eternity though our faith in Jesus Christ. The Bad News is that while we are living in that living hope in this world we are going to have problems. Some of our problems will come from those whom we know and some of our problems will come from the world around us, but there will be pain, sorrow and

suffering as we live in the living Hope of Easter in this world. The Apostle Peter puts it this way: **“Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.”** (1 Pet. 2: 18 – 20)

In our world today there is a lot of pain, sorrow and suffering that cause us to ask the questions like: “Why did this have to happen?” “Why would a God who loves us and cares for us allow such a horrible thing to happen to our loved ones, to other Christians, or to those peace loving people we know?” I don’t have an answer for that question and I can’t come up with a reason why these situations happen, but I do know that they will happen again and again because of the sinfulness of all humanity. They may not be as brutal as some of what we have heard about the tens of thousands of Christians who were killed over this past year in the world but they are going to happen and we need to know how to live through the pain, sorrow and unjust suffering we will face in of this world.

That’s what the Apostle Peter wants to talk to us about today. When we face all the pain, sorrow and the suffering of this world, whether it be the senseless killing of innocent Christians or the verbal abuse of a neighbor who we are trying to be friendly to, we are told that we need to be **“mindful of God.”** In all our trials, the resurrection of Jesus Christ has to be the focused of our life, not our own abilities or the abilities of others. For it is only in focusing on Jesus that we will be able to move from the pain, sorrow and the suffering that we are feeling at that moment and continue on to in the living Hope of Easter given to us by God’s love. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit in God’s Word and Sacraments and by our fellowship with other believers that God gives us what we need to make it through all the pain, sorrow and suffering that we will go through in this world.

Now many of you may have seen magic eye pictures books and may have tried to find the hidden picture found in the magic eye picture. Now the picture by itself looks confusing and can remind you of a wallpaper pattern. Yet, in each of these pictures there is a hidden picture and the ways you see the hidden picture is by holding the design close to your nose for a few moments and to focus on one spot in the design, then slowly move the picture away from your face without changing your focus, suddenly you will see the hidden picture.

Sometimes life is just like these magic eyes pictures, for as we face pain and unjust suffering our lives become confusing and make no sense. The hidden picture that makes all the sense in life can only be discovered as we let God be our focus in the living Hope of Easter, the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we face the pains, sorrows and suffering of this world we need to keep our eyes focus on the resurrection of Jesus or else we will never see the real picture but just the confusion of the world around us and the hopelessness of the pain, sorrow and suffering that we are face.

The Apostle Peter tells us: **For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. 23 When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.** (1 Peter 2:21 – 23)

As we go through the pain, sorrow and suffering of this world we find a peace and comfort by entrusting ourselves to God, who judges justly and loves us completely. As children of God, followers of Jesus Christ, we have been given a heavenly calling to be free from the slavery of sin, death and the power of the devil by walking in the footsteps of Jesus, through His Word, sacraments and fellowship with other believers. Christ suffered for us, innocent of any sins in Himself, and yet He suffered the pains and sorrow of our sins, with no thoughts of retaliation, because He was focused on the resurrection and the gift of eternal life He wants to give to you, me and all the world. The Apostle Peter says it in this way: **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.** (1 Peter 2: 24)

On this past Palm Sunday we hear storys of the pain and suffering of some of our fellow Christians of the world. One of those stories is about a mother who has come to church with her family and has gathered in the courtyard of the church with many of her friends and family. As they were standing talking and visiting all of a sudden several men masked come running into the courtyard shooting guns. The mother quickly calls her young children to her side, she drops to her knees and holds them in her arms and then beens over them putting her head on the floor covering them. Bullets fly in all directions hitting and killing many. When the shooters leave those who are not injured move around to help those who are. The husband of the mother comes to find his wife with several bullet shots in her body kneeling

and leaning on her head. As he picks her up he finds his two children alive and well.

Jesus did more for us than take the shots that were meant to give us death. He rose again from the death that He suffered for all our sins so that we can have life in the living hope of Easter and the unchangeable inheritance that can be found now and for all eternity. As we see what Jesus did for us, how great His love for us and how He has taken us from certain death to eternal life, we are given the ability to face the pains, the sorrows and the sufferings of this world with the assurance of the living Hope and unchangeable inheritance given to us by God's Only Son, Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter explains it this way: **"For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."** (1 Pet 2:25)

We have life and safety now because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. We have the assurance of that safety in the midst of all the pain, sorrow and suffering that we will face in this world because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on that first Easter morning. It is in keeping our focus on God that we are given the way of living through the pain, sorrow and unjust suffering of this world so that we can see a better tomorrow in the safety of our heavenly home prepared for us by God. It is by sharing our living hope and unchangeable inheritance with others that we help them find the correct focus for their lives so that they can see the real picture in this confusing world. For in the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter we are given a living hope and an unchangeable inheritance so that we can endure the pain, sorrow and suffering that we will face each day in this world. Amen.

Let us Pray: O Almighty God we know that we will face pain, sorrow and suffering in this world. Help us keep our eyes focused on You as we face them and remember all that Your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ has done for us. Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen