

Theme: **Living in the Hope of Easter through trials and temptations**

Text: 1 Peter 4:12 – 17, 5:6 – 11 Season: 7th Sunday of Easter, Ascension & Memorial Sunday

Date: May 28, 2017

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

May the grace and peace of the Hope of Easter be with you, from God our Father, our risen and ascended Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On this 7th Sunday of Easter we have a lot to celebrate. We have the Ascension of our Lord and Savior to the right hand of God our Father to celebrate. We have Memorial Sunday, as we remember all those who have passed from this world to be with God in the heavenly home He has prepared for us to celebrate. We have Armed Service Sunday to celebrate, as we remember all the men and women who in the past and today have giving their lives for the protection of the freedom we have here in the United States of America. Oh, there are many other things that we could be celebrating also, such as the graduation of Kiandra Wilt from Platte Canyon High School or the beginning of summer or our Confirmation Anniversaries. Yes, we have a lot to celebrate today and the words of the Apostle Peter given to us in his first letter deals with all of these items because they remind us of our commitment to Trust in God, resist the Devil and expect God's help no matter what the trials or temptations are that we will face.

When did many of us make this commitment to Trust in God, resist the Devil and expect God's help? Well for many of us we made that commitment when we were confirmed in the faith that we were given in our baptism as we were asked the question, “*Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death?*” And we answered with words, “*I do, by the grace of God.*” Then we were asked, “*Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?*” And we answered with words, “*I do, by the grace of God.*” This commitment to trust in God, resist the Devil and to expect God's help in our lives for many of us have been made because we had others whom we remember on this Memorial Sunday, who showed us the way, but did we really think that we would have to make that choice between our commitment to God or death?

Today more and more of our world, our nation and the people we live among have turned away from their commitment to God and we can feel, see and hear about the fiery trials and temptations that we will have to deal with as we Trust in God, resist the Devil and expect God's help in our lives as we live in the hope of Easter.

Take for example Miranda Duncan; she grew up in what many would call a typical American family. Oh, she didn't go to church, though her family did occasional meet with a group for a prayer meeting and her father was often involved in various council meetings. She had all the goals of a typical teenager and when she graduated from high school she was looking forward to going to college. In college, her roommate wanted to get involved with a Lutheran Campus ministry group and she invited Miranda to attend with her. Miranda enjoyed being a part of the Lutheran Campus ministry group and became very interested in learning more about being a Christian. Miranda texted her parents about the Lutheran Campus ministry group she was getting involved with and her father e-mailed her back saying, "You are not allowed to be involved with any Christian groups. Do not go to their meeting any longer." Miranda was confused by her father's message, but she had learned long ago that it was never advisable to question her father, but to cautiously continue on with what you like to do and don't let your father get involved. When Miranda when home for the Christmas break, her father questioned her on if she was going to the Lutheran Campus ministry group any more. Miranda dogged the question by saying that she was getting all her studies done and her roommate and her were doing a lot of very enlightening and fun things together.

In the winter and spring semester at college Miranda continued to go to the Lutheran Campus ministry group and asked the pastor if she could be baptized as a Christian and in the Lutheran faith like most of the group. The Pastor led Miranda and two others through a 10 week class in the Lutheran Catechism and at the end of the class they were baptized and confessed their faith in God just as many of us did by answering those same questions.

When Miranda got home for the summer break she knew that she was going to have to tell her whole family the good news of her baptism as a Lutheran, but remember her father's warning against what she had been involved in. As she explained the joy she had found in becoming a Christian her father stood up and yelled at her for disobeying his orders to her. He told her if she did not deny her Christian faith right now she would no longer be his daughter and she could no longer live in his house. What would you do if you were in Miranda's shoes?

The Apostle Peter tells us: **Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.** (1Peter 4:12) With these words we are warned that as we live our lives as Christians we will go through trials. Trials that will cause us to suffer for our faith in the living hope of Easter, but they will also cause our faith to be purified and strengthened. We all go through various trials in many different ways as

the Apostle Peter goes on to tell us: **But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon you.** (1 Peter 4:13 – 14)

Now rejoicing in pain and suffering is hard to do. Often when we are in the middle of all our suffering and pain we may ask, just as many did before us. “Why God, why do I have to go through all of this?” Thought the answer may not be the one we want to hear, it is the one that enable us to grow in our living hope of Easter. We suffer trials, pain and suffering because the devil, the world and even our own sinful nature hates and rejects God. So, we find ourselves being hated and rejected by the world and yes, there will be times in our life when we will be tempted to say, “I don't want to be a Christian.” When this happens, it is a sign to us to rejoice, for it is by the hatred and rejection of the world around us that we are shown that the Holy Spirit is living in us, causing us to follow God's will and not to do the will of our sinful nature.

The Apostle Peter goes on to talk to us about the suffering that we should and shouldn't go through as we live in our faith in Jesus Christ, as he says: **“But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”** (1 Peter 4:16 – 17)

Each of us here today bears the name Christian. We were given that name in our baptism and we have come today to this worship to hear Christ's Word to be strengthened in our faith and the power that the Holy Spirit has given to us. We have come here today to be strengthened in our faith with the communion of saints that we are a part of, as we confirm and bearer God's name in our lives, our words and our deeds. We come in the remembrance of what God has done in us through our baptism and we come with all the faithful here in this congregation and all of those who were faithful in the past, who are faithful now and who will be faithful in the future.

The Apostle Peter doesn't just tell us that there are going to be trials and suffering in the bearing of God's name, but he also goes on to give us a way of making it through those times of suffering and trials. The Apostle Peter tells us that we First need to: **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.** (1 Peter 5:6) We are not able to live as Christians on our own, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. We have to let God do the work in us and through us and not to reject His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This is trusting in God, for it is God who will

lift us up in faith just as He lifted up Jesus Christ after He suffered and died for all our sins in the first resurrection to give us the assurance of our salvation and the living hope of Easter.

Secondly, the Apostle Peter tells us to be: **casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.** (1 Peter 5:7) Trust in God for He is the one who created us and gave us our faith. He is the one who will care for us in times of trials and affliction. God cares so much for us that He even gave up His Only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer all the pains that we suffer, to die on the cross of Calvary for all of us and then to rise again on the third day to give us the assurance that we to will share in the resurrection of live just as Jesus Christ did. God has created us, He has taken care of everything to give us eternal life and He will take care of our lives here on this earth also. That's why we need to be trusting in God.

Third, the Apostle Peter tells us to: **Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.** (1 Peter 5:8) God is caring for us but we are not His robots. We must be on the alert at all times for those who would want to take us away for God's caring hands and reject all that God has done for us. We must, with the help of the Holy Spirit, continually put our bodies and minds under the control of God's will and be aware that the devil is out there looking to devour us and take us with him to hell, where God and His blessings will be completely absent. Instead of allowing the devil to draw us away from God we are to: **Resist the devil, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.** (1Peter 5:9)

What would you have done if you were in Miranda's shoes? Miranda tried desperately to explain to her father the newfound joy that she had as a Christian but he would not listen to her. As he began to throw all of her belongings out of the house, with tears in her eyes, she gathered up her belonging and called her college roommate to tell her what had just happened. Her roommate drove to meet her and brought her home to live with her.

There is no suffering that we will go through that someone else has not gone through before us, that's something we need to remember on this Memorial Sunday, for God will always be there to help us. That's why it is so important to be faithful to God and to the fellowship of the church that He has established through His Word and Sacraments for us. Join with your fellow believers and become strengthened in their experiences and understanding of how God has strengthened their faith through the trials of this world. For the Apostle Peter tells us, **“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ,**

will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:10 – 11)

Let us pray: Trust in God, resist the Devil and expect God’s help