

Vicar Andrew Wolfgram

Text: 1 Peter 2:19-25

Date: May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Setting: Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

### Suffering as Christ Suffered

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Someone asked the famous Christian author C.S. Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" he replied. "They're the only ones who can take it." That is an interesting phrase, especially because suffering is an ongoing part of this sinful world. When Adam and Eve sinned, and ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they brought sin into the world. They brought death into the world. They brought pain and suffering into the world. Throughout the ages since then, we have been able to manage pain better and better as science and medicine progresses forward. But no matter what, no matter how hard we work to eliminate pain, we cannot eliminate suffering. There will always be suffering.

We can be tempted to jump to the conclusion that we won't experience any more suffering because we follow Christ. But we are wrong. We will go through suffering. In Peter's first letter, Peter talks about suffering that we experience.

*For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.*

What happens when you suffer when you did nothing wrong? It feels like unjustified suffering. A car accident happens. You were not at fault at all. It was another driver that was reckless and crashed into you. This action was done to you, not by you.

When it comes to the differences between unjustly and justly, it can be easy to figure out what is what. Examples of suffering justly can be easy to see. Often, we suffer the consequences of our sins. We suffer paying the parking ticket because of the sin that we committed parking where we shouldn't. We suffer the consequence a broken limb after walking or running to hastily on ice and falling. When we sin, there are consequences that we must suffer. Suffering justly would mean getting what our sins deserve. Our sins deserve death, hell and damnation.

*<sup>20</sup>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.*

When you sin and receive punishment, it can be easy to see why it happened. It is a very different thing when you do what you are supposed to and are punished for it. It can be hard to endure the punishment that you don't really deserve. You may say to yourself, this isn't just at all. This isn't fair. Why is this happening to me? The people Peter was writing too were asking this question as well. Why is this happening to us? We may ask this question as we suffer for our faith. Suffer for sharing our faith with others.

*<sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*

Christ came into the world to fulfill the law. He kept the law perfectly, and he did not sin. He lived a perfect life for you and for me. He could have simply done whatever he wanted to, being He was and is perfect. He is God. But He didn't. He left for us an example of how to suffer. The one who never sinned; in thought, word, and deed.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

The concept of payback is a major precedent in our society today. When someone wrongs us, we feel we have the permission, nay the right to wrong them in return. If someone cuts us off in traffic, we should pass and speed by them breaking the law ourselves. If someone steals from us, we feel the need to steal from them in return. We think we don't do wrong. But the perfect Son of God, who was perfect let Himself be crucified in our place.

Jesus even talks about retaliation in Matthew 5:38-39. ““You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

We are called to suffer as Christ suffered. True, we suffer consequences for the sins that we commit, but we also suffer because we bear the name of Christ.

At the end of verse 23, we hear about him who judges justly. Who is that? That is God the Father. On our confirmation trip to St. Louis a few weeks ago we talked about God the Father quite a bit. God the Father who is omniscient, He knows all. He is omnipotent, He is all powerful. He is omnipresent, He is everywhere. God our Father is eternal. As Isaiah 53 states: “Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.” God was justly punishing your sin and mine when Christ hung upon the cross for us.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

Thanks be to God, we have a savior who suffered for us. Because of Christ's own suffering we are healed. Christ didn't run away from suffering. He even prayed in the Garden of

Gethsemane that it would be taken away. He went willingly to the cross for you and for me so that we could be forgiven of our sins. We are forgiven children of God.

*<sup>25</sup>For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

We follow our shepherd, Christ, who is the Good Shepherd. We follow our shepherd who willingly took for us the suffering that we deserve. He who didn't retaliate. He who didn't fight back. He who was lead like a lamb to the slaughter to be Crucified for us. Christ suffered and died for us on the third day so that we could have life with him. We endure the suffering that this world gives us as Christ followers. But we know that because of Christ's suffering and death on the cross, and His glorious resurrection, we receive the forgiveness of sins, salvation and eternal life. Amen.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen."

Ephesians 3:20-21