

Mark 15

“I’ve Fallen, and I ...”

Palm Sunday

March 25, 2018

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, Our Heavenly Fathers
And Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[*Introduction*] “No pain, no gain.”
 “Sweat plus sacrifice equals success.”
 “Pay the price.”
 “*We shall overcome.*”
 “Help! I’ve fallen, and I can’t get up.”

Maybe you’re thinking “I’ve fallen, and I can’t get up”
 doesn’t quite rank there with “*We shall overcome.*”
Maybe you are thinking it is not as inspirational.
Maybe you think it wouldn’t make a great poster – in my day – or a meme today.

Well maybe I will change your mind today...

[*Fallen*]

We, in our sufferings, show that we’ve fallen.
 All have fallen short of the glory of God. All of us have fallen.
 AND you and I – We complain, blame, avoid and cause.

FIRST, We complain.

Why? Why did this happen to me?
Why me, Lord? Thousands of moms could have been diagnosed with cancer. Why
did it have to be mine?

We don’t see the spiritual benefit of suffering. We just know that we don’t like it,
so we complain.

We complain to our family.

We complain to our friends.

We complain to anyone who would listen.

 And in so doing ... we have fallen in our faith.

We not only complain but we also blame.

We say things like:

“I’m sick and tired of Steve at work. He never seems to get off my back; he’s behind most of my problems.”

OR

“If that doctor had half a brain, he would have seen this coming. He could have given my husband medication before his heart condition got worse.”

OR

“The problems just keep coming. God, can’t you stop this? You’re supposed to take care of me! This is your fault!”

Can’t you just hear yourself?

We blame suffering on the incompetence and measures of other people.
And in so doing ... we have fallen in our faith.

We complain and blame, but we also avoid.

Many say we live in a time when we can worship freely.
Suffering for faith isn’t a problem as in historical times. Society has changed.

Tough question:

Has society adapted to Christians, OR have Christians adapted to society?

The reality is: the reason we rarely suffer for the faith
 is that we’ve arranged our lives such that we don’t have to.

We bring our faith when it’s comfortable.
In thinking about the embarrassment and pain we might suffer, we avoid it.
And in so doing ... we have fallen in our faith.

We complain, blame, and avoid, but we also cause.

How many of you had a bad day at work, came home,
and took it out on the first person you saw—your spouse or kids?
I’m surely not the only one.

If we have to go through it, others might as well too.
And in so doing ... we have fallen in our faith.

[Transition]

With every complaint and statement of blame,
our spiritual feet fall out from under us.

We drop to our knees, not because the things we suffer are so unbearable,
but because attitude has weakened our spiritual foundation.

Under the weight of our sin, we've fallen, and, no, we can't get up,
but from that humbling perspective
we can see the one person who remains standing – Jesus Christ

Because of his sufferings, we who have fallen do get up.

[*Jesus Christ*]

You know, Jesus didn't relish hardship and difficulty any more than we do.
Our text reminds us that he prayed, "Father, if this cup can pass from me . . ."

Yet, Jesus Christ is the one person who
endured all suffering, faced every kind of pain, and stands firm (Is 53:3).

Christ knew what it was to suffer, and because of it, our faith stands firm.

Christ did not complain.

We never hear "Why me?" or "Not now."

Instead, it's "Father, your will be done." Did you hear it? Thy will be done!

And our faith stands firm.

Christ did not complain or blame.

Jesus did not hurl back accusations at those who were taunting him on the cross.

Instead, Jesus says,

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing."

And our faith stands firm.

Christ did not complain, blame or avoid.

Some called for him to come down from the cross if he was the Son of God.

Instead, he hangs there in agony until we hear "It is finished."

And our faith stands firm.

Christ did not complain, blame, avoid or cause.

Christ willingly endured suffering.

Because with every crack of the whip that knocked him to the ground,
every piercing nail that made him slump on the cross,
we can stand firm.

Therefore, "*the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing
with the glory that is to be revealed to us*" (Rom 8:18).

That's what sets Christians apart; we have hope.

And our faith stands firm.

When we respond to suffering with a positive attitude, people will take notice.
God uses hardship to give occasion for our Christian witness.

[*Conclusion*]

We can approach problems with confidence,
knowing Christ did not remain slumped on the cross.
On the third day, he stood up.
He has overcome all suffering and problems.
And because Christ dwells in us, we will overcome too.

His resurrection enables us to stand up in the face of suffering.
We can stand firm against those who mock or belittle our faith.
We can stand against sickness and disease in this world.
We can stand with confidence that we will stand with Jesus on the Last Day!

And this the confirmands will do...

*Annie Bower, Maddie Caylor, Kale Clark, Abby Ghabel,
Rory James, Faith Reynolds, Peter Rocca, and William Wittich.*

They will stand here before the altar, before the cross and confess their faith.

At Jesus' name these young men and women will bow their knees
and with their tongues confess that Jesus Christ is their Lord, that is, their Savior,
who redeemed them lost and condemned persons,
purchased and won them
from all sin, death and the power of the devil
with His holy precious Blood
and His innocent suffering and death
all to the glory of God the Father.

And they will promise to not fall away from the faith... even unto death.
Just as you have done!

They can do this... we can confess this...
because of God's good and gracious will...
Our sins are forgiven, salvation, even life everlasting is ours.

"I've fallen, and I can't get up." Okay, maybe it's not so good. BUT
"Help, I've fallen..., and with Jesus we stand up." To that I say, "Amen!"

"Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good
that you may do his will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.
Amen." (Heb 13:20-21)
