

Trust in the Lord despite suffering! - 1 Peter 5:6-11

Brothers and sisters in Christ this morning we meditate in the Second reading of today: 1 Peter 5: 6-11, which you heard a while ago. We begin our meditation: In the name of Jesus in whom we live and move and have our being. Amen

Dear children of God:

*“There were two boys who were twins, one was optimist, the other one pessimist. The parents were worried about the extremes of behavior and attitude and finally took the boys in to see a psychologist. The psychologist observed them a while and then said he will help them. He put the pessimist in a room full of toys in order for him to enjoy life. He also prepared another room filled with horse manure, and he put the optimist in that room.*

*The psychologist observed both boys through one way mirrors. The pessimist continued to be a pessimist, stating that he had no one to play with. Then he went to look in on the optimist, and he was astounded to find him digging through the manure. The psychologist went into the room and asked the boy, what on earth you are doing? He replied that with all that manure, he was sure there had to be a pony in the room somewhere.”*

Friends, we all understand the difference between a pessimist and an optimist. And we all likely see ourselves as one or the other. Hopefully, we are more optimistic than pessimistic. After all, Christians have every reason for optimism. We have a good and loving Father in heaven, who is working all things together for the good of the people He loves, including you and me. And yet, when we so often feel overwhelmed by the cares and worries of life, it is hard to maintain a positive outlook.

It is hard to be optimistic when work is going badly, and when we're not sure we are going to have a job. It is hard to be optimistic about life when your family seems to be in constant struggle with one another. It is hard to be optimistic when someone you love, someone who is special to you is very sick or is dying. It is hard to be optimistic when our bodies creak and groan as we grow older, as our health deteriorates, or as we suffer in any way in this world that is so full of suffering.

There is a saying, which say: *“Cheer up! Things could be worse. So I cheered up, and sure enough—things got worse!”* This saying often describe how we feel about life in general. We hope things are going to get better, but in some ways, we always have that fear that sooner or later, things are actually going to get worse in our lives. Sooner or later, our suffering is going to increase.

But what Peter reminds us of in our text today is that the best **is** yet to come. Yes, He says, there is suffering in this world. But it doesn't last forever. It does get better—much better, eternally better, for those who trust in Jesus Christ. He says: <sup>10</sup> **And the God of all grace, who called you**

***to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.***

Friends, no matter what may happen in this world, we can be sure that the day is coming when God is not only going to bring an end to our suffering, but He is going to bring blessing upon blessing as He leads us to the life of eternal bliss and glory that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

What a joy it is to have the assurance that, in Christ, the best is yet to come! The risen Lord, who gave His holy, sinless life for us on a cross, now sits at the right hand of the Father, to rule over all things for the sake of His people. There is nothing in heaven and earth that escapes the watchful eye of the very same Lord who suffered for us, that we might have life in Him. There is no trouble, no worry, no pain or sorrow that is unknown to Him. And in all these things, He wields His almighty power to strengthen and to deliver His people.

But then, something must be wrong, because we still find ourselves caught in a world that is filled with suffering and sorrow beyond comprehension. What's worse is that it often seems that Christians suffer more than non-Christians in this world? It just doesn't seem to make any sense. Where is the glory that we were expecting? Shouldn't we be experiencing a truly blessed life because of our faith in Christ? If Jesus ascended to rule all things for our good, then why do we still have the pains, the disappointments and the suffering of life in this world?

In the epistle of today, Peter talks about the question of suffering. And in that regard, the Christians of his day were worse off than we are. History tells us how difficult it was for those early Christians. They were often ostracized by their family and friends, becoming outcasts in their own communities. They were mocked and ridiculed for their faith; there were those who lost their jobs because of their religious convictions; they were physically abused because they believed in Christ. There was a time when Christians were so hated that they were arrested, tortured and thrown to the lions in the arena. And why? What had they ever done that was so bad, that they should suffer so much? It was all because they believed the truth: that Jesus is God, who came to die in our place and rise to give us life.

But if there is one thing the devil hates, it is to see people believe that truth. In fact he will do anything he can to destroy our hope and confidence in God. He will do it through persecution, through fear, misunderstanding, through disappointment and suffering. Peter speaks of the devil as ***a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*** And the devil is good at what he does. He often knows just which buttons to push in us; he seems to know the things that are most likely to cause us to question God and His ways in our life. And the devil will keep pushing; he will keep at us

because if he can upset our faith and turn us away from God, then he has won us and our souls for all eternity. And if we think we have it bad in this world, scripture reminds us that all the pain of this life is nothing compared to the greater torment of hell.

The devil is at work to destroy our faith with all the pain and sorrow that the power of sin brings into this world. But all is not lost! While there may be those times when we have trouble understanding why God allows all this to happen, He does promise that He will be there to see us through it all.

Earlier in this epistle, Peter said: ***“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.”*** Peter knows that the suffering is there. But he also knows what God can, and will do for those who trust in Him. And so he says: ***Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*** When we find ourselves overwhelmed by the devil’s attacks, there is only one thing we can do, and that is to cast our burdens on the Lord. We need to let go of the burdens, and let the Lord take care of them.

A while ago I read a story about a young teenager named Sally who made herself miserable over the smallest failures and setbacks of her life. Early one fall, while the leaves were still on the trees, there was an exceptionally heavy snowstorm. Sally’s grandfather took her for a drive and said, "Notice those elms, the branches are so badly broken that the trees may die. But just look at those pines and evergreens. They are completely undamaged by the storm. My child, there are two kinds of trees in the world, the foolish and the wise. An elm holds its branches rigid. As it becomes weighted down, eventually its limbs break. But when an evergreen is loaded, it simply relaxes, lowers its branches, and lets the burden slip away. And so it remains unharmed. Be a pine tree, granddaughter."

Dear children of God “Christians who give up all their cares to the Lord can face life's burdens much better than those who try to bear the weight themselves.” But more than that, the Lord can, and does, see us beyond them. Peter knew that the ascended Lord was still in charge, and he knew that in His time, the Lord would act for the good of His people. Peter knew something we need to remember: The day is coming when the Lord is going to set things right. At the right time, He will bring an end to the suffering and troubles of our lives. And He will bring us to the wonderful glory of His eternal home.

Yes, the best *is* yet to come, for our God will bring an end to our suffering. He will deliver His people, giving us greater blessings than we could ever imagine. And even now, as we stand firm in

our faith, He gives us the help and strength we need to deal with and to overcome the sufferings and problems of this world.

“There is another saying written by an author unknown. It refers to God. The saying say: Trust Him when dark doubts assail you, Trust Him when your strength is small, Trust Him when to simply trust Him seems the hardest thing of all. Trust Him, He is ever faithful, Trust Him, for His will is best, Trust Him, for the heart of Jesus is the only place of rest.”

Friends, Peter tells us that suffering will come. But he also says, don't give in, as if there is no hope. Remember that God is at work, and the best is yet to come. He will deliver you. He will strengthen you. And you will beat the devil, through your faith and trust in God, the God who can, and does work all things for the good of the people He loves. Amen.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
and Savior. Amen.