



## LESSONS FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> PETER

Mid week Bible Study, 2020 with Pastor Hetrick

April 26, 2020

1 Peter 1:17-23

### SESSION 2- LIVING THIS TEMPORARY TIME

**Can you think of a time in your life when you had to endure?**

**What can we hold onto to give us perspective and center us?**

**How will we live as those enduring?**

Perhaps one of the challenge these days is seeing this current circumstance as temporary. The longer it continues the harder it is. Somewhere between the beginning and seeing an end in sight is the very difficult middle. The place of endurance.

In order to engage today's passage, some background may help- how we see the work of Christ in the cross; what faith and ethics have to do with each other; how to see ourselves in relationship to a bigger world and what it means to be born anew.

#### **Christology:**

It is clear in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter that the Christian community is of central importance. It is also clear that this community is centered in the work of Christ in the cross. The fancy word for how we see Christ's work is Christology. In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter the emphasis is upon seeing the suffering of Jesus. Christians are called to be holy as Christ is holy. We see this shown principally in his behavior during the events we call the Passion- Christ's arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

## **Ethics:**

We are called to join Christ. The norm for our behavior, the command to love, and behaving even in prolonged struggle or persecution, is Christ. Remembering Christ's saving grace creates a new reality for us- we are seen in grace. We are called to embody grace. Our actions in the world are to manifest God's presence and reality. We do this by being present in the world, sharing the best of what is good in society while resisting that which is bad for society. One of the concerns of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter was that in order to endure, some might choose to just join in things that are bad for society thinking they will help them endure.

### **How might we think of this in our world?**

## **Household:**

In the Greco-Roman world of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, how one ought to conduct oneself in relationship to others was a common concern. This notion may seem frankly at odds with our sense of individualism, self- determination and consumer culture. There was an emphasis on interrelationships- this was reflected in Jesus' sayings.

Can you think of some examples? Loving one's neighbor as one's self; seeing someone who is naked, poor, in hungry and one's obligation to provide for them. If you have two tunics, and someone has none, give them one.

The Christian community was given a way of reacting to both internal and external threats so that their missionary role and central values could be preserved. Christ's past, one which included suffering, is the Christian's present. Christ's present, one of resurrection, salvation and blessing, is our future. We will see glimpses in this life, of what is assured in it fullness to come, but there will still be struggle.

Then, as now, doing good was not exclusive to Christianity, however, the notion of doing so even if it means suffering is distinctive.

### **How does this strike you in this time?**

## **Born Anew:**

The Christian community in the eyes of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter sees itself not merely as a group of individuals with similar convictions, but as new people of God, with social and even political implications for how to live in the challenges of the world.

There is a word we don't really use today- "beget"- which means "created."

In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter we hear about being born anew, seen today in the last verse. It would be better to envision being begotten anew/created anew. This, together with our understanding of baptism, remind us that it is God who is re-creating us, and creating new community and new life. What God is creating is a community of hope through the resurrection of Jesus.

Death, evil, and destruction do not get the last word. This is the hope we are given to share and why we can have joy in the midst not only of challenge but of sacrifice.

Just before today's readings the writer tells readers to set their hope totally upon the grace that comes to you through Christ and be holy as God is holy. In other words, lives of hope are holy lives. All of this is a backdrop to today's reading, to act in ways appropriate to God's redeeming work, from a place of awe and reverence for God's work, and God's faithfulness in Christ.

**“And if you address as Father the one who impartially judges according to each one's work, live out the time of your temporary residence here in reverence. You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed – not by perishable things like silver or gold, but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ.**

**Through him you now trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. You have purified your souls by obeying the truth in order to show sincere mutual love. So love one another earnestly from a pure heart. You have been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:17-19, 21-23 NET**

Let's break the verses down:

**Verse 17:** The “if” here is really “since”- there is no question that God is our benevolent Father and also impartial judge. The notion of impartial judge is a long standing tradition in the Hebrew Scripture, and was hoped for in the judges and kings of the Old Testament. Used here, the writer is making the point that God's grace is not an event, but a reality that should transform our life to one of obedience to God's will not only for ourselves but for the world. Not because we live in terror of God, but one of reverence for one who loves and saves us and redeems us.

**What comes to mind when you hear of obedience to God in our living?**

**Verses 18-19:** This redemption is not so much for 1<sup>st</sup> Peter about human sin and guilt as it is redemption from a former way of life that was vain or foolish. It is a rejection of a cultural heritage that is not consistent with Christ.

**How might we hear these words about culture out of sync with God's will?**

This passage refers to Christ as the Passover lamb, echoing the story of Israel redeemed from Egypt and the marking of the doorposts. But it is important to note that it was not the blood of the lamb that saved Egypt, it was the power of God. The liberation of the people was no accident. Likewise, our redemption through Christ was no accident, it was done for the sake of the people of God by God.

**Verse 21-** Just as God chose to redeem the people of Israel, God chose to act in Christ. Such a God is our source of hope and faith- we can place our trust in the God who acted through Christ. We have been begotten/born anew in God's Word (Jesus Christ). This is our reality.

**Verse 22-** Therefore, live the lives you were created to live. Mutual love will help you to support one another amidst external pressures. This living is not "works" as much as it is indicative of our rebirth in Christ.

**In our current situation, how might the notions of mutual support amidst external struggles speak?**

**How do you hear sacrifice and endurance for the sake of who we are called to be versus who we want to be?**

I think these are the questions speaking to us as we struggle with a new reality in this time caused by the pandemic. And this passage is also our antidote.

When I decided to run a 10 miler race, despite all of my training, the conditions that day were not optimal. It was extremely humid- at times it felt like breathing underwater. The radiant heat of all of the concrete and pavement was draining. My feet began to ache from the pounding they were taking. And there was no water at any of the water stations. The Gatorade made me feel sick. But the only way to get to where I needed to be was to get through it. At about the 8<sup>th</sup> mile, I was miserable. With each breath I tried to will myself along. I was surrounded by people wearing earphones so there was no one to talk to. At one point I remembered a trainer I had who used to really stretch me. She would tell me to just do something I was sure I could not for one minute. "Come on, it's just one stinking minute- you can do anything for a minute!" Then I remembered my trainers for this race and the encouraging things they had said to me, including, "you got this!"

And “it doesn’t have to be pretty.” Which it definitely was not. But I finished, somehow still living but I said some pretty unholy things along the way. When it was hard, it was almost impossible to remember that the time was temporary. But that was a chosen struggle.

The challenges we faced when our older daughter was born were not. When Catherine was born, the doctors made mistakes in her delivery that resulted in her having trauma to her brain and her body. For the first couple of months, every moment she was not sleeping, she screamed. And we had to triple diaper her to help her hips grow in place. She had learning challenges and body control challenges. Every time I thought we were past the hard part, something new emerged. This wasn’t so temporary, it was an ongoing labor. But that labor was a labor of love.

I would love to tell you that I was serene and accepting and forgiving in it all. I was not. It took a long time process all of my own emotions about the doctor, and the insensitive or indifferent responses to the struggles of sorting out what our daughter needed. I certainly felt ill equipped. Though I often felt unprepared, there is no doubt God to made the path.

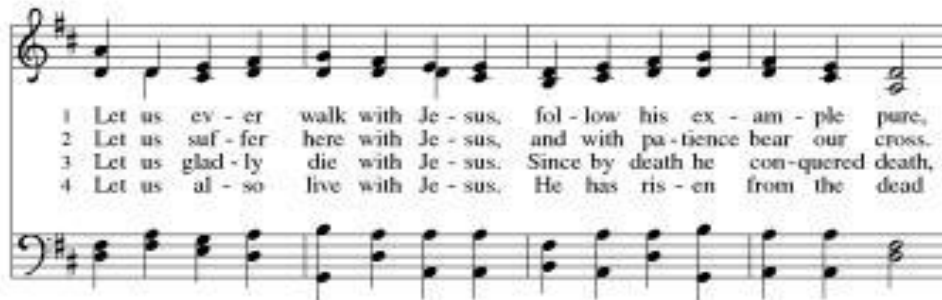
Though I and we struggled, my faith and hope were in God, because it was the only thing I could count upon. That got us through the orthopedic specialist phase, and the screaming phase, the battling with educators phase, and the mental health phase. Because along the way, there was also the caring faith community phase, the loving music teacher phase, the nurturing Montessori education phase, the referral for a clinical neuropsychologist phase, and more. Interspersed along the way were others who obeying the truth of my daughter as a child of God, who showed sincere and mutual love. That love helped to birth her and us anew.

My faith and hope in God were bolstered by the community who showed up, sometimes exactly when I was at the limit and could not see that this moment was temporary. The situation was not temporary, but the moment was.

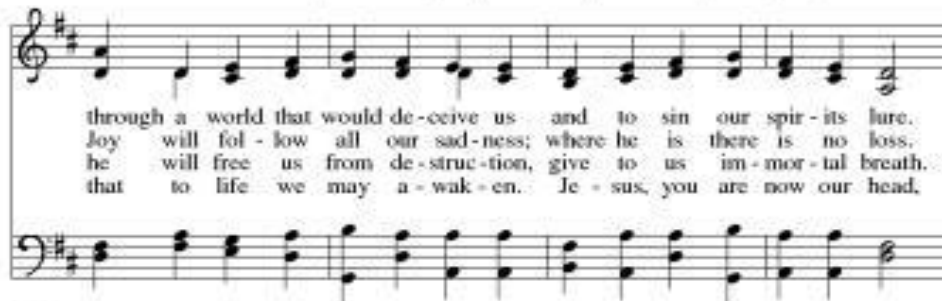
We are living in a time that calls us to sacrifice not only for ourselves, or those we love, but for all God loves. I hope that we can turn to God’s word and to each other to see and experience what we need for the moment at hand so we can continue in faith to follow Christ, and not give up.

**CLOSING: I often rely upon music to lead me into my time with God and I know that for many of us, this has been a time where we are missing our communal music making as church. A song for this lesson that has spoken to me is “Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus” which is ELW #802 or LBW #487. It appears on the next page**

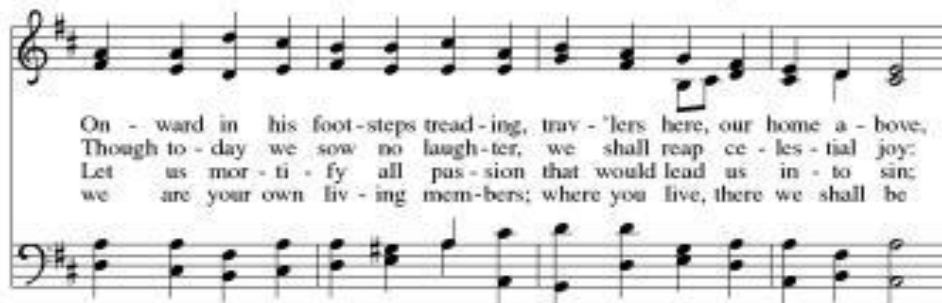
## Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus



1 Let us ev - er walk with Je - sus, fol - low his ex - am - ple pure,  
 2 Let us suf - fer here with Je - sus, and with pa - tience bear our cross.  
 3 Let us glad - ly die with Je - sus. Since by death he con - quered death,  
 4 Let us al - so live with Je - sus. He has ris - en from the dead



through a world that would de - ceive us and to sin our spir - its lure,  
 joy will fol - low all our sad - ness; where he is there is no loss.  
 he will free us from de - struc - tion, give to us im - mor - tal breath,  
 that to life we may a - wak - en. Je - sus, you are now our head,



On - ward in his foot - steps tread - ing, trav - 'lers here, our home a - bove,  
 Though to - day we sow no laugh - ter, we shall reap ce - les - tial joy;  
 Let us mor - ti - fy all pas - sion that would lead us in - to sin;  
 we are your own liv - ing mem - bers; where you live, there we shall be



full of faith and hope and love, let us do our Sav - ior's bid - ding.  
 all dis - com - forts that an - noy shall give way to mirth here - af - ter.  
 and the grave that shuts us in shall but prove the gate of heav - en.  
 in your pres - ence con - stant - ly, liv - ing there with you for - ev - er.



Faith - ful Lord, with me a - bide; I shall fol - low where you guide.  
 Je - sus, here I share your woe; help me there your joy to know.  
 Je - sus, here with you I die, there to live with you on high.  
 Je - sus, let me faith - ful be; life e - ter - nal grant to me.

Text: Sigmund von Birken, 1626-1681; in *Cathenas Book of Worship*, ed.  
 Music: LASSET UNS MIT JESU ZIEHEN, Georg G. Bokze, 18th cent.  
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