

RESURRECTION REALITIES: SUFFERING

AS WE GATHER

I'd like to start out with a question today, and that is this: If you are okay with having to suffer, raise your hand? Okay, I don't see any hands raised and so I'll assume none of us likes to suffer. Yet we do. Don't we? And some of that suffering is our own fault. We say something or do something and the consequence results in some form of suffering. And while we certainly don't like it, we still can look in the mirror and say, "I brought this upon myself," and accept it.

But what about the suffering we endure because of someone else? That's totally different, isn't it? That kind of suffering has no justification.

So what about the suffering we endure as a Christian? Are we just to accept it and move on? Well, that's what we're going to find out today as we look at the Biblical view of suffering.

INVOCATION

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OPENING READING (Psalm 140)

P Throughout the Bible, we hear stories of people suffering. Take Joseph (of the Old Testament) for example. As a child Joseph is thrown down a well, exported to a foreign land, sold into slavery, falsely accused of rape, and forgotten in prison. All of this lasts for 17 years, and the unspoken question in all this is "where is God? Why is he letting this happen?" Or how about the prophet Jeremiah? God told him, "Go to the people and speak to them the truth." What did that get Jeremiah? Well, he was rejected, mocked, put in stocks, and also thrown down a well. And then there's David. True, David did bring much of the suffering he endured upon himself through his actions. Still, David suffered because of the actions of others. So much so, that he wrote about it in his psalms like he did in Psalm 140:

Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men;
 preserve me from violent men,
² who plan evil things in their heart
 and stir up wars continually.
³ They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's,
 and under their lips is the venom of asps.
⁴ Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked;
 preserve me from violent men,
 who have planned to trip up my feet.
⁵ The arrogant have hidden a trap for me,
 and with cords they have spread a net;
 beside the way they have set snares for me.
⁶ I say to the Lord, You are my God;
 give ear to the voice of my pleas for mercy, O Lord!
⁷ O Lord, my Lord, the strength of my salvation,
 you have covered my head in the day of battle.
⁸ Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked;
 do not further their evil plot, or they will be exalted!
⁹ As for the head of those who surround me,
 let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!
¹⁰ Let burning coals fall upon them!
 Let them be cast into fire,
 into miry pits, no more to rise!

- ¹¹ Let not the slanderer be established in the land;
let evil hunt down the violent man speedily!
- ¹² I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
and will execute justice for the needy.
- ¹³ Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name;
the upright shall dwell in your presence.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P But for all those times David prayed to the Lord that He would bring an end to his suffering, David also prayed to the Lord for forgiveness for the suffering he brought upon others through his words and actions. Psalm 51 is one of those prayers:

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight...

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

P Just like David, we too must confess that our words and actions have resulted in others suffering. Therefore, let us confess our sins to God our Father, seeking His forgiveness and cleansing us from all unrighteousness:

C **Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our creator and preserver, we admit and confess our sinfulness. We are stained by sin from our very beginnings. We have sinned again and again in thought, word, and deed. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves and have turned away from one another in our thinking, speaking, and doing. We have done the evil You forbid and have not done the good You demand. We do repent and are truly sorry for all of our many sins. Have mercy on us, gracious Father; forgive us all that is past, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, direct our lives so that we serve You in true faithfulness. Grant us victory over all that oppresses us, and build Your kingdom among us here through Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

P In His boundless mercy, God has promised forgiveness of sins to those who repent and turn to Him for restoration and renewal. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. God keep you in His grace by the Holy Spirit, and grant you a life on earth in which you tell of His greatness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING**Acts 2:42–47**

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

This is the Word of the Lord.

EPISTLE**1 Peter 2:19–25**

¹⁹This is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰For 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. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When 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. ²⁴He 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. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

This is the Word of the Lord.

HOLY GOSPEL**John 10:1–10**

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the tenth chapter.

¹[Jesus said:] “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

SERMON

Let us pray: Almighty God, through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord we have been born anew to a living hope. Our inheritance of eternal life is kept safe in your hand. Even though we suffer now through difficult times, you are at work in us to test and strengthen our faith. We look forward to the day when faith turns to sight and our inheritance is realized, the day when Christ our Savior returns in glory. Hear our prayer and accept our praise in his name. Amen.

NICENE CREED

**☩ I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

We pray for the whole Church, that the message of salvation joyfully be told throughout all the world and the Easter victory of Jesus Christ be celebrated around the globe. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the nations of the world, that the governments of all nations be a source of blessing to those who are governed and that oppression in all forms be hindered. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for ourselves in this season of our Lord's great victory, that we truly be Easter people all year long, radiating the light of Christ in our homes, workplaces, and communities. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all who serve us through their callings, especially for those who deal with special challenges or dangers on a regular basis, including police, fire, and emergency personnel. Also, we remember at this time the military forces of our nation, those stationed both at home and abroad, whose efforts serve to defend our nation in challenging times. Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those with special concerns and needs this day: those who are hospitalized, [*including . . .*], those who grieve, the unemployed and underemployed, the chronically ill and shut-in, and all others whose needs are not known to us at this time. Bless them with Your presence, gracious Father, that they have a sense of victory in their lives and find strength and hope for each day. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Merciful God, we bless You for having placed into our lives faithful Christian people to guide us. On this day we remember those no longer among us on earth who have completed their earthly races and have won the final victory in Christ. Lead us to follow in their way, that we rejoice together eternally at Your Table and in Your mansions. Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

LORD'S PRAYER

**☩ Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace. Amen.

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