

Welcome and Announcements: May 10, 2020

Prelude: *Holy God, We Praise Your Name*

“All apostles join the strain, as your sacred name they hallow”

Opening Prayer: Following Psalm 16 (Every week in Eastertide – through May 24)

Song of Trust and Security in God

¹ Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

² I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you.”

³ As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.

⁴ Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.

⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.

⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.

⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.

⁸ I keep the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.

¹⁰ For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.

¹¹ You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Opening Hymn: To God Be the Glory

1. To God be the glory, great things He hath done!
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

(Refrain)

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord,

Let the earth hear His voice!

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord,

Let the people rejoice!

O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,

And give Him the glory: great things He hath done!

2. Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. (Refrain)

Scripture:

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

1 Peter 4

Good Stewards of God's Grace

4 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), ² so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God. ³ You have already spent enough time in doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you no longer join them in the same excesses of dissipation, and so they blaspheme. ⁵ But they will have to give an accounting to him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does.

⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰ Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has

received. ¹¹ Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Suffering as a Christian

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. ¹⁶ Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And

“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?”

¹⁹ Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.

Sermon: Speaking the Very Words of God (God and Suffering)

Each week in Eastertide will be a reflection on “The Path of Life” for Christians going through 1st and 2nd Peter. Psalm 16 will be our guiding prayer each week too.

April 19: Show Me the Path of Life, 1 Peter 1, Psalm 16

April 26: Honor Everyone. Fear God. Honor the Emperor (God and Governments), 1 Peter 2

May 3: Tender Hearts; Humble Minds (God and Relationships), 1 Peter 3, John 10:10b

May 10: Speaking the Very Words of God (God and Suffering), 1 Peter 4; John 14:6

May 17: Tend the Flock in Your Charge (God and the Church) 1 Peter 5; John 14:15

May 24: Waterless Springs and Mist in the Storm (God and False Prophets) 2 Peter 1&2

Prayer of the People and the 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sending us out to be God's Word in the World:

Every hand that we don't shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another, must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should that need arise. *—Rabbi Yosef Kanevsky of Los Angeles*

Closing Hymn: *How Firm a Foundation*

1. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in God's excellent Word!
What more can be said than to you God hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

2. When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be near thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

Response: *Jesus Shall Reign* (v. 4)

*Blessings abound where'er He reigns;
The prisoners leap to lose their chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all who suffer want are blest.*

Postlude: *Lead On, O King Eternal*

*Thy cross is lifted o'er us; we journey in its light:
The crown awaits the conquest; Lead on, O God of might.*

Speaking the Very Words of God –

Verses 7-11 are very “Ashland Presbyterian” and also very current...

The end of all things is near.

That may sound a little more true than we'd like for it to be.

Certainly, life has changed.

What it “used to be like” will be hard to explain to those who didn't live through this.

Be serious and disciplined – for the sake of your prayers.

You lean into your prayer and study lives when it comes to your faith, and I love that.

You teach students to be pastors and that requires a sense of discipline.

But I would also say – make time to laugh and occasionally ignore the laundry or dirty dishes.

It is a balance, and especially now, seriousness is important but can get out of whack.

Serious about life; disciplined as to not get harsh or punitive in our seriousness.

Maintain constant love for one another – for love covers a multitude of sins.

Love is what Jesus came to teach.

I think he meant for us to live into that love (more than just say we “believe” in him)

This may be what Jesus means when he said “I am the Way.” The way of love.

Live in this WAY – with constant love for one another.

Be hospitable to one another without complaining.

Hospitality is an underrated spiritual gift.

Some learn that in their families.

I learned it from theology discussion group in seminary.

And it's not hospitality if you complain about it. Maybe not even if you apologize for it?

When visitors come to my home – it isn't because it is the neatest or best decorated.

Hopefully it's because they can feel connected and safe.

Serve one another with whatever gifts each of you have received.

This is the grace of God (our stewardship campaign from November) –

It is the grace of God to equip us and encourage us for the very times and places in which we find ourselves.

Sent to serve – it's who we are. We care about our community – and know the people in our neighborhoods. This is about local need and the capacity we have to care about that need.

This isn't about pushing beyond your own limits or needing to be something that you are not.

It's about being exactly who you are, and the more you can live into that authenticity,

The more God can use you!

Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God.

We shy away from this – understandably so.

It's a good thing to be humble in speaking.

Those who DO say they speak the words of God are often certain in ways that we might otherwise find to be blasphemous, so this is done with great caution.

However, when we live in love – which is the Way of Christ.

We can also learn to speak the Truth of Christ.

When our words are Christ's words – they will ring with the truth of the words of God.

Whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies – so that God is glorified.

Some serve from a position of privilege so they can feel “better than.”

See how I helped those lowly folks...

That's not what God is asking of us.

We are required to notice the humanity in others, and to serve with the strength that God is giving to us, not strength over, but strength to walk beside.

It's not about wanting glory for ourselves but entrusting our gifts to work for God's glory.

Forever and ever – Amen.

This rather obscure letter is showing us the path of life that comes through knowing and following Jesus. It's not a book I really studied in seminary. In fact, when I said I was preaching from it – a former theology professor wondered – what could it possibly have to teach?

Haltingly. Humanly. Mistakes and all. It's about discovering Christ's way of love.

It's about serving others by noticing that we are all under the same human condition together.

It's about speaking the truth with our words and our actions.

It's about love, and friendship, and hospitality.

This sounds like a good plan, but the author reminds the faithful that following Jesus, means suffering like Jesus. We share in Christ's suffering. Glory. Glory. Hallelujah.

Some suffering comes through unjust social structures.

Some suffering happens when we step away from God's plan.

Some suffering is Christ-like.

How will we know the difference? How will we know when those who are suffering in accordance with God's will have entrusted themselves to their faithful Creator and are continuing to do good?

Well – when we are committed to love – those we love can hurt us.

When we are committed to service that glorifies God – then we let go of the credit for ourselves.

When we speak honestly, there will be plenty of people who don't like what we say.

It can be the fiery ordeal that feels like we are in the midst of the end times.

Friends, it may feel more pronounced to us now, but we are always reaching an end, because God is out in front of us making new beginnings.

Our sufferings aren't therefore related to doing bad things and reaping the consequences – we have already been reminded to give up excesses and indulgences so that we won't find ourselves lumped in with murderers, thieves, criminals or even mischief makers.

The suffering we do is in feeling the pain of our world

And then doing something about it through love or through service.

Everyone has pain in their lives – everyone.

Some choose to let that pain affect them so that they can make hard choices.

Love and service sound simple, but they take a lifetime to get good at.

We suffer AND we continue to do good.

That takes courage – real honest to God courage – not foolhardy courage.

And when we find ourselves in this suffering, it will open the door to understanding the gospel of recognizing what Jesus meant when he said, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, no one entrusts themselves to a faithful Creator, no one walks the path of life without knowing me. It's because the way, the truth, the life, the love are found completely in the living Christ. This is our path. Let us continue walking it together and caring for each other along the way. Amen.