

Monday March 23

Read: 1 Peter 1:1-2

“May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” 1 Peter 2b.

As a student, I liked Math, but especially multiplication. So that word jumped off the page when I read the beginning of Peter’s first letter. When you multiply, the numbers get big fast. Here’s a little math trick for you:

$$111,111,111 \times 111,111,111 = 12345678987654321$$

Multiplication can be pretty amazing. The problem with the people receiving Peter’s letter was that the main thing that seemed to be multiplying was suffering. It may seem that way in our world and, perhaps, even in your life right now. Whether you like math or not, the prayer of Peter is one that we all can appreciate, and it is no trick.

“May grace and peace be multiplied to you.”

Peter’s letter will go on to talk about the suffering Christians were experiencing, but he will also go on to talk about how grace and peace are multiplied to you because you belong to Jesus. You have His forgiveness as a promise, His love as a certainty, His joy that knows no end, His life as your future and your present. His grace – that is His undeserved love toward you exemplified in His cross – covers the multitude of your sin. His peace – won by that same cross and resurrection – goes beyond all understanding.

In times when suffering seems to multiply, remember there is something much greater – the grace and peace of Jesus for you.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, turn my eyes to you that I can glimpse your boundless grace and peace that is for me.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, March 24

1 Peter 1:3-12

A Little While

“A little while.” These words carry mixed feelings for me and possibly for you because “a little while,” though it might sound nice, is not very specific. “A little while” can mean two more minutes... two more weeks... or longer. These days there are many questions about how long “a little while” is. We wonder how long we will have to wait until we are able to return to our daily routines- how long until we will be able to gather as a congregation again. “A little while,” in today’s context (and really any day) might not seem so little!

But 1 Peter 1 puts things back into perspective for us today. “A little while” of various trials is what it is: little. “A little while” is little when compared to the eternal hope each of us has been given in our baptism. While our nation and world has been shaken, 1 Peter points us to the One who **“has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”** While many things in life may be turned upside down, we have **“an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”** While fear and quarantine procedures might cause us to think that we are left to fend for ourselves, we are those who **“by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”** In this, we rejoice.

Dear Lord, give me the strength to endure this “little while” in life and grant me a heart that rejoices in your eternal mercy to me through your Son, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Jacob Tuma

Wednesday, March 25

Read: 1 Peter 1:13-25

Prepared for Action

I remember hearing an Olympic athlete talk about getting into the starting block for a track and field race. He said how he couldn't hear the crowd. He didn't notice the other runners. He saw his lane. He got ready. Then just before it was time, he closed his eyes, and in that moment when his eyes were closed all of his training flashed before him. The hours of weightlifting and running and early, cold mornings and long days. The voice of his coach rang over the top of these images. As he opened his eyes, he wondered, "Was it enough?" A moment later...BANG! And he was off to the races.

In 1 Peter 1:13, we are encouraged as we are **"preparing (our) minds for action and being sober-minded."** To "prepare" is to literally pull up your robe so you are ready to work, ready to move. For us to be sober minded is to be clear thinking, focused. But how do God's people prepare for action? How are we ready to share the love of Jesus? Will it be enough?

Peter goes on, **"set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."** We prepare for action, as God's people, by being focused on Jesus. One advantage of this current time is that many distractions are set aside. Like the runner who couldn't hear the crowd or notice the competitors, his whole vision was consumed by the race ahead of him, and the finish line. Christ has certainly done enough. He's done it all. He calls us to run the race looking to Him and the promise of the resurrection. But to run this race each day, we need His Word, as he prepares us for action, guards us in temptation, strengthens us for trials, and emboldens us in the promise of His coming again. And as you train, His words will ring in your ears with His strength and promise. And you'll know, *He's* done enough for you.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, prepare my mind for action by the hope that is mine in Your Word. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

March 26, 2020

Read 1 Peter 2:1-12

A Spiritual House

If you're like me, you might be missing certain places right now. Maybe your favorite restaurant. Or your work building or school. I'm sure all of us miss our church building and gathering there. Physical spaces matter to us. They connect us to people, can even bring strong emotions to our minds when we enter them. And when physical spaces are destroyed, or when we're kept away from them as we are now, it hurts. We might even be tempted to despair.

In our reading today, Peter says that **“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house.”** It's a reminder that though we value physical spaces where we can gather to hear God's Word together, the Church is ultimately a spiritual house—it is sustained by the Holy Spirit. And who is this house built upon? Peter has an answer for that too, quoting from Isaiah: **“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”** The him here is Jesus! He is the one on whom the Church is built, who sustains us in whatever troubles the world may throw at us. And the Holy Spirit makes us into a holy people, pointing us to Jesus and his saving work. As Peter says, **“Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”** As ones who have received mercy, let us show mercy, unity, and love toward one another in these times of uncertainty.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, continue to be the cornerstone of my faith and give to me the comfort of knowing that you preserve and protect your church. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Friday March 27

Read 1 Peter 2:13-25

“For the Lord’s Sake”

“**Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution...**” “For the Lord’s sake” - You may have heard that kind of language many times, but never quite known what it meant. It means “on account of the Lord.” When we offer our prayers “for Jesus’ sake,” we mean that we pray on account of who Jesus is and what He has accomplished for us. He is the basis for our prayers and for confidence in coming before God to pray in the first place.

But Peter is not talking about prayer in today’s reading. He is talking about following the directions of earthly authorities, even authorities and directions that we may not like. (It is worth remembering, the emperors were often less than kind to early Christians. Peter himself was killed during the persecution of Emperor Nero.)

Yet Peter tells us to “be subject for the Lord’s sake.” In other words, we should recognize earthly authorities on account of THE authority of God. That’s why a little later he tells us, “**Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. (That’s the people of God!) Fear God. Honor the emperor.**” We only fear God. He is above all authorities. But He also puts all other authorities in place, and unless we are ordered to defy the Word of God, we are to listen “for the Lord’s sake.”

That’s not always easy. We may not like the current requirements that restrict large groups meeting together or other limitations on freedoms that we often enjoy. But when we recognize that authorities are put in place by God, it is easier for us to “be subject...living as servants of God.”

Prayer – Bless all those You have placed in authority, Lord. Help me honor everyone, even as I fear, love and trust You alone. Please hear my prayer for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday March 28

Read 1 Peter 3:1-12

1 Peter 3:8 “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.”

“Be Subject”

This text (especially vv. 1-7) is one normally used at weddings and for marital counselling: “**Wives, submit to your husbands...Husbands, honor your wives.**” Perhaps, as you’ve been “socially distanced” at home with your family for over a week now, you need to be reminded of that Wisdom from God – well and good. Another message, though, that this reading reminds us of in this unusual and fearful time is that God has an order – a structure – for our world.

He is God over everything. We are beneath Him and are subject to Him in every way. And, when it comes to husbands and wives, we demonstrate subjection to God by submitting to each other, loving one another, and serving the other as we’d want to be served ourselves.

For all Christians, though, especially during these times, the way we serve God is by “**having unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind**” for our neighbor in need. In doing so, we’re fulfilling a part of God’s promise to Abraham – that through him and his offspring (us), he would be a blessing to all the families of the world. And Abraham’s other offspring, Jesus, makes this possible.

Prayer - Lord God, Thank you for reminding me to bow before you. Help me now to be a blessing to my family, community, and church around me. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday March 30

Read 1 Peter 3:13-22

“In the days of Noah”

There has been no greater catastrophe than the global flood that came **“in the days of Noah.”** As the ship was prepared, it would have served as the largest object lesson ever. The growing boat proclaimed, “Repent! A storm is coming!” But apparently no one heeded the warning outside of Noah’s family. Yet among Noah’s family, “eight persons were brought safely through water.”

If the predictions are correct, the coming days will present much greater challenges in our community and nation. We pray that the Lord spares us the kind of suffering that many have prognosticated. Yet even when the storm clouds of suffering in this world grow, you have certainty. You, also, have been brought safely through water. But you have been through more than a flood. You’ve been rescued from the greatest catastrophe of sin and the eternal death to which it leads. How? **“Baptism, which corresponds to this (salvation of Noah and his family through water), now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”**

There is a lot of good news in that one verse. Baptism NOW saves you. No matter the threats that surround you, nothing can snatch you from the mercy of your God. He has rescued you. And not just from flood waters. He has rescued you from the everlasting catastrophe of being isolated from Him. PLUS! He’s done this by giving you a good conscience, cleansing your heart, not by your goodness, but by something far more powerful and sure – the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Take heart today and always! No calamity can take this assurance from you. Prayer – Comfort your baptized people in the midst of uncertain times. Remind them of the rescue that is ours now and forever since we have been baptized in the name of the risen Jesus. In His name, I pray. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, March 31

Read 1 Peter 4:1-11

“More than Advice”

Advice is in no short supply these days. All you have to do is pick up your newspaper or smartphone, and you can find recommendations for how to spend your time at home... how to gracefully practice social distancing... how to wash your hands! There is so much advice going around that offering some more almost feels silly. Yet here come the words of 1 Peter 4, a text that has been speaking to Christians for some 2,000 years. If you noticed as you read today’s portion of the letter, Peter speaks a lot of guidance into the lives of his Christian readers.

But before you or I discount this as just some more advice, there are a few things to ponder. First, the words that Peter writes are not just another opinion but they express the will of God (v. 2). Secondly, there is the beginning of verse 10: **“As each has received a gift...”** You see, as Peter calls his brothers and sisters in the faith to serve one another, he does more than give them advice. He first directs their attention to the gifts that God has given them.

Today the list of things that we have lost or are currently losing out on is rather long. But the gifts that we receive and share with the people in our lives are truly endless. Whether it’s another breath of air or the fact that **“Christ suffered in the flesh”** for you, God’s gifts abound.

Dear God, open my eyes to see the gifts that you have given me and guide me as I use them in service to the people in my life. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Jacob Tuma

Wednesday, April 1

Read: 1 Peter 4:12-19

As Though Something Strange Were Happening to You

It is April Fools' Day. Maybe you are one of those people who likes to play pranks on others. Maybe you are not. But unless you venture out to the grocery store, everywhere else seems like one huge April Fools' Day prank. There is no rush hour. Most stores are closed. It is a good thing for people to be safe, but it sure feels **"as though something strange were happening to all of us!"**

Peter was preparing his first readers for suffering that would come because they were Christians. They were not to invite suffering by being **"a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler."** That's a broad list! What they have in common is that all of them cause others grief to varying degrees. In other words, don't invite suffering by your sin. Suffering finds Christians because, as Jesus said, **"(His) kingdom is not of this world."**

But suffering also comes to all people in this broken world. Other words of Jesus come to mind. **"In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."** He didn't say you *might* have tribulation, but you *will*. As God's people AND as residents of a sin-fractured creation, you will have tribulation. Give thanks during times when you are spared from such difficulty, but when difficulties do come **"don't be surprised...as though something strange were happening to you."** But! Take heart. Christ has overcome the world. In His death He absorbed all of our sin AND all of our pain AND our death. By His resurrection, all are overcome, and through your baptism you share in His victory. So when suffering comes, don't be surprised. Instead look to Jesus whose victory is greater than the suffering of the moment.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, keep me from inviting suffering by my sin. And when suffering comes near me, help me to look to You and Your victory that I share in. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Thursday April 2, 2020

1 Peter 5:1-5

Clothes and Crowns

What clothes are you wearing these days? It may seem an odd question, but in these days of staying at home many of us have traded our work clothes, school clothes, or church clothes for pajamas or t-shirts. What we wear says quite a bit about what we're doing, and when we're spending more time at home we tend to wear comfortable clothes, just as we wear nicer clothes when we go out.

Peter urges his readers to adopt a different kind of clothing: humility. But this can be a lot harder than putting on a pair of sweatpants. Humility doesn't usually come naturally to most of us—we tend to be selfish a lot of the time, and to think we're right most of the time, too. We can even get impatient with others when we think we know best. But Peter urges his readers to get along with one another, practicing humility and respecting one another. This might become even harder in these days of staying home, as we become frustrated or lonely while we are cooped up.

But we have greater hopes in this time of trial. Although we can't physically meet right now, we take consolation in the church. That God has even given us shepherds, pastors, to lead us. What an amazing gift. They continue to minister to us, even if we must forgo physically meeting for a time. And the Chief Shepherd, Jesus, leads his church, and will return to make all things right, and as Peter says, to grant us unfading crowns of glory. What a beautiful image of God's grace, that we should receive such great gifts from our Lord!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, grant me humility in these times of anxiety and uncertainty. Remind me that you lead your church, even in the midst of hardship. Grant us peace and hope. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by seminarian Alex Smith

Friday, April 3

Read: 1 Peter 5:6-11

Cast Your Cares on Him

A few summers back, our youth group went to a very poor region in Ohio to serve the people there. The organization that we served through collected lots of donations. One company donated a large number of wood desks and left them outside their facility. It didn't take long for the weather to do a number on those desks. One of our jobs was to dispose of the desks by loading them in a pickup truck and taking them to another location to be burned. The bed of the pickup was piled high and weighed down by all of that garbage, but little by little we broke down the desks and threw one board after another on to the burn pile until the whole load was dumped on a place that could handle it.

You probably are carrying a heaping load of anxiety. There's a lot of garbage that is likely weighing you down – financial concerns, health concerns, emotional stresses, and more. Peter invites us to “**(cast) all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.**” There is not doubt about the care of our God who has given us life now and life everlasting in Christ. Not only does He care for you, He alone can handle the whole heaping pile of this world's anxieties. He knows that the troubles of this life are many, and yet He has overcome them for you. He will see you through your current pile of anxiety as well. Throw them on Him in prayer, trusting in His care for you. And then rest in His promise, “**after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**”

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me to daily trust in You and throw all my anxiety on You to carry, for I know that you care for me. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday April 4

Read 1 Peter 5:12-14

1 Peter 5:14b "Peace to all of you who are in Christ."

Peace

I spoke with my aunt a few days ago. This is the aunt and uncle who lived closest to us growing up – who we got together with for holidays, whose son I went with to camp, and the uncle who flew me to my first big airshow. They are two of the most level-headed people I've known. Now, they're older – my uncle has dementia and my aunt is on hospice with cancer. And, being old and on hospice during these times means they can't have visitors. All their kids and grandkids, friends and neighbors, can't come to see them in their last days. And so, the phone call.

We talked about our families, about who had recently visited with whom. We discovered that one of their grandkids may be serving in the Air Force with someone from Hope. We talked about airplanes so she could possibly spark a conversation later when she would talk to my uncle. It was a great phone call, one I'll cherish forever.

We've all had conversations like that. And, those talks are remarkably like the closing of Peter's first letter: "**Greetings from... and peace to all of you who are in Christ.**" In that call, Aunt Jen demonstrated that perfect peace with God as she pointed to the sure hope we all have in looking forward to eternity at peace with God.

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending me Your Son, Jesus, to create eternal peace between You and me. In His Name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson