



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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September 23, 2012
Pentecost 17
Sermon Text: [1 Peter 4:12-19](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Jeremiah 38:1-13](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 116](#)
Second Lesson: [1 Peter 4:12-19](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Mark 8:27-35](#)

Suffer The God-Pleasing Way

For the right reason
In the right hands

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

You've probably heard it said that there are two things certain in life, death and taxes. I suppose that's true, unless Christ comes back first. But I think there are really a lot more things that are inevitable than just those two things. Our Lord talks to us about one of them this morning.

One thing that is inevitable in this life on this side of heaven, because we live in a sinful world, is suffering. At Bible class this morning we looked at the effects of the fall into sin and we saw how nature lost its perfection and all the things that comes with it. Things like disease, cancer, death. A lot of these things bring suffering into our lives. It comes about just because of the nature that we live in a world that is no longer perfect, no longer the way that the good Lord created it.

It's true that we are all going to suffer to one degree or another because of these kinds of things, but that's not the kind of suffering our Lord is talking to us about this morning. He's talking about a very specific kind of suffering that really only Christians go through. If you don't want to face this kind of suffering, don't believe in Christ as your Savior. You won't have to face this kind of suffering. You'll go to hell, but you won't have to face this kind of suffering.

The kind of suffering he is talking about is the suffering that comes about because you do what Jesus said in the Gospel. You take up his cross and you follow Jesus. The Christian's cross that God talks about that we endure at times is the things that we suffer and endure because we are living for God, because we are doing what God wants us to do. An example would be Jeremiah in our First Lesson.

Jeremiah had to tell the people, "The Babylonians are going to win. We are going to lose. If you want to live, go to the Babylonian side." He had to tell them that because God told him to say that. If you are an Israelite, you aren't going to want to hear that. So all of a sudden the lower half of his body gets a spa mud treatment or something along those lines. That's the suffering that comes about because he was doing what God told him to do and other people didn't like it.

Evidently the people that Peter was writing to in his First Letter were enduring the same thing. He tells them that it shouldn't surprise them. "It shouldn't surprise you because of the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you." By the time Peter wrote his letter, early 60s AD, he had sure come a long way from where we saw him in the Gospel 30 years or so earlier. Thirty years or so earlier, Jesus said that he had to suffer and die. What did Peter do? He took him aside and said "No! No! That's not what my Messiah is going to do. I won't let that happen to you." Jesus had to call him "Satan." Evidently, like any other man, it only took him three decades to learn the lesson, but he learned it well.

So he writes and tells people that "Because you are a Christian, you will suffer. As Christ suffered, we who bear his name will suffer as we do the will of our Father." What he wants us to do is to suffer the God-pleasing way. If you are going to suffer, suffer for the right reason. If you are going to suffer, and you will if you are a Christian, then make sure you are putting yourself in the right hands, and it isn't Allstate. That's what our Lord teaches us this morning.

If you are going to suffer, suffer for the right reason. Which means suffer because you are doing what God wants you to do. Don't suffer because of what your sinful nature wants to do. If I, or you, did everything your sinful nature wanted you to do, your world would be a little different right now, wouldn't it? If I gave in to my sinful nature, who knows where I would be or what I would be facing. He says, "If you are going to suffer, don't do it as a murderer, a thief or any other kind of criminal, or even a meddler." Don't just give way to your sinful nature and let it cause you problems with other people because you are acting in anger or bitterness or hatred or any of these other things. At times we all do that. He says, "If you are going to suffer, don't suffer for that. Don't think I'm talking about that kind of suffering. I'm not talking about suffering because you are a sinful fool and you act in your sinfulness. I'm talking about the suffering that comes because you are living for God. If you suffer that way, you should even get to the point where you grow in your faith to where you rejoice in it." I don't think that means to be giddy, giddy, happy, happy. I've had people chew on me at times for doing what God wanted me to do and it doesn't make me feel giddy, giddy, happy, happy. It tears your heart out. But you can rejoice because a Christian's joy is not giddy, giddy, happy, happy. A Christian's joy is this confidence that my God loves me and he'll love me no matter what, that my God has taken away my sins even though I don't deserve it, and that my God has opened heaven to me. That's my greatest treasure.

Because we are focused on who God is and what he has done for us, at times we will do what God calls us to do. When we are at our best and our new self, the part of us that loves God, is acting, we will do things to serve our God that at times will cause us pain and suffering. It think you can relate to this. I think you know what God is talking about. Think about the things God has called you to do that you just don't want to do. God has called us to admonish one another, which means pointing out to each other when we have done things that are wrong before God and lead them back to Christ so that in Christ they have forgiveness and so that heaven is theirs. We are doing it

because we want that person to be in heaven with us. We have a head knowledge that we are supposed to do that. But honestly, do you always do it? Or do you at times keep your mouth shut because you know it's going to cause problems with the person you are talking to? So instead of doing what God has called you to do, to admonish someone or correct someone or rebuke someone, to do it in love, and all those things, instead of doing that, in your mind you weigh how that person is going to react to you. You think about it and you say, "I don't want to lose a friend." Or, "This is a relative. I have to see him all the time. I don't want it to be a problem, so I'm just not going to serve God."

When you weigh those kinds of things, you know the kind of suffering he is talking about. Often we stay silent because we don't want to endure that kind of suffering. I understand it. I've done it. I'm sure you have too, but we have to stop and think a little bit about what we are actually saying when we do that. We are actually saying, "I want to endure peace and happiness myself. I don't want there to be a problem that I have to endure. If it means you lose your faith or you are hardened in your sin and you end up going to hell, so be it. But I don't want it to inconvenience me." Put in those terms we'd say, "I don't want to do that." But here is the thing...our sinful nature doesn't let us put it in those terms all that often, does it? Our sinful nature just focuses on what it might cost us and it keeps us from doing it.

God says, "If you are going to suffer, suffer for the right reason. Suffer because you are doing what is right before me because you love that other person so much and you want them to know that Jesus has lived and died in their place and taken away their sins." But in order for them to know that, sometimes they have to see their sin. They have to see what they have done and how that separates them from God and that this is dangerous. People want to say all the time, "God is a God of love. He wouldn't send anyone to hell." God is a God of love and he is a God of love because he lived and died in our place so that we don't have to go to hell. But God is also a just God and he says, "The wages of sin is death." A person that lives without faith in Jesus and dies without faith in Jesus is going to hell.

That's what makes what we saw happen this morning so cool...Baptism with a child that can't do anything yet except cry when its hungry or when its wet or when it needs to be changed. It can't do anything yet. God comes and works and gives that gift of faith to that little child. That's how loving our God is. He acts when we can't offer him anything.

Now, because he acted in your heart and in my heart before we could offer anything to him, we want to serve him, even if it's going to cause us suffering. That doesn't get me into heaven, but I want to do it because he's given me heaven. When I'm at my best, that's what I'll do.

Suffer for the right reason. Suffer because you're doing what God wants you to do. But don't ever kid yourself that there won't be suffering involved. There will. When we do suffer, God tells you also to suffer the God-pleasing way by suffering in the right hands.

Look at that last sentence that Paul wrote in the last paragraph of what is in the Bulletin. "So then, those who suffer according to God's Will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." The right hands would be the hands of our Creator. Stop and think about this a minute. Why does God here say "suffer in the hands of your Creator"? I would have almost expected God to say "suffer in the hands of your Savior". The motivation for doing it is because God saved us. That's why I want to do even what is going to cause me to suffer at times. That's my motivation. But he's not talking about my motivation in that sentence. He's talking about where I find comfort and strength so that I continue to do it. He points us to our Creator. He doesn't point us to God's love. He points us to God's power.

God said "Let there be light," and there was light. God said "Let there be vegetation," and there was vegetation. God said, "Let there be stars in the sky," and there they were. God's power is way beyond my imagining. It's way beyond my understanding. But I trust that he is almighty.

So if he is almighty, he is able to sustain me even when I feel like, "God, I can't keep doing this. God, I'm sick and tired of having people attack me. God, I'm just not so sure it's worth it anymore." When I see that God has the power to sustain me, I'll trust that power. I already know that he loves me and has taken away my sins. That's why I want to serve him. But when I'm under attack, I put myself in the hands of a loving God. That's what God is calling all of us to do.

A God who is powerful, a God who is able to sustain us when we don't think we can continue on. I've seen God do this with people suffering physically because of sin in the world and sicknesses they have to endure. I've seen people suffer things that I shake my head at and think "I don't know how I could do that." The only way they can do it is because they trust in God's power. The same thing would apply when I'm suffering because I want to serve my Lord. Suffer in his hands knowing that his hands created this world. His hands have already opened heaven for me. And his hands will always be there to sustain me. It doesn't mean I'm going to enjoy it. You won't enjoy it. I guarantee you won't enjoy it. But I guarantee you will be blessed by God as you seek to serve him.

If it draws you closer to him, you will be blessed for all eternity. If it makes you go through difficulty that you say "This world isn't all that great." It reminds you that you are a stranger and an alien here and that heaven is your eternal home. That's for your eternal good. I don't know how the Lord is going to bring good out of it in your life. I just know he will. It's often not until we look back in the rearview mirror and see what God has done for us in the past that we go "Oh yeah. Now I get it. Now I see what God was trying to teach me."

As you and I go through this suffering, we simply trust he is powerful enough to sustain us and he loves us enough to bring good even out of evil. Then, serve your Lord by suffering for the right reason. Amen.