

“Jesus: The Model Sufferer”

The Vine Series... John 15:5

SCRIPTURE

John 18:1-14 (NIV)

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.² Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.³ So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.⁴ Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?”⁵ “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)⁶ When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.⁷ Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they said.

⁸ Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.”

⁹ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: “I have not lost one of those you gave me.”^[a]¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

¹² Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him¹³ and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people

Subject Question: What are the three lessons that Jesus teaches us as modern day disciples concerning unjustified suffering?

Compliment answer: To Accept One’s Personal Responsibility, To Reject other’s understandable Hostility, and to Respect God’s Ultimate Sovereignty.

Big Idea: The three lessons that Jesus teaches us as modern day disciples concerning unjustified suffering are: To Accept One’s Personal Responsibility, To Reject other’s understandable Hostility, and to Respect God’s Ultimate Sovereignty.

Homiletical Idea: “God is Controlling”

Purpose: I want the congregation to understand the paradoxical nature of the Christian life in the area of suffering and in doing so, consider Jesus’ model and

attitude in confronting the suffering that we ourselves are often called to endure.

Introduction: What about suffering? Most of us run from any type of suffering. Understandable. Sometimes our own actions have made the suffering we are called to endure justifiable. However, what about the injustice of suffering just for who you are? Or better yet, just for whose you are. In our scripture lesson today Jesus is about to be unjustly arrested, unreasonably tried, baselessly sentenced, and callously crucified; all because of who He was and more, whose He was. Yet... Here as Jesus faces his final hours He also exemplifies and models for us as believers how to deal with the unjustified suffering that we often experience just because of who we are and “whose” we are. Let us look at how Jesus confronted the proponents of His anguish.

Groundwork: “Whose” Christians Are.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

---Peter

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

---Jesus in John 15

³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

---John

¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other. ¹⁸ “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.” ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

---Jesus in John 15

“Who” Christians Are.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

---Jesus in Matthew 5

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. ² As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

---Peter in 1 Peter

- A. To Accept One's Personal Responsibility. (Vs.1-7). *When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.² Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.³ So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.⁴ Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)⁶ When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.⁷ Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said.*
- B. Even though Jesus was facing suffering, He never lied or pretended to be someone else. He was upfront: I am He. In the same way, we as Christians often are faced with the real fact that we are different from those around us; and we don't like to feel that we are odd, or bizarre, or out of step with those whom we associate with. More, we don't like the possibility of "suffering" for Jesus if indeed we stand up for our belief in Jesus. And yet...
- C. We often grow tired of trying to play two roles: the non-religious role around our non-religious friends or co-workers, and our religious role around our religious friends or co-workers. In other words, we get tired of being "on the fence;" divided in our hearts and minds. We feel like we are not being honest with God, with others, and especially with ourselves.
- D. It is truly God's gift to us when we finally will stop pretending to be someone else than the Christian that we have been called to be. Eternal loyalty to Christ starts to be more important than temporary loyalty to those who surround our life at this time, in this place. It may mean that we will suffer from our chosen association, but our hope becomes more centered on Christ faithfulness rather than people's fickleness. When facing suffering for whose and who we are... we need to:

(Stand back, Look up, Lift up)

- A. To Reject other's understandable Hostility. (Vs. 8-11) *⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go."⁹ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."^[a]¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"*

- B. The real lesson here is not about the hostility that Jesus faced from those who had already determined in their hearts that He was the bane of their existence. No, it's not enemies at times that we need to confront, but close friends, even fellow believers! Consider, even though Peter's actions were commendable and appreciated, Jesus knew that lowering one's standards to try to defend Him was counter-productive. In this case it wasn't Peter's "words" that were inappropriate, it was both the action of impulsive violence, and the absence of changed character that Jesus rebuked.
- C. In many ways, when we suffer for Christ, we want to make our case, find a sympathetic ear, and vent our understood frustration. All of these things are good and right, and they are indeed what our church family and Christian friends are there for.
- D. But... to join together in vicious personal attacks toward those who yes, have caused our suffering, may feel good for a moment—however in our heart of hearts we are often left with feelings of personal and collective loss—we really haven't done anything to fix the situation and quite frankly, we have lowered ourselves to the offending party's level. Instead of seeking the Lord, we have sought revenge. Instead of praying for our enemies, we have judged them. Instead of acting like we should, we now hear Christ's rebuke... *Put your sword away!* And as such, left to ponder our part in God's plans for our life that may have included this suffering for some unknown reason... *We with Jesus should seriously consider... Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"*

(Stand back, Look up, Lift up)

- A. Respect God's Ultimate Sovereignty. (Vs. 12-14) ¹² *Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him* ¹³ *and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people*
- B. At this time in Christ's life, suffering was unavoidable. His reaction? Submission. Trust. Resignation. Acceptance. Did Christ look forward to the suffering the was before him? Certainly not. Was he surprised that the suffering was going to happen? Certainly not either. In a way, Jesus must of recognized His father's hand in the fact of what Caiaphas had said... *that it would be good if one man died for the people*

- C. In the same way, there does come a time when our own suffering for who and whose we are as Christian believers and modern day disciples begins to lead us to where we find solace in the midst of our suffering. We should not really be surprised that suffering for Christ seemingly is part of our lot in and God's sovereignty over our lives... Like Christ, we too must look for the father's hand in the midst of our suffering. James wrote: ² *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,^[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*
- D. Should we then, look forward to "suffering?" I don't think so. We would be less than human if we did. But, we can come to a place, like Christ, of Submission. Trust. Resignation. And Acceptance. Here we can find the reality of verses such as Proverbs 3:5&6: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.* We can also grow over time to consider the truth in verses such as Romans 8: *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[i] have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified*

Conclusion: Unjustified suffering is simply part of the Christian experience. In a way, God uses our suffering from Him to bond us closer to him. In closing, consider the Apostle Paul's words to the church at Philippi about the magnificence of knowing and being known by Christ; suffering with and for Christ. *What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

(Stand back, Look up, Lift up)

