

4.6.23 am

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Date: 04 June 2023

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning. A warm welcome to the service this morning. It's good to see some visitors with us as well and you're especially welcome. If you're able to stay behind for tea and coffee, there's tea and coffee at the end of the service. The intimations have been on the screen. Just a couple of things to note. The evening service tonight at six o'clock and we'll hopefully come to the end of the life of Abraham tonight in our studies in Genesis. Ladies' Fellowship, Little Fishers, Road to Recovery, all at the usual times, usual places. You've had the details there on the screen. And then there is the family music session for parents and toddlers meets again this Wednesday, 10.30 to 12.30 and the prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past seven in person and on Zoom. It says rooted meets on Friday, but I don't think rooted's meeting again. So rooted, you can strike that off the list that resumes at the beginning of the new term. Service is next Sunday. God willing, be taken by myself. And just as I've noted in past weeks, the 16th to the 18th of June, we're hoping to have a kind of outreach weekend, a communion outreach weekend. So we will have on Friday night a men's curry evening. The time on the screen is seven o'clock, but I don't know that it will be seven o'clock. So you can, you can, we'll give you details of the time. We might have it a bit later than that. So you can note the curry evening, but the time we'll give details of later.

On the Saturday, we're hoping to have a barbecue, church barbecue here at 5pm. And that's followed by a sort of fellowship, informal fellowship and a testimony on, informal fellowship, sorry, with an evangelistic message. The testimony is on Sunday evening. Now the team for that is team three.

And Mary was just helpfully pointing out to me that the teams for the catering have all women on them and no men. And perhaps that's an oversight and perhaps that's a reflection of our lazy natures.

But there's a barbecue coming up and I think team three could very well do with some assistance who will help to organize that and to do the barbecue and to clean up afterwards. So, and then on a Sunday morning, we'll have a service with a kind of preparation for communion as we would have over a longer communion weekend. And the Sunday evening, we'll have a service with communion, the sacrament celebrated. So please note that. With that weekend coming as well, perhaps there are some who have trusted the Lord, but they've never come forward and professed their faith. This is an opportunity to come forward and to profess your faith and to sit at the Lord's table for the first time for some, or perhaps for the first time in a while. And please be encouraged to come and do so.

Speak to the elders, speak to myself. If you want to have a discussion, a chat about that. Cleaning rota you've got there on the screen as well, if you have had. So we see who's on duty this week.

[3 : 24] These, I think, are all the notices. So let's begin this time of worship and we'll sing to God's praise. We'll sing from the screen. It's not on mission praise, but it's a hymn that we've become familiar with over the last few months. And it's a great hymn of encouragement. As we sometimes see what appears to be chaos in this world and a whole lot of trouble. It's great to be reminded of the fact that God is sovereign and he is reigning and he is ruling overall. So let's in a moment stand and sing to God's praise.

God Almighty.

God Almighty. God Almighty. God Almighty.

So I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Things.

None above Him, not before Him, nor I'll die in His hands. All His throne is shall remain and ever stand.

[4 : 58] All the power, all the glory, I will trust in His name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.

Oh, the dread of night overwhelms my soul. He is here with me, I am not alone.
Oh, the love is sure, and He knows my name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.
None above Him, not before Him, nor I'll die in His hands. All His throne is shall remain and ever stand.

All the power, all the glory, I will trust in His name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.
[6 : 10] Though I may not see what the future brings, I will watch and wait for the Saviour King.

All the glory, I will trust in His name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.
All the glory, I will trust in His name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.
My God is the Ancient of Days. Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the words of the hymn that we've been singing.
[7 : 36] And we thank you that as we bow in your presence on this day, we bow in the presence of the Almighty, the Sovereign, the All-Powerful, a Gracious, Loving, Kind and Good and Just God.

We thank you that you are the Eternal God. You are the Infinite God. And even as we meditate upon these things in these moments, we confess that you are far greater in your being and character than our minds can comprehend.
Our thoughts are so limited, our minds are finite. Our limits, our vision is limited and our hearts are dulled.

And you are the God who is great and who is vast and who calls us to come and worship. So we come in response to that call.

And we thank you that you have revealed yourself to us. We acknowledge that there is much that we cannot see.

[9 : 04] There is much that we cannot grasp. Much that we are called simply to accept by faith. But we thank you that you have revealed yourself to us.

And on a day like this, when we see the splendor of your creation and we feel the warmth of the sunshine, we see these signposts to the creative wonder and glory of your work.

And we thank you that we have your word. We thank you that we can open it and we can read of your revelation of yourself to us.

We thank you that we can read of your works. Your works of grace that enable us to come to you. We are sinners. We are those who cannot come into the presence of a holy God. But we thank you, Father, that you sent your son, Jesus, into this world to be our saviour.

[10 : 11] We thank you that he who knew no sin became sin, so that we who are sinners could become righteous in him. And so we make our approach in Jesus' name.

We look once more to the cross where he paid for our sin. We look once more and remember on this Lord's day, the empty tomb, the fact that Jesus died and rose.

And we thank you that that resurrection is the proclamation through history of the fact that we are accepted in Christ if we believe in him.

So we ask, Lord, that you would grant to us faith. We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would be working in this place and in our hearts. Show us our sin, we pray, in a measure that we can bear and lead us to the saviour.

And speak to us, Lord, we pray, your words of grace. Awaken hearts that are dead, quicken hearts that are lukewarm.

[11 : 24] Stir within us, we pray, a zeal for your glory and enable us in this time to worship you in spirit and in truth.

To take the encouragement that we receive as we see and spend time with each other. But we pray that we would know that you are God and that you are with us.

We pray that we would sense your presence and that we would know that you are ministering to our hearts. Amen. We thank you, Lord, for all who have gathered this morning.

Bless each home represented, we pray. We pray for those who are visiting with us. We thank you for them. And we ask that you would bless any fellowships that they may be connected with.

We pray for those of our number who are not here this morning, some who are away on holiday for a few days. And we ask that you would bless them and protect them where they are. We pray for those who are sick.

[12 : 24] Those who are struggling with illness. Some who are back and forth to hospital. Some who are housebound. And we ask that you would minister to them by your grace.

We thank you for these screens which enable us to keep in touch with each other as a fellowship when we're going through hard times. And we pray for those who are grieving.

And we ask that you would comfort them. Again, Lord, we pray for Donald and for Katrina as we continue to miss and grieve for Rachel's passing.

And as we thank you for our life, we do so again, Lord, and we commit the family to you and ask that you would minister to them your comfort. We pray on for Mary having lost her husband and Donald last week.

And we ask, Lord, that in her grief and in the confusion of mind that illness can bring as well that you would minister to them. Lord, we thank you that when we are struggling to get through to someone that you are still able to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[13:36] And so we bring them to you. We pray for those who are battling with addiction, some who may be in a dark place just now. And we ask that from the depths that they would cry to you and find the redemption and the strength that you are able to give.

We thank you that you are able to break the chains of all sin. And we ask, Lord, that you would be in particular with those who are struggling with addictions.

Help us on Road to Recovery week by week to encourage each other and to look to you and Lord, we pray for our nation. We are far from you.

We see that week by week as we watch the news and read the papers. Have mercy on us, we pray.

Draw us back to yourself. And we pray that the name of Jesus will be lifted up across all nations.

We thank you that the gospel is going forth in power across the world even though we may be in a time where we see little.

[14:43] We thank you that much is happening in different places and often in the places where there is the most acute persecution. the gospel is going forth in greatest power.

And so we ask, Lord, that where brothers and sisters are suffering, that you would give them strength and that you would give them courage and wisdom. And Lord, we pray that the message of Jesus would advance, that all nations would call on him.

and Lord, we pray now that you would continue with us. We ask that you would cleanse us from our sin as we acknowledge all that we fall short on.

We ask, Lord, that you would cleanse us in the blood of Christ. We thank you that his blood is able to cleanse us from all sin. So as we think of our own sin, we pray as we confess it that you would cleanse us and give us that assurance of pardon and that joy of your salvation.

So hear our prayers. Bless the wee ones as well. We thank you that we hear them just a little through the wall. We thank you that they are an answer to prayer. And we pray that they would grow up to know you and to trust you.

[16:01] May they come to you and not be hindered in the days of their youth. Hear our prayers. Continue with us, we ask. In Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please?

How are you all today? Feeling good? Feeling a bit tired? Pardon? Coming to the end of the term feeling a bit tired.

I'm feeling a bit tired. I'm feeling good. I'm feeling good. I'm feeling good. I'm feeling good. I'm feeling good. I'm feeling good. Because yesterday was a big day. You know what time we were up in the morning? Half past four. Do you like getting up at half past four in the morning?

Not me either. So we were up at half past four in the car and through to Stornoway over in the ferry and we were over to Ullipo.

And I think Mary Catherine's got a few pictures on the screen. So what do you think we were doing in Ullipo? What does that look like? I think there's a couple more pictures as well.

[17:17] Is there two or three I think? There's another one. And there's another one there. What do you think that was? When do people all kind of come together?

Eat food. There was a barbecue. There was sausages. There was burgers. There was chicken. There was a big massive pink French fancy cake.

And there was a Nutella chocolate cake that looked amazing and they never took out. and there was crisps and there was juice and there was all kinds of stuff.

There was some singing. There was a guy there who was singing with his guitar and there was some psalms and hymns and just other different kinds of songs as well. There's guys playing football and some girls.

Some music. So what do you think was happening in Ullipo? Come on guys, you're not that slow. Jono, what do you think?

[18:20] Well, it was a barbecue but we were all together and there was balloons, cards, presents. Jake? Celebrating. What were we celebrating?

A birthday. Whose birthday? Good question. It was my sister-in-law, CJ, who comes over from time to time. She was 40 years old.

And so there was a surprise party. She didn't know anything about it. So there was a few people who came off the ferry at whatever time it was we came off the ferry and she was, oh, I wasn't expecting you.

Nice to see you. Then a few more came. Oh, nice to see you as well. Are you just passing? Well, not really. Then there was people that started coming from Inverness and there were some people who came from England and there must have been 60 or 70 people and it was a great day.

It was a long day but it was a great fun day and it was a surprise party. Is it a good thing to have a surprise party? Is it a good thing to have a party at all?

[19:22] Is it a good thing to celebrate birthdays? Yeah, why? Why, Jake? To celebrate their birth, yeah.

And what do you, when you go to a birthday party and you send a card, John Rory, like your haircut by the way, and a present, what are you telling somebody?

Happy birthday. You telling somebody that you like them or you telling somebody you're not bothered about them? That you appreciate them. You appreciate them and you like them.

If you want to tell somebody that you care for them, then it's good to say happy birthday. It's good to send a card, isn't it? It's probably better to send a present and a card but the best thing you can do is to come and actually be with them on their birthday.

That's what tells them really that you care for them and so CJ had a great day because she was surrounded by lots of people who care for her.

[20:32] Now here's a very simple question. Fraser, what do you think? Does God care for us? How do we know? You're definitely, your answer is absolutely right.

He cares for us. Did he send us a card to tell us he cared for us? Jay? He didn't send us for God. Exactly. He did kind of send us a card.

It's a bit thicker than most cards we get. But if you wanted to get to the heart of the message of the Bible it's a message where God is saying to us in all these different books through all these pages he's saying to us I made you I love you and I want you to be with me.

So God did send us a card through lots of different messengers and the card's called the Bible. But did he do any more than send us a card?

What? Who died for us? And who's Jesus? And where did he come from? Heaven.

[21:45] Heaven. So God so loved us that he didn't just send us a card that God the Father sent us his son. He came from heaven to this world to tell us how much he loved us.

And how do we know about God's love for us? Well we hear him say it all through the Bible Jesus tells us that. But Jesus loved us so much that he went to a cross to take away our sin so that if we believe in him we can be with him forever.

Because it's sin that holds us back from God. It's sin that makes us sad it's sin that makes God sad. And so Jesus came to take our sin away so that we can know God's love here in this world and then forever.

So even today as we think about Rachel who we can just see in our minds eyes sitting over there in the church in the past and she's now no longer in this world but because Jesus lived and died and rose we believe that she's with Jesus and will be with Jesus forever.

And that's great news. So let's pray and thank God for that. Lord we thank you for your love for us. We thank you that you loved us so much that you showed us your love partly in this world when we see sunny days like this and we see all the beauty in this world we thank you that you've made the world beautiful for us to see something of who you are and to enjoy being here.

[23:29] We know that in this world there's sin in our hearts there's sin but we thank you that you sent Father your Son Jesus into this world to be our Saviour to take away our sin.

So we thank you that we have more than a card we have the Bible where you tell us of your love. We thank you that we have more than the Bible we have your Son the Word made flesh who came to this world to live for us and die for us and rise for us so that if we believe in him we can know your

love in our lives and know it in this world and then forever.

So help us we pray to believe help us to receive the gift of Jesus that you've given to us and thank you for the good news that you give us in Jesus that begins in this world and goes on forever.

We pray that the boys and girls the young ones and the older ones who are here would all be trusting in Jesus and receiving and not pushing back your love and we ask this in Jesus name and for his sake.

Amen. We're going to sing now that message really and we're singing Mission Praise 52. God sent the Son they called him Jesus he came to love heal and forgive he lived and died to buy my pardon that means my forgiveness an empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives and because he lives I can face tomorrow and all tomorrows.

[25 : 01] We'll stand to sing God's praise. Amen. God's praise.

God's God's name is there to prove his forgiveness because he lives I can face tomorrow and because he lives all fear is wrong because I know I know he holds a future and life is like this burning just because he lives I'll speak to home a new more baby and feel the bright and joy he lives but grifter still the ground assures to shout in place a certain day because he lives because he lives like nations on own because he lives all fears gone because

I know I know he knows the future and life is sparkling just■■ of style catch much it out you know more feels pretty until ■■■■■■ saint■aged haben Because he lives Like his tomorrow Because he lives Oh, fear is wrong Because I know I know he knows the future And life is worth the angels Because he lives Okay, boys and girls, have you head through to Sunday school now?

Amen. And if we could turn to 1 Peter chapter 3, please.

1 Peter chapter 3 And We're focusing on verse 13 to 17.

[28 : 30] I'm going to read from just a little further back. I didn't tell Mary Catherine that, so we might not be able to see that on the screen. But if you've got Bibles with you, you'll be able to follow in your own Bible. Verse 8 of 1 Peter chapter 3.

This is God's word. Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another. Be sympathetic, love us brothers, be compassionate and humble.

Do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit the blessing. For whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

He must turn from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear. Do not be frightened.

[29 : 39] But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against you, your good behavior in Christ, may be ashamed of their slander.

It is better if it is God's will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

And so on to the end of the chapter, we'll thank God for his word and ask that he'll add his blessing to it. We're going to sing again now from Psalm 27.

Psalm 27, we would normally have a Gaelic psalm at this point, but we are really struggling for Gaelic presenters. I don't think we have any here today, and we certainly don't have many Gaelic singers.

So I've been advised by the Gaelic singers to switch to English this morning. So we're going to sing Psalm 27, and we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 4, five stanzas in English.

[30 : 56] The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed. My life's strength is the Lord, of whom then shall I be afraid. When as mine enemies and foes, my most wicked persons all against me rose.

To eat my flesh, they stumbled and did fall. Against me, though I'm hosting camp, my heart yet fearless is. Though war against me rise, I will be confident in this. One thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain, that all days of my life I may within God's house remain, that I, the beauty of the Lord, behold me and admire, and that I in his holy place may reverently inquire.

These verses will stand to sing to God's praise. The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed.

My life's strength is the Lord, of whom then shall I be afraid.

Where does my enemies and foes, most wicked persons all, to eat my flesh against me rose.

[32 : 44] They shall bow down, they shall bow down, they shall fall. Against me, though I was in camp, my heart yet fearless is.

Though war against me rise, I will be confident in this.

One thing I of the Lord desire, and will seek to obtain, that all days of my life I may, within God shall see me.

That I, the beauty of the Lord, behold me and admire, and that I in his holy place, be with the glory of the Lord, and that I in his holy place, if we could turn back to 1st Peter chapter 3.

I've just spotted a gal that's presented over on my left, but it's too late now. 1st Peter and chapter 3. We're going to look today at verses 13 through to, through to verse 17, I think.

[35 : 04] So let's ask for God's help as we go there. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and we thank you for this letter from Peter, the disciple that we identify so readily with.

And we ask that the Holy Spirit would be our teacher, and just as the words were penned with the help of the Holy Spirit all these years ago, we pray that as we listen, and as we meditate upon them, that we may know the help of the Holy Spirit, opening our minds and our eyes, and touching our hearts, that we may see the beauty of the Lord, and our need of the Lord, in every situation, and especially when we go through hard times.

We pray for the congregations around us as well, wherever Christ crucified is preached, in whatever denomination we ask, Lord, that you would be at work, adding your blessing to your word, and applying it to the hearts of many people.

Show us, Lord, we pray, our need of Christ, the beauty of Jesus, and give to us faith, that we may come to him. And Lord, we pray for all the barriers that so often get put up.

We are good at creating reasons to make us hesitate to respond to your call. And we pray that, even in the course of the service today, that some of these barriers, some of these excuses, would be swept aside, and that we would hear the call of Jesus to come and trust him, and that we would respond in obedience and in faith.

[36 : 44] And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We come to a subject today as we are looking at this section.

And it's a subject that everybody knows something about, although some people know more about it than others. And in seasons in our life, we may experience this sometimes more than others.

And it's a subject that a lot of people would give as the reason that they don't believe in God. And yet, when we think this subject, this issue through biblically, this is not a reason to fail to trust God, to not believe in God.

It's a thing that God speaks very clearly about in his word. And the subject for today is suffering.

Suffering. Peter writes this letter all these years ago, almost 2,000 years ago, a little less.

And he writes to believers who were suffering. He writes to believers, as we read in chapter 1, that were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Turkey.

[38 : 05] At one time, these believers who were receiving this letter, they'd lived in a different place, in what they called their home, their birthplace.

And they were with family, they were with friends. And then they came to faith in Jesus. And these believers were, they were scattered.

Their families disowned them. As we thought about in the past, families had funerals for family members who believed in Jesus because they were sending the message to them that they were dead to them.

friends deserted the believers and turned on them. They were, they were defriended in a much more real way than we talk about being defriended on, on Facebook or social media.

And so these believers, they were, they were suffering and it was going to get worse. Because soon, Nero would be the emperor and he would target Christians and he would make them suffer.

[39 : 19] And still today, we can, we can read on many websites and we see that Christians are suffering for Jesus' sake. This is not just something that was prevalent in past times in a different place.

Today, Open Doors tells us that there are 360 million Christians a year who are suffering persecution and discrimination for Jesus' sake.

And we can read stories in Nigeria which are horrendous that are happening right now. They'll never be on the news. But if we know where to look, we can, we can find stories of brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering and being scattered because of their, their faith in Jesus.

And even here, although it's nowhere near that level, we're beginning to feel the first bite of suffering if we decide we're going to hold on to the Bible.

If we decide we're going to toe the line of salvation only in Christ, we will begin to feel the first bite of suffering.

[40 : 38] So, Peter's letter, it's as, it's as fresh today as it was on the day that he wrote. And, various points to think through this morning. We'll see how time goes.

The first point is the name behind suffering. Because Peter asks the question in verse 13. he says, who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

He's writing to Christians and he says to them, who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? He doesn't say what's going to harm you. He personalizes this.

He says, who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? And then he just leaves us to think biblically through the answer. who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

Now, when we think about that, first of all, we would be inclined to answer the question by saying, well, no one is going to harm us if we are eager to do good. Why would anybody want to harm us if we are eager to do good?

[41 : 42] I mean, generally speaking, good people doing good things are appreciated at the sort of cultural level. But that's not always the case.

And especially if we are seeking to do good for Jesus' sake. Maybe, Alex, you could pull the door just to give the Sunday a wee bit of privacy. Thanks. If we are trying to do good on occasions for Jesus' sake, there will be people who will want to do harm.

And I think Peter, as he writes this, he is almost saying, cast your mind back and think about, if we want to talk about good things, we want to talk about good works, let's think about Jesus.

Let's think about all the good things that Jesus did. Peter was there. Peter watched Jesus heal the sick. He watched Jesus give sight to the blind.

Peter was there as a witness when Jesus gave life to the dead. And yet, says Peter, remember how he suffered through it all.

[42 : 46] so who caused harm to him? Well, we could say it was the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Roman soldiers, sometimes his family, his friends, even the disciples.

There was a level of harm that Jesus had to suffer through these people, but all these people on different occasions were being used. So who was using them?

And the answer is Satan. During the time of Jesus' ministry on earth, there were so many incidents, much more so than we see today, of demons railing against Jesus and the cause of Christ.

Now, who were the demons in employment of? Satan. Think back a little further to the Old Testament. Think of Job.

He was described as a righteous man. He was a man who was recognized as doing much that was good, and yet in his life he experienced the most horrendous, the most acute suffering.

[44 : 03] Who caused it? Well, Job didn't know as he suffered. But we're taken behind the scenes in Job chapter 1, and we see that the one who is doing the harm, the one who is inflicting the suffering on his life, is Satan.

Rewind a little further again. Go back to Genesis. Genesis 1 and 2, we see a garden. We see Adam and Eve. The garden is beautiful.

The environment is perfect. Adam and Eve in marital harmony. Adam and Eve in perfect union with God. No suffering.

Then we come to Genesis 3 and we begin to see harm. We begin to see suffering and decay. Fast forward a little more and we see death.

Who caused it? Who is the name behind that suffering? It's Satan. So let's make a point of unmasking Satan as the name behind suffering.

[45 : 26] I am continually hearing people, as will you be, who blame God for suffering. But when we think through this biblically, we see that the name behind suffering is Satan.

And people may respond by saying, well, doesn't God care about this? Will God not do something about this? And the answer is, God does care.

And God has done something about suffering. he sent his son into the world to suffer and to die, to overcome Satan, to undo the works of the devil, so that we, if we believe in him, can ultimately know relief from suffering and sin and Satan and death and hell.

So the name behind suffering is Satan. But praise God for Jesus' son, the one who came to suffer in our place, to undo suffering and to offer us life and peace.

we could fast forward all the way to Revelation 21 for that. We've been there a lot in the last few weeks. And in that place we see an environment where we're back to Eden in the first instance.

[47 : 11] We're taken back to a place where there's no sickness and no suffering and no death and no sin and no decay. And how is it that way?

It's because God is there and Satan is not. So the name behind suffering is Satan. The second point is the blessing of suffering.

Verse 14 says, But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. And this is a peculiar thing to read and to think through.

There was a TV show, I think it was in the late 60s, I never really watched it, but I was aware of it being advertised. It was called The Odd Couple. I don't know much about what it was about. It was two men, strange, two friends who were kind of thrown together and they were an odd couple, but they had adventures through life type thing.

And you could say in verse 14, suffering and blessing are put together, but they're an odd couple. And there are odd couples.

[48 : 26] There's no odd couples in the room here, but you look around and there can be odd couples. One's very big and one's very small. One's very glamorous and one's a bit scruffy.

One is very quiet and the other one never stops talking. And you look at them and you think, I don't know how on earth they got together, they're an odd couple, but they seem to work. And even some flavours, you know, caramel and salt.

That would never work, you would think, but it does. Pepper and strawberries. Try it. Peanut butter and jam. Americans swear by it.

They're flavours that seem strange, but they work together. And strange as it seems, Peter teaches that suffering and blessing go together. And we only need to go to the cross to see that that's truth. That's the core of the truth that we see on the cross. Jesus suffered. Jesus suffered more than anyone ever experienced suffering.

[49 : 34] It's the most awful scene when we go to Calvary. And yet from that cross comes eternal blessing.

So we see suffering and blessing concentrated in the same place. And Jesus says to us as disciples, you, disciples, if you're going to follow me, you have to take up your cross.

You have to walk the way of suffering sometimes for doing right. Suffering and blessing go together are calling us to walk in the steps and the footsteps of Jesus.

And Jesus did what was right. And yet he suffered for it. And we are called, if we are Christians, to do what is right.

And that will sometimes cause us to suffer. Peter knew all about it. He had the scars that testified to it. God's God's God's love.

[50 : 47] And even today, it is not difficult to suffer for Jesus' sake. Take John 14, 6. There's a crystal clear text for us.

Jesus. If somebody wants to be saved, there is one way, one name, and it's Jesus. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father, no matter who they are, no matter what other religion or what other good they associate themselves with. No one comes to the Father, no one is saved except through Jesus.

That's the truth. Now, when you're in a discussion with somebody, and they want to talk to you about Eastern religions and every other myriad of religions and all the possible ways, and you respond by saying, no, no, there's only one way.

It's Jesus. You're going to suffer. You're going to be called narrow-minded, intolerant, bigoted. You know, put that text on your Facebook this afternoon.

[51 : 59] One way to heaven, Jesus. The comments will probably give you some heat. Or if you stand up today for what the Bible says about marriage, about gender, in this culture, you'll suffer.

Whether you're in school, whether you're in work, we'll be labelled as bigoted and narrow-minded, and that's a suffering that we're called to endure.

And if we suffer for doing and for saying what is right, there's blessing. There's blessing for us in the midst of suffering because when the heat is on and when we're feeling the bite of suffering, Jesus is there with us.

And he helps us. We find refuge in him. it's hard, but we know peace when we're suffering for his sake.

And if, for example, we speak clearly about Jesus being the only way to salvation and the truth being taught in the Bible at no other place, and somebody responds to that even as we suffer by saying, I think I'll pick up this Bible.

[53 : 15] I think I'll look to Jesus. and then they hear the truth and they're saved. There's blessing for them. How many conversion stories begin with Christians suffering the fury of an unbeliever for sharing the gospel?

So many conversion stories start, somebody told me about Jesus. I was mad about it. I was furious about it. I didn't like it, but I went home. Then it started to bother me, and I started to think about it. And God by his spirit started to work. Then I picked up the Bible, and I started to see things, and I was given faith, and I believed, and now I'm saved, but it started with some poor soul who had to suffer their fury.

And even if we think about it in our own room here, how many of you had parents who suffered as they prayed for you through your wayward years?

They suffered. And as they taught you the Bible, and said, I want you to come out to church morning and evening, and the kids said, I don't want to go out to church.

[54 : 42] church, and there's a big fight at six o'clock because they don't want to come out, and you're saying you have to come out, and they're suffering, and today you're sitting here.

They endured the suffering of your tantrums. They endured the suffering of praying for you when it seemed that you had no interest whatsoever in anything that they held dear. And yet through their prayers and through their witness, today there's blessing for you.

The blessing of suffering. It's a strange thing, but it's the truth. The third point, and I don't think we'll get beyond this today, is that there's opportunity in suffering.

There's opportunity in suffering. There's a story told about two shoe salesmen. And they're both sent to a foreign country.

They work for competing shoe companies. They're both sent to a foreign country to assess the market for shoes. And so the first salesman goes off to this country, and he sends a telegram back, it's years back, and he says, research complete, unmitigated disaster, nobody here in this country wears shoes.

[56 : 05] the second salesman goes out to the same place, he sees the same thing, and he says, research complete, glorious opportunity.

Nobody here wears shoes. So you have two salesmen, they see the same thing, but only one sees an opportunity. The other one just sees doom and gloom.

And Peter's teaching us here, suffering is an opportunity to reach people for Jesus. So when we start to feel the bite of suffering, whatever it is, it may not be persecution or heat because we have faith in Jesus, it can be any kind of suffering.

When we start to feel the bite of suffering, our tendency is to think, oh no. But Peter is actually teaching us to say, take a breath, think about this, there's opportunity here.

So how does that work? Well, this is how it works. When someone who has no Savior suffers, when someone who has no faith in the sovereign God suffers, their whole world comes crashing in.

[57 : 29] And everything for them is dark. overwhelming. But when someone who is a believer suffers, when a believer goes through dark valleys and is able to say, from Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd, and he is with me in this dark valley, God, then they don't fear in the way that an unbeliever fears.

I've seen this so many times. I've seen this as so many believers have approached death. It's difficult, there is suffering, but they don't fear in the way that an unbeliever fears.

And Peter is saying to us, that's the way it should be if we're believers. He says, do not fear, verse 14, what they fear.

Don't be frightened. And we might say, well, that's great advice, Peter, but how do I actually put this into practice? How do I take this theological truth and actually press it in my own life?

How does this work? How do I get there? And Peter gives us the answer in verse 15. He says, put in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.

[59 : 08] And it's as we remember that Jesus is Lord, it's as we remember that Jesus is in control, it's as we remember that Jesus is with us in the hard times, that's the antidote to fear.

It's when we remember that Jesus is above everything that we're suffering and he's still in control. That's when we start to feel the reality of God's sovereignty filtering down into our lives and our experience.

We sang it. though the nations rage or even though our circumstances are in a rage just now, though kingdoms rise and fall, there is still one king reigning over all, so I will not fear, for this truth remains that my God is the ancient of days, none above him, none before him, all of time in his hands, for his throne it shall remain and ever stand, all the power, all the glory, I will trust in his name, for my God is the ancient of days.

and it's that truth that chases away fear and brings calm. And when people who are around us see a believer who is in the middle of a storm of suffering and yet they're calm, they're composed, and they have hope, then the person who's watching will say, where did you get that hope?

How is this working? How can you approach death and still be smiling? How can you be going through this pain and you're still steady?

[61 : 26] How can you have this hope when it looks to me like everything is hopeless? And the doctors have told you everything is hopeless. Who supplies this hope that's in you?

And Peter says, when someone asks you that question, now you have an opportunity in the midst of suffering to tell them about Jesus.

And Peter says, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

love. I see some golfers in the room today. As far as I can tell, golfers are always prepared.

They always have their clubs in the car. The first blink of sunshine. And they're away from their work post. They're on the phone to their wives.

[62 : 30] And they're out on the course. They're always prepared. good. Or the fire service. The guys who've got the things on their belts. The first bleep.

And they're rushing out the door. They're always prepared. And Peter is saying to us, that's how you're to be. And especially in a season of suffering, you're to be always ready to speak about Jesus.

there's opportunity in suffering. Now, as we finish, I wasn't going to finish here, but as we finish on this point, we may feel a kind of stab of guilt as we read this.

Because the truth is, we know that we haven't always been prepared to speak about Jesus.

And we can all think about situations, especially when we're having a hard time, and we think, I can't be done with this. I don't want to speak. I don't want to engage.

[64 : 00] It's going to be too costly, it's going to be too sore, I'm not going to say a word. And if that's how we feel today, remember this as we finish, Peter knew all about that.

And he's the one writing the letter. I don't think there was a day that passed in Peter's life without him remembering the time when he wasn't prepared to speak about Jesus.

I think it cost Peter to write this. And as he wrote it, he was probably being taken back to that fire that was burning.

And the little girl who was asking, did you know him? And Peter didn't speak up. He denied Jesus with curses.

But that day was in the past. And Jesus had forgiven him. And Jesus had restored him. And now Peter, with his pen and his paper, sitting at his desk, was doing what Jesus charged him to do.

[65 : 27] Remember what Jesus said to Peter? He said, when you have turned back, after the mess you're going to make of things, he said, strengthen your brothers.

So we sit here with a letter today. And from that letter, we receive strength. So that when we go through suffering, we remember Peter, we remember this teaching, we remember the grace of Jesus, and we take the opportunity to talk about the hope that we have.

the name behind suffering is Satan. Don't forget that when we're in the world. And everybody's pointing at God. Every sickness, every disease, every illness, every bit of decay, every grief, is traced back to the fall.

It's not God's design. But praise him, he sent his son to be the savior, to save us from suffering.

[66 : 48] And even when we're in the midst of suffering, Jesus is able to make it a blessing.

Because he's with us in it. He's the master architect.

He can take what the devil designed for evil, to harm us. He can turn it around for good. There's blessing in suffering. And there's an opportunity.

And that opportunity is before us as we leave here today. When I was in Carlyway last Sunday night, and I'll finish with this, after I finished preaching, and we sang the final praise, a picture flashed up on the screen as everybody was leaving the church, and it said, you are now entering a mission field.

And let's remember that as we go out there. We are Christians. We are entering a mission field.

People are looking for hope. So always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that's in you.

And likely if you're suffering, someone will ask you about that hope soon. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word.

[68 : 11] We thank you for this letter that Peter wrote as he was inspired to do so. And we pray that we would receive strength from your word as we hear the experienced words of Peter coming to us.

One who fell and who failed, one who was silent when he should have spoken, and yet one who was forgiven and restored and recommissioned to share the gospel.

We thank you that we hear it, even in these verses today, and we pray that you would enable each of us to believe it. And then as we go out from here, enable us, we pray to share it.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to conclude Mission Praise 988, how deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure.

Amen. how deep the Father's love for us, our paths beyond all measure, that he bring many sons to glory, and we give him his son.

[69 : 40] To make our wretched treasure, and we give him the pain of stealing loss, the Father turns his face away, as wounds which bar the chosen one, bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon our cross, my sin upon his shoulders, ashamed I hear my mocking voice, all earth among the stalkers, it was my sin that held him bare, until it was accomplished, his dying breath has brought me life, I know a take his finish.

Amen. Amen. I will not boast in any day, no gifts, no power, no wisdom, but I will boast in Jesus Christ, his death, the resurrection, I should have leave from his reward, I cannot give an answer, but this I know with all my heart, his rules, the pain my heart and soul.

The last point, in case you're wondering, we're not just going to cut it out, but there's a verse or two about how we're to behave, not just how we're to speak, but how we're to behave as we witness in suffering, and we're not going to take that next Sunday, but we will deal with it Wednesday night, so be encouraged to come along to the meeting and we'll hear the next point.

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more. Amen.