

An Exhortation to Patience Under Suffering
Sermon for the 4th Sunday of Easter, 2017
1 Peter 2:19-25

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Second Reading from before, 1 Peter 2:19-25: **¹⁹ For this is a commendable thing, if someone is moved by his conscience toward God, to bear the pain patiently when he suffers unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if you are beaten for doing wrong and you patiently endure it? However, if you suffer for doing good and you endure it patiently, this is commendable with God. ²¹ For God has called you for this purpose, because Christ also has suffered for you and has left you an example in order that you may follow in His footsteps. ²² He did not commit any sin and no deceit was found in His mouth. ²³ When others insulted Him, He did not insult them in return. When He suffered, He did not make threats, but handed it over to Him who judges justly. ²⁴ He Himself carried our sins in His body to the cross, so that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wounds you were healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Caretaker of your souls.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“Good Shepherd” Sunday, has for centuries granted worshippers the opportunity in the season of the resurrection to rejoice in Christ, **the Shepherd and Caretaker of your souls**. The relationship of the shepherd taking care of his flock is most tender. Out in the fields, at any moment, a sheep could be torn to shreds by wolves, or be stolen by a thief. At any moment, their protector may have to save them by personal hazard. Alone in those vast fields, with no others nearby, the shepherd and the sheep feel a life in common, and all differences disappear.

This tender care of the shepherd for the sheep is seen especially in Scripture. Perhaps there is no better example given than what we find in our Introit, *Psalms 23*. The intensely personal perspective of this psalm mirrors the attitude of the Good Shepherd, who knows and is known by His sheep.

So also the words of God, spoken through His Apostle Peter, are given to cheer and comfort us, especially in days of continuing distress, with the assurance of the Lord's infinite love and compassion. It shows us how Christ, our Shepherd, has gone before and how He still leads us onward and upward till our rest is won. Although in these times many are perplexed, heavy laden and cumbered with care, our Shepherd still goes before us and by virtue of His redeeming and atoning work enables us to follow patiently, enduring the hatred of the world, having our affections fixed on Him and on the things which are above. In the words of our text today, the Apostle Peter gives us an *exhortation to patience under suffering*.

Peter begins by saying that **God has called you for this purpose**.

He says, ¹⁹ **For this is a commendable thing, if someone is moved by his conscience toward God, to bear the pain patiently when he suffers unjustly.** ²⁰ **For what credit is there if you are beaten for doing wrong and you patiently endure it? However, if you suffer for doing good and you endure it patiently, this is commendable with God.** If we have done evil and take the well-deserved punishment patiently, there is nothing commendable in that; there is no glory in it. Many a condemned criminal throughout the ages has gone to the gallows stoically or with apparent indifference. If such criminals do not take their punishment as the due reward of their deeds, if they curse the civil powers for giving them the deserved punishment, they add to their guilt. However, that is not the kind of suffering the apostle has in mind here. Rather, Peter has in mind those who **suffer for doing good and endure it patiently** because they have done well, because they have done what the Lord requires of them. The apostle is speaking of the one who **is moved by his conscience toward God, to bear the pain patiently**. We have a number of examples in the Scriptures showing how this was done. One such example is Daniel. At the time of Daniel, King Darius's officials came to him and said, "*The king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays*

to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den," (Dan. 6:7-8). The king agreed and issued the edict. Yet Daniel was in conscience, bound to pray to God daily, and for this service he was cast into the lion's den. Another example is that of the apostles. Soon after Jesus' Ascension, the high priest and his associates commanded the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and had them flogged. Yet ⁴¹ *The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.* ⁴² *Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ,"* (Acts 5:41-42). They thought that it was a joy to suffer for His name's sake.

Now, who knows? The same thing may happen to us. Perhaps it already is to a certain extent. How many people today look at us and snicker if we stand up to promote our Christian values and beliefs. The words of Scripture from Isaiah 53 telling us that Jesus was *despised and rejected*, could very well be used to describe us. Scripture never teaches that those who follow Jesus will be immune to suffering. Rather, if we are serious in our Christian life, then the guarantee is that we will incur the hatred of the world, that we too will suffer for being the sheep of this Shepherd.

There can be no doubt that the world hates us because it hated Christ.¹ Though we are in the world, we are not of the world. It is not a strange thing if we are reproached for Christ's sake, and it certainly is not a dishonour, but rather a *distinction*. Though in our country for now, we do not see hatred and open persecution to the same extent as there was in the time of the apostles, we are not being flogged or told to stop preaching Christ, yet there are many ways in which the world makes known its hatred of those who lead a godly life.

Now, all this should not surprise us. The fact that the world hates us shows that we are God's children. Jesus says: *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you, because of Me. Rejoice and be very glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for in this way*

¹ John 15:18-20

people persecuted the prophets who were before you,” (Matt. 5:11-12). If we were of the world, then the world would love us.

So, because we still live in this sinful world, and are part of it, how are we to endure this hatred patiently and joyfully? It would be nigh impossible if we did not have the example of Christ.

Peter says that **Christ... has suffered for you and has left you an example in order that you may follow in His footsteps**. Jesus is our Saviour, of this there is no doubt. We truly believe that ²⁴ **He Himself carried our sins in His body to the cross, so that we might die to sins and live to righteousness**. Since we are saved by His grace, we are to **follow in His footsteps**. What manner of example did Christ leave us? To answer this, we must look at His suffering.

Peter says that **Christ also has suffered for you**. That is a glorious fact. The eternal Son of God took on Himself human flesh and blood. He became man so that He could take our place. He suffered in body and in soul. In body He suffered scourging, ridiculing, a crown of thorns, and crucifixion. In soul He suffered mocking, reviling, ridiculing, and agony in Gethsemane. He had not deserved any of that. And making a reference to Isaiah 53, Peter says that ²² **He did not commit any sin and no deceit was found in His mouth**.

Jesus was sinless not only in His conduct, in His actions, but also in His speech. Jesus was always truthful; He dared to speak the truth and reprove evil, even though by doing so He incurred the enmity of those in authority. Since He was sinless, He deserved none of the suffering He endured. He was innocent. When He suffered, it was not for any evil He had done. Pilate, the heathen judge, declared Jesus innocent more than once. Not one of Jesus' enemies could find any sin in Him.

Now, in all His suffering, here is the example that Jesus has left for us. He was reviled and slandered against, and yet Peter tells us that ²³ **when others insulted Him, He did not insult them in return**. Natural man, when helpless, will make some gesture indicating his resentment at how he has been treated, but not so with Christ. He endured buffeting, scourging, smiting, the crown of thorns, and crucifixion without a trace of resistance, without any menacing gesture or look. Instead, He prayed for His tormenters, and committed Himself

and His case to His heavenly Father. “*Father forgive them. For they do not know what they are doing,*” He prayed.² What a marvellous example Jesus has left for us. We too, must commit ourselves to our heavenly Father who judges justly. A little later in this same Letter, Peter says, “*Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good,*” (1 Peter 4:19).

Finally, in suffering patiently, Jesus accomplished more than setting an example for us. He took our place before the tribunal of divine Justice. He bore the punishment we had deserved; He endured the curse we had merited. This is brought out more fully for us when Peter says, **He Himself carried our sins in His body to the cross.** He was made sin for us who knew no sin.³ He became a curse for us.⁴ He bore our sins altogether, completely; He made expiation for all sins. There are no sins left for us to bear. It is not necessary for us to atone for venial sins in purgatory.²⁴ **He Himself carried our sins in His body to the cross.** There is no other way in which they may be borne. No self-imposed penances will take the place of, or add to, His sacrifice. This is not only unnecessary, but positively sinful, since it is an insult to the perfect atonement of Christ. Quite simply, we are completely healed.

Jesus suffered **so that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wounds you were healed. By His sacrifice, He sanctified us.** Jesus has given us a new nature, which delights in doing God’s will. True, we are still imperfect by reason of the sinful flesh and blood that still cleaves to us. But we mortify the members which are in the body. Paul says in his letter to the Romans that “*if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die. But if, by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live,*” (Rom. 8:13).

²⁵ **For you were like sheep going astray.** In his natural, unconverted state, man is going away from God, breaking God’s Commandments, neglecting the things belonging to his peace. **But now you have returned to the Shepherd and Caretaker of your souls.** Those who believe the sacrifice of Jesus by faith are completely turned from their former state; they are returned to the

² Luke 23:34

³ 2 Corinthians 5:12

⁴ Gal. 3:13

fold, where they are under the constant watchful care of the Shepherd, where they hear His voice and follow Him and are recalled by His voice when inclined to stray. “*We are now His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,*” Paul says (Ephesians 2:10). By virtue of His merits, which becomes our own by faith, He has enables us to grow in grace and sanctification. Naturally this will have its effect on us when we are exposed to the sufferings of this time. The hatred of those who abuse us is the fruit of the flesh; but patience, long-suffering, and meekness are fruits of the Spirit. Since He brought us back from our sinful straying, He gives us strength more and more to follow in His steps. Indeed, the new nature which we have received from Him causes us to rejoice in suffering for Jesus’ sake.

Dear friends, may we then suffer patiently all injuries and abuses that come to us from the world because of our adherence to Christ. If Christ, the sinless Son of God, patiently and silently suffered for us, should we not patiently endure the sufferings that come on us for His name’s sake? Since Christ has suffered for us and has freed us from the guilt, punishment, and dominion of sin, since He has enabled us to endure, we should gladly take the cross upon us, knowing *that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us.*⁵ Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Lord our God, we praise You for Your great goodness; and for the good things that You have prepared for those who love You! Grant that we may obtain those glories, which no human being has ever seen or heard or ever thought could happen, through Jesus Christ, Your holy Servant.

We thank You for sending Christ, the Good Shepherd, into our world, to lay down His life for the sheep, to pay the price of His blood to free us from the power of Satan, from the deserved results of our sins, and from the lifelong fear of death. We praise You also for His triumphant resurrection, and for the

⁵ Romans 8:18

glorious promise that all who listen to His voice and follow Him will receive eternal life.

We thank You for His pity and love for us, who were straying and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, but who are now through Your great mercy brought back to fellowship with the true Shepherd and Keeper of our souls. We thank You for Your gracious forgiveness for all our sins, for Your promise of peace, for Your assurance of salvation, for Your presence and power in our lives, and for every gift in Christ Jesus.

Enable us, by Your grace, to follow the example of Jesus, our Saviour and Head, by seeking the lost, lifting up the fallen, strengthening the weary, rescuing the straying, feeding the poor, helping the suffering, sheltering the homeless, and being sensitive to each other's needs. May we thereby proclaim Your praises for calling us out of darkness into Your marvellous light.

Give us the voice and leadership of Jesus the Good Shepherd in all parliaments and councils of the nations, in commerce and industry, in all civic and social life.

Direct our way through the sin, strife, and uncertainty of this age, O Lord. Give us true faith and godly hearts. Strengthen the sick, cheer the depressed, and supply the needy, showing that You are always ready to help in every trouble. Because our eyes have seen Your salvation, when our last hour comes, release Your servants in peace, and receive us into everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ Your Son, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 2:42-47

⁴² They continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in the fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers. ⁴³ Fear came on everyone; and many wonders and miraculous signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and shared everything

with one another. ⁴⁵ They used to sell their possessions and goods and divide them among them all, as anyone was in need. ⁴⁶ All were one at heart as they continued to go to the temple every day. They used to break bread from house to house, and eat their food with glad and generous hearts. ⁴⁷ They kept praising God, and had the good will of all the people. Every day

the Lord kept adding together those who were being saved.

1 Peter 2:19-25

¹⁹ For this is a commendable thing, if someone is moved by his conscience toward God, to bear the pain patiently when he suffers unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if you are beaten for doing wrong and you patiently endure it? However, if you suffer for doing good and you endure it patiently, this is commendable with God. ²¹ For God has called you for this purpose, because Christ also has suffered for you and has left you an example in order that you may follow in His footsteps. ²² He did not commit any sin and no deceit was found in His mouth. ²³ When others insulted Him, He did not insult them in return. When He suffered, He did not make threats, but handed it over to Him who judges justly. ²⁴ He Himself carried our sins in His body to the cross, so that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wounds you were healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Caretaker of your souls.

John 10:1-10

¹ “Truly, truly, I tell you, the man who does not come into the sheepfold through the door but climbs over somewhere else is a thief and a robber. ² However, the One who comes in through the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. ³ The doorkeeper opens the door for Him, and the sheep listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.

⁴ “When He brings out all His own sheep, He walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow Him because they know His voice. ⁵ They will not follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

⁶ Jesus told them this dark saying, but they did not understand what He was telling them. ⁷ Therefore Jesus spoke again: “Truly, truly, I tell you, I am the Door for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the Door. If anyone comes in through Me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly.”