

Sermon 5-3 and 7, 2017 Life in His Hands I Peter 2:19-25

Dear Safe in the Lord:

We live today in what is called the postmodern world. What does this mean? It means we live in a culture where there is...

- No longer one concept of morality
- No longer one concept of self
- No longer one culture of faith that predominates life

The postmodern attitude today believes...

- I am whatever I make myself to be
- I am whatever I have been influenced by
- I am the master of my soul and life
- Life is better in my hands

Is life better in my hands? Did I make myself? Am I the master of my soul? Am I the master of my life?

Sometimes people think life would be better if their lives would be in the hands of...

- The government
- Wall Street
- Science or technology

Yes, the Lord blesses us with good government, financial institutions that work on our behalf and modern technology but these entities are not perfect and will always let us down if we totally entrust our lives to them.

What about entrusting our lives to the institution we call the Church?

A survey which I have shared with you before was conducted of young people between the ages of 16 and 29. In this survey these young people were asked what their impressions were of the Church today. These young people felt the Church was...

- Judgmental
- Hypocritical
- Old-fashioned
- Out of touch with reality

How may we respond to young people or anyone who thinks this way about the Church? I would say remember that...

- The church is made up of people who are not perfect
- The church is made up of people who don't always say the right things in the right way
- The church's teachings are based upon God's Word
- God's Word is always true, always right and always relevant

What may seem judgmental is really love for one's eternal soul. What may seem hypocritical is not based on spiritual reality. What may seem old-fashion is really timeless. What may seem out of touch with reality is really in touch with real life.

Why is the Church that is teaching the truth of God's Word to be listened to and followed?

- Because life is better in God's hands
- Because life is better with God's Word guiding us
- Because life is better with God's message of forgiveness
- Because the Apostle Peter calls the Church: "A spiritual house composed of living stones built upon Christ as the foundation."

Life is best when...

- It is not in my hands
- It is not in other people's hands
- It is in my Heavenly Father's hands - this is Peter's message to us.

The book we call 1st Peter was written to Christian slaves who had very wretched lives. Peter urges them not to strike out against their masters but rather he instructs them in the Lord with these words:

- Don't take life into your own hands
- Don't respond in anger or rebellion when mistreated
- Rather, entrust you life, your situation, your circumstances to your Heavenly Father
- Accept the poor and unfair treatment with faith in God's sovereign care, rather than responding in anger, hostility, discontent or rebellion.

The Apostle Paul wrote: "We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed." II Corinthians 4:8ff

Peter wrote these words to offer encouragement to suffering Christians.

- Peter was in Rome when the great persecution under Emperor Nero began.
- Throughout the empire Christians were being tortured and killed for their faith
- These believers were crushed, overwhelmed and devastated
- Christians were beaten, stoned to death, put in jail and executed
- Peter himself was put in jail and beaten several times

Peter says look to Christ as your example and as your Savior:

V21ff “To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats, instead He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.”

To this you were called Peter says...

- God called us to be His children
- God called us to be saved
- God called us to be different
- God called us to entrust our lives to Him...even when we are being mistreated

Example

Peter reminds us that Christ’s suffering is an “example” for us to follow v21 We are to follow in His steps...

- The word “example” means “writing under”
- It is describing that art of tracing letters on a piece of paper
- We are to trace or pattern our lives after Christ

We are to face suffering as Christ did with patience, calmness and confidence that God is in control of our future.

According to tradition, Peter had to watch his wife be crucified but was encouraged by her departing words: “Remember the Lord.”

Peter himself was eventually crucified upside down as tradition says for he did not consider himself worthy to be crucified in the same manner as the Lord was.

Peter wrote these very words around July of 64-65 AD while the city of Rome was burning down to the ground with a fire started by Emperor Nero.

How are Christians to deal with animosity and unfair treatment?

How did Christ respond to being treated unfairly? How did Christ bear under the strain of suffering?

- He was sinless and did not deserve to be mistreated
- He was verbally abused but never retaliated with vicious words or threats
- What did Jesus do in the midst of being treated unfairly?

He entrusted Himself to the Heavenly Father. This meant that He...

- Handed his life over to His Father
- Suffered in surprising silence
- Had perfect confidence in the care and concern of the Heavenly Father

But, Christ is much more than our example.

Substitutionary Atonement

- Primarily He is our Substitute and Savior
- Peter says in verse 24: “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.”
 - To bear sins was to be punished for them
 - Christ bore the punishment and the penalty for you and me
 - We call this the “Substitutionary Atonement”
 - Jesus took our place on the cross and made us “at one” with God

Like the mother who took a bee sting for his daughter.

Peter says: “We have died to sin and live for righteousness because we have been healed.”

Believing in Him means...

- The penalty for sin and death has been paid - past, present and future sins
- We died to sin in the sense that we paid its penalty and death by being in Christ when he died as our substitute -
- Luther says by faith we appropriate His death and victory as if we had achieved it ourselves
- Jesus paid the price --- we get the credit.
- We have been healed spiritually from the deadly disease of sin

The forgiveness of sins that God gives us in Christ is such a change from the world’s way of things that we are left with one thing to do:

Pray that the Spirit of God would lead us to totally put our lives in the hands of our Heavenly Father.

We all know how it is when something in our life doesn't turn out the way we had planned or when it turns out badly for us. At times like these...

- We feel completely isolated
- We think there is no one to turn to
- We thought that we were making the right decisions
- We begin to wonder what will happen next to us

But, then, suddenly as believers we begin to remember that our life ultimately is in God's hands...

- God will see us through the trials we face
- God will be there for us and help us endure suffering
- God will not give up on us
- God surrounds me with a spiritual family the church

Hebrews 10:25 "Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Peter says: "For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." V25

The word "return" means "to repent"

- Lord, help us to repent for the times we thought life was better in our hands than Yours
- Lord, help us to repent when we think life was better in the hands of others than Your hands
- Lord, help us to live the way you want us to live

Our Father forgives. He is our Overseer who watches over us 24/7/365

With the Lord as our Shepherd and with our fellow believers we...

- Live our lives in grace
- Bear our struggles in love

We are privileged to belong to God's family. Everyone in this community is related, spiritually and we are all loved equally by God.

We don't have to go it alone.

In Christ we stand with confidence, patience and hope.

King David had many difficult days in his life and suffered many times unfairly at the hands of his enemies. Once he even suffered at the hands of his own soldiers. The Bible says: "David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him...(his fellow soldiers under his command) But David found strength in the Lord His God. 1 Samuel 30:6

Whose hands is your life in?

Your life is in His hands!