

Wednesday in Lent 5 2018

1 Peter 5:6-11

Calling Us Home . . . Graced toward Glory

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

You've caught it, I'm sure. Our midweek Lenten services have had a clear theme: GOD IS CALLING US HOME. Sometimes in life we hear that call loud and clear. Other times, it seems far and distant, but we still hear it. Since we hear God's call, we know there's a goal before us, a goal to reach in the future. St. Peter says that goal is the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:9). "Salvation" simply means being rescued and brought safely home. Walking by faith, we know that Jesus rescues us, saves us. One day, we'll arrive safely home, safe with God for all eternity. Are we there yet? No, we are not. So, today, we live in a "time of grace." "Time of grace" simply means we need all the help, all the grace we can get from our God and Savior if we're going to arrive safely in our true home. As this evening's sermon title puts it, we are "Graced toward Glory."

To arrive safely home to heaven, we need all the grace we can get! Grace is the favor that God gives you and me because of Jesus Christ. It's the opposite of works, which you've heard many times cannot save you. Grace is the favor God gives sorry, repentant sinners because of all that our Savior has done for us.

Perhaps, the best way we can understand grace is to think of St. Paul. The Apostle himself tells us that to keep from becoming conceited over his call to be an apostle, God permitted Satan to torment him with what he refers to as a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7). It does us no good to speculate what this thorn in the flesh was. It was simply a reminder to him that he was still in the world. Three times he pleaded with God to remove it, but God's answer to him was "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). Even though God permitted this messenger of Satan to torment Paul, the Almighty still held him in the palm of His hand! That's grace! Because of what Jesus has done for us, God has lots of grace for you and me, and, as I said, we need it! We really are living in a "time of grace," because God's grace preserves and keeps us no matter how dark the valley before us or how heavy the cross we carry.

Our lesson this evening list four qualities for you and me to develop as we are graced toward glory. The first is **humility**. Peter says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you." You may recall that when Jesus predicted that all the disciples would fall away from Him, Peter boasted, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away" (Mt 26:33).

That is the absolute opposite of humility. Peter trusted in himself, and the rooster crowed and reminded Peter and all of us how weak we are.

Humility. Jesus said it this way, “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (Lk 18:17). You remember what it was like when you brought you children home from the hospital? They were completely unable to do anything for themselves. So it is of us and our salvation – we are totally dependent upon Christ. Humility is seeing that we are weak, but He is strong.

The second is this, **cast “all your anxieties on Him**, because He cares for you” (v. 7). On the day that we call Maundy Thursday, Jesus gathered with the 12 in the upper room, instituted the Sacrament, and gave us the new Commandment, “Love one another,” then He went to the Garden to pray. And, He prayed, “Father if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done” (Lk 22:42). Jesus prayer teaches us again the 1st Commandment. We are to fear, love, and trust in God above all things because God is in charge. We live and move and have our being in the palm of His hand. In the weakness of our human flesh, there is no need for us to worry, or stew, or fret. Follow in the footsteps of Jesus – “Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care? Take it to the Lord in prayer” (*LSB* 770:3).

The third is this, “**Be sober-minded; be watchful**. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith” (vv. 8-9).

We talked about this in Bible Class Sunday. The word Peter uses that is translated “devil” in our English Bible is “diabolos”. It’s a legal term which means “to give false information.” Peter is reminding us that the devil is a liar and the father of lies. Dear Child of God, the diabolical one says things about you that are not true. We must ever be on guard because the old evil foe always means deadly woe for the children of God.

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the diabolical one, what did He use to resist His lies? The Word of God, “It is written...” God gives us His Holy Spirit so that we believe His Word and live holy lives according to it. That’s what it means to be firm in the faith.

And fourth and finally from tonight’s text, “**knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood** throughout the world.” A regular and vital part of our Sunday worship is the prayers of the church, where we remember our brothers and sisters in Christ in their various stations in life, especially when they are suffering in this vale of tears. We rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, that Christ may continue to do His work through us to our neighbor.

In our passion reading this evening we heard of Jesus’ crucifixion, death and burial. We heard that passion history knowing that glory was going to break forth from the tomb three days later. That’s our life. We have died with Christ by baptism into death, now we daily rise to newness of life in this time of grace, and we believe that one day we will be resurrected with Jesus. Until that day, until the goal of salvation is achieved and we are brought safely home, until then, we need all the grace we can get!

I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.
(LSB 878:2)