Glorify God in all you do!

*“Therefore wait for Me,” declares the Lord,
“For the day when I rise up as a witness.
Indeed, My decision is to gather nations,
To assemble kingdoms,
To pour out on them My indignation,
All My burning anger;
For all the earth will be devoured
By the fire of My zeal.”*

 Zephaniah 3:8

The LORD tells His people to wait for Him. In spite of all that happens in this world and in this life, if we are God’s people through Jesus Christ, then we are to wait for Him. So many things are wrong, so many things are unfair, so often those who do evil seem to get by with it. But we are to wait for the Lord.

We see in this verse that almighty God will rise up repay those who pursue evil. He will providentially gather them all together (probably in the valley of Jezreel), and bring about their destruction. He will bring destruction upon all those who insist on rebelling against the holy God. Entire nations and people will be brought to account.

His zealous holy fire will cleanse the earth of all that raises itself against Him and His people. God will have justice and His wrath will be satisfied. Those who declare themselves to be God’s enemy will be defeated beyond restoration. And God will be glorified in this.

But for those of us who are His people in Jesus Christ, we wait as we are told and look to the next verse:

*For then I will give to the peoples purified lips,
That all of them may call on the name of the Lord,
To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.”*

The work is the LORD’s; He is the one who will purify us and make us holy so that we may praise and worship Him as He truly deserves; and that we may be His faithful servants throughout eternity, complete with all its rewards and benefits.

In Christ’s love

John

 4-23-23

Luke 24:13-35 (2)

Last week we began gleaning from this account of two of Jesus’ disciples walking to the town of Emmaus. They were dejected and sad; their hope that Jesus was the Messiah and deliverer of Israel had been shattered. They knew that their Lord had been crucified and placed in a grave. They saw no way that He could be the One who would redeem Israel.

As they walked, Jesus joined them. How blessed we are, that by the Holy Spirit, Jesus walks with us always. This is God. And He so cares for us that when we believe on Him as Saviour, He will never leave us or forsake us. The Bible makes it clear, that we will suffer in this life; not only physical pain, but dejectedness, sadness, disappointment, and despair. But just as Jesus walked with the troubled disciples on the road to Emmaus, He walks with us on our road of life.

As we are promised in Psalm 46:1, “*God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble*.” So, when we go through times of difficulty, we have this promise that God is with us. He is our refuge; the One we can turn to for protection and comfort. He is our confidence because He is unchanging God and we can always know that He has the situation in hand. It will work for His glory, which is most important, and for the good of we who love Him.

In knowing this, we have strength. We can face whatever we are dealing with because God is for us. Additionally, God gives us supernatural strength. The Holy Spirit will give us the peace of mind we need and the ability to press on. But it is important to know that He also helps us. God will direct our paths and the paths of others; He will hold back satan and not give us over to the devil’s desires; and God’s providence is real and active, He is able to direct and redirect anything for our ultimate good.

Notice that refuge, strength, and help are all during times of trouble. We will have times of trouble.

It is also good to notice that Jesus was interested in what these two were talking about … even though He already knew. Remember that talking to Jesus is prayer. Sometimes is seems odd to us that we should tell Jesus all that is in our hearts when He already knows. Well, here we see an example of what our Lord and Saviour wants from us. He does want to hear from us, He does want us to tell Him about what is troubling us.

The apostle Peter tells us, “*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you*.” The way we cast our cares upon Him is by telling Him about them. We ask Jesus to strengthen us and help us with our troubles. The Bible tells us that God cares for us in all things; there is certainly nothing too big for our God, and importantly, there is nothing too small. Recall that Jesus’ first miracle was changing water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. This was for nothing more than saving the bride and groom some embarrassment.

The reason we can expectantly cast our cares upon Jesus is because He cares for us. What a fantastic comfort we have in that. This is the creator God of the universe; and He cares for us. He maintains all the galaxies; the moon and all the stars; the planets and all the living creatures on the earth. He is King of heaven and commands all the hosts of heaven. Yet He cares for us, He loves us, nothing in our lives escapes His notice. No wonder king David asked in awe and wonder, “*What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?*”

But notice that there is also a requirement that the apostle Peter gives us*: humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*. The Lord Jesus came to this earth as a servant; to serve His people and die in their place; but He is not our errand boy. He is not someone who’s purpose is to grant wishes and give us our every whim. He is God. If we meditate on what that means, that He is God, we can begin to appreciate His enormity and power. We come to understand that He is not to be trifled with.

We must humble ourselves before Him. We are told to love God with all our being. That means we follow His commands. Doing so is how we show that we love Him; and part of that is doing His commands joyously. Humbling ourselves means that we are willing to lay aside our own desires and become His willing servants. Humbling ourselves under God’s mighty hand gives us a whole new way of dealing with suffering.

Hold onto that thought of dealing with suffering, we’ll come back to it in a moment.

After hearing what the disciples had to say, Jesus made a very important statement: *Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?* Jesus made sure to point that out, before He explained everything to them from the Scriptures. The Christ, the Messiah, Jesus, had to suffer; not only at the cross, but throughout His life.

I’ve seen some TV shows and plays that portray Jesus smiling and laughing a lot throughout His life. And that’s ok, as far as it goes, if it gives us a better understanding that Jesus was truly a human-being. But bear in mind that it is not an accurate portrayal. Scripture tells us that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. These are not words that would apply strictly to the one-time event of the cross; this is His life.

From the time that He came to the understanding that the Scriptures applied to Him, He would have known what was coming. This would have always hung in the back of His mind. Think about all the people He came in contact with. He loved them; yet He knew that most would reject Him; most would spend eternity without Him in hell.

So many of the people He healed would enter hell with a complete body; so many of those from whom He cast out demons would soon be reinfested with seven more. He wept over the city of Jerusalem because He knew of its impending destruction. Twice He cleared the temple in holy jealousy because the people cared little for the things of God, and instead worshiped the demon of mammon. Jesus’ tender heart was in pain throughout His life.

The disciples had not yet comprehended the idea of a Suffering Servant Messiah. As they mentioned in verse 21, they were looking for a redeemer of Israel. The idea of redemption is prevalent in the Old Testament. The process is described in the Law of Moses and the book of Ruth is an example of redemption taking place.

Basically, a person might fall on hard times and have to sell their land or lose their land to creditors. At any point in time however, a close relative, called a kinsman-redeemer, could pay for the land or pay off the debt and the land would be restored to the one who had lost it. This is what the disciples had in mind: They were looking for a mighty redeemer who would restore the land that rightfully belonged to Israel from the Romans. What they didn’t understand was that the idea of a kinsman-redeemer was a physical description of a spiritual reality.

Jesus was indeed the redeemer of Israel. He came to pay the debt they owed to God for their sins and rebellion against Him. He came to restore their right relationship with God so that they could become citizens of the true Promised Land; the Kingdom of Heaven. The disciple’s hopes had been truly fulfilled beyond their wildest dreams; but they missed it.

Jesus had to explain the Scriptures to them. Later, when they received the indwelling Holy Spirit, they would understand both the Scriptures and Jesus’ explanation of them. As a side note, upon Jesus’ second advent, He will restore the physical land of Israel to them. God’s promises are true in both the physical and the spiritual; He is creator and ruler of both.

So, yes, Jesus had to suffer all the things He did in order to redeem us. God is just and He cannot let sin go unpunished. But He is merciful, and so He gave us Jesus to take the punishment in our place. Now our only requirement is to truly accept Him as our Lord and Saviour; if we do this, our debt is paid, we are redeemed, and the paradise that we lost in the Garden of Eden is restored to us.

But now, going back to Jesus’ statement, let’s look at the rest of it. He had to suffer, but He also had to enter into His glory. If He had died and stayed in the grave, death would have won; it would still have the greater power. How glorious it is that Jesus took up His life again. Consider all that Jesus did for us and also in perfect obedience to the Father. How wonderful it would be to be perfectly obedient to God; what honor and glory that would bring to Him.

So Jesus glorified the Father and, in turn, the Father has glorified Him. During His final forty days on earth He was in His glorified body. It is a body that will never experience sickness or death. It is a body that He will have for eternity. And at the end of the forty days, He ascended onto heaven. He gets to sit at the right hand of the Father; the place of highest honor. God will put all His enemies under His feet and give Him absolute rule over the earth. Jesus had to suffer and then He had to be glorified; at the same time, His suffering brought about His glorification.

Jesus knew what His suffering would bring about. He would save many people from eternal destruction. He would please the Father by His obedience. He would spend eternity with the people He saved so that He could generously shower them with His love and receive their devoted praise. The man Jesus would receive eternal reward for what He was able to do. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus is “*the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” Jesus put up with the suffering because He knew what was coming.

May Jesus be honored and praised for eternity for all He had done. But we must ask what this all means for us. First, we who are Christians have the comfort of knowing that Jesus has saved us, that we are His, and that no one can take us from Him. Second, that Christians have become adopted sons and daughters of God the Father. We are brothers and sisters of Christ, and God has bestowed upon us full rights as co-heirs with Jesus. Certainly, living in heaven is more than enough, but we will also somehow share in the glory of Christ.

However, we must also consider the path that we must travel to glory. The path to glory is suffering. It is our goal to be like Jesus; Jesus suffered and so we must suffer too. Suffering is part and parcel to living in this fallen world, but for the Christian, suffering takes on a whole new dimension. Suffering prepares us for eternity with God; it conforms us to the likeness of Christ; it teaches us perseverance and helps us to be more kind and understanding toward others. Ultimately, suffering is good for us.

So here is the thing about becoming a Christian: If we choose Christ, we will suffer now but we will spend eternity in peace and glory. Or we can choose to have our glory now. But with that we will face the suffering later for eternity.

Now, we must keep all this about suffering during this life in perspective. God does not intend for us to go about our lives miserable. He has created many good things for us to enjoy. When we receive something good, we are to enjoy it while giving Him thanks because it comes from Him.

We are not to seek out suffering. Our all-wise God will permit the perfect problems at the perfect time for our greatest benefit. Leave the coming of suffering to Him; if we try to bring it on ourselves, we will mess it up.

There is nothing wrong with trying to avoid or alleviate suffering as long as it is done within Biblical boundaries. The apostle Paul allowed himself to be lowered over a wall in a basket to escape persecution. But later, when taken prisoner and forced to stand trial before Caesar, he would not deny Jesus even though doing so would have saved his life.

When we are faced with a problem, the first thing to do is to pray. We ask God to remove whatever it is. Next, we do what we can to solve the problem, whether it is having an uncomfortable conversation, going to the doctor, going to a lawyer, whatever. Lastly, we accept God’s answer. This means that we continue to praise God no matter what happens and give Him thanks. We don’t thank Him for the problem itself, but for the good that He will bring out of it.

Keep in mind that when you continue to praise God during trouble, you are giving Him glory while handing satan a defeat. Even though Job suffered tremendously, he still did not curse God; satan was proved wrong before the whole court of heaven. The same thing happens each time you suffer and remain faithful to the Father.

If you become a Christian, you will face suffering and persecution: So why do it? Because of the reward. We can be like Jesus who endured suffering and shame because He knew what was coming; He knew the joy He would have. It is the same for us. The cost of being a Christian is high; but the cost pales in comparison to the reward.

Prayer

Blessed Lord Jesus, You cared so much for just two of Your disciples that You would take the time to walk with them and explain the word of Your Father to them. You gave them comfort in their time of sorrow. You revealed to them good news; beyond anything they could have hoped for. You came to Your disheartened apostles to encourage them and give them strength. You appeared to the faithful and sorrowing women, honoring them with Your first resurrection appearance.

And these are examples for us. You still come to Your disciples to give us comfort, to encourage us in time of trouble, to strengthen us with reminders of the great promises we find in Your word. By Your Spirit, we will persevere, enduring all that befalls us, that we may become more like our Saviour and receive the reward of eternal life. Thank You Jesus for Your very presence; for Your promise that You would never leave us or forsake us.

Jesus, we confess that far too often we stumble and fall. We do not persevere, we cry out in frustration, we do not give You the thanks and praise that You deserve. Thank You for Your mercy and grace. Please forgive us these trespasses, pick us back up and set us on Your path. Guide us that we may glorify You.

It is in Your most precious name we pray.

Amen