

## Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 24, 2020

**Psalm 68:1-10 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him. <sup>2</sup>As smoke is blown away by the wind, may you blow them away; as wax melts before the fire, may the wicked perish before God. <sup>3</sup>But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful. <sup>4</sup>Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds—his name is the LORD—and rejoice before him. <sup>5</sup>A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. <sup>6</sup>God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land. <sup>7</sup>When you went out before your people, O God, when you marched through the wasteland, Selah <sup>8</sup>the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. <sup>9</sup>You gave abundant showers, O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance. <sup>10</sup>Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor.

**Acts 1:12-26 (NIV)** <sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. <sup>13</sup>When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. <sup>14</sup>They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. <sup>15</sup>In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) <sup>16</sup>and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus— <sup>17</sup>he was one of our number and shared in this ministry." <sup>18</sup>(With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field;

there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. <sup>19</sup>Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) <sup>20</sup>"For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms, "'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, "'May another take his place of leadership.'" <sup>21</sup>Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup>beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." <sup>23</sup>So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." <sup>26</sup>Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

**John 17:1-11 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. <sup>2</sup>For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. <sup>3</sup>Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup>I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. <sup>6</sup>"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. <sup>8</sup>For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup>I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. <sup>10</sup>All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through

them. <sup>11</sup>I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.

**1 Peter 4:12-19 (NIV)** <sup>12</sup>Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup>But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup>If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup>If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. <sup>16</sup>However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. <sup>17</sup>For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup>And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" <sup>19</sup>So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

**1 Peter 5:6-12 (NIV)** <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup>Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup>Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. <sup>10</sup>And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. <sup>11</sup>To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. <sup>12</sup>With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

## Seventh Sunday of Easter

### *Immovable Steadfastness*

1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-12

1 Corinthians 15:58 *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be **steadfast, immovable**, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.* (ESV)

Peter gives three commands in order for Christians to experience immovable steadfastness:

#### ❖ **Rejoice in suffering** (1 Peter 4:12-16,19)

- Rejoice in the presence of Christ
- Rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 4:14; 5:10)
- Rejoice in the purpose of God (1 Peter 4:16, 19)

#### ❖ **Be steadfast in faith** (1 Peter 5:5-9)

- Be humble before God (4:17-18; 5:5-6; 1 Corinthians 10:12; James 4:6)
- Cast all your anxiety on the Lord (5:7; Philippians 4:6)
- Resist the devil (5:8-9; James 4:7)

#### ❖ **Stand fast in grace** (1 Peter 5:10-12)

#### **Benediction:**

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:10-11)

## Seventh Sunday of Easter

### *Immovable Steadfastness*

1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-12

The title of today's message, ***Immovable Steadfastness***, come from 1 Peter 5:10:

*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* (NIV)

Steadfastness is facing adversity without giving up.

Ernest Shackleton is arguably the premier historical example of never giving up in the face of overwhelming obstacles. His failed 1914 bid to be the first expedition to traverse the entire continent of Antarctica via the South Pole, turned into an even more courageous nearly two-year epic journey of survival and rescue. His ship became entrapped and then crushed in the powerful grip of sea ice. Shackleton is credited with heroic leadership that resulted in saving his entire expeditionary team. With four other men he made an 830-mile open ocean crossing in a modified 22-foot lifeboat, only to have to ride out a hurricane as they were in sight of land. He then crossed a treacherous mountain range to arrive at a whaling outpost where he organized the rescue of the rest of his expedition.

Steadfastness is the quality of being unyielding and incapable of being diverted from one's purpose. A synonym of steadfastness is immovable.

We find both these words in 1 Corinthians 15:58:

*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.* (ESV)

Likewise, Paul exhorts the Christians in Colossae to . . . *continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel . . .*

This morning I want you to discover with me, how we can have *Immovable Steadfastness* as we face down the suffering, challenges and opposition we are bound to encounter in our lives.

Let's begin with prayer: Heavenly Father, be our teacher this morning and open your Word to us so we can believe and trust your promises and have *Immovable Steadfastness*. In Jesus name, Amen.

Peter was no fan of suffering. In fact, he once tried to talk Jesus out of enduring the suffering of the cross.

Peter and his fellow disciples mistakenly thought that following Jesus would lead to glory, not suffering. But they discovered that the road to glory leads through the wilderness of painful trials.

We all have a natural aversion to painful situations and try to avoid them at all costs. But suffering is something we can't escape. It is part of our human experience from birth to death.

When Jesus said, *come, follow me*, He invited Peter into the fellowship of His suffering. And in our Scripture today, Peter invites us, as believers in Jesus, into that same fellowship, when he calls us to *participate in the sufferings of Christ*.

So, in this passage of Scripture Peter candidly shares what he himself had to learn about how to respond to painful trials with immovable steadfastness.

The first lesson Peter learned was to

### ❖ **Rejoice in suffering** (1 Peter 4:12-16,19)

*<sup>12</sup>Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup>But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup>If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on*

you. <sup>15</sup>If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. <sup>16</sup>However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

You and I are likely to say, “come on Peter! Rejoice in suffering? Really?? That’s not going to happen!

But Peter knows what he is talking about. He has been there. Peter and the other Apostles had been hauled before the religious authorities for preaching the gospel about Jesus. They were slandered, threatened and whipped. We are told in Acts 5:41 [Peter and] *The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name [of Jesus].*

James 1:2 (NIV) *Consider it pure joy . . . whenever you face trials of many kinds,*

James 1:12 (ESV) *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*

Like James, Peter says suffering is a test, as he said in Chapter 1:7, *that your faith . . . may be proved genuine.*

Peter gives us three key truths so we can rejoice in suffering

- First, we are not alone in our pain. 1 Peter 4:13 says, *rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ.* Literally it says we fellowship in Christ’s sufferings. Jesus is with us. He’s been there and he is there with you now.

The Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:10, used the same Greek word when he wrote: *I want to know [Christ] . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings.*

When we rejoice in suffering, it brings us into a closeness with Christ like nothing else can.

If you want to experience the presence of Christ in your life, then rejoice in suffering.

- Second, with Christ’s presence, comes His power. The next verse says, *we are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you*

That is the power of the Holy Spirit. You don’t handle pain in your own strength. At the end of our lesson (1 Peter 5:10-11) we learn that God will *make you strong, firm and steadfast.* <sup>11</sup>*To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

We are *blessed* through the power of God so we can rejoice in our suffering. So, if you want to experience the power of the Holy Spirit, then rejoice in suffering.

- And third, God gives purpose to our suffering.

<sup>4:16</sup> *Praise God that you bear the name of Christ*

And if we go back up to verse 13 it is because

<sup>4:13</sup> *so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed*

Our anguish may not make sense to us now, but it will in glory. God does *work all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.* (Romans 8:28)

So, if you want to experience the purpose of God in your life, then rejoice in suffering

We can rejoice because of God’s presence, power and purpose in and through our suffering.

We can rejoice and praise God in our suffering and pain because, when we do, we are drawn into a closer fellowship with Jesus, we are declaring a greater dependence on Him (and his

power) and we are committing ourselves fully into God's hands to fulfill His purpose.

And that is why this section ends in verse 19 with these words: *<sup>19</sup>So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*

Next Peter exhorts us to

❖ **Be steadfast in faith** (1 Peter 5:5-9)

*<sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup>Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup>Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

The Greek word, translated here as *standing firm* is better translated, *steadfast*.

*1 Peter 5:9 (NKJV) Resist him, steadfast in the faith . . .*

Here Peter again teaches us some of the lessons that he had to learn in order to be steadfast in faith. First, he learned to

- Be humble before God (4:17-18; 5:5-6; 1 Corinthians 10:12; James 4:6)

1 Peter 5:5b . . . All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (NIV) *<sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

Peter was not a humble person before Jesus transformed his life. But Peter learned that pride seeks to be self-sufficient. Godly humility trusts God's sufficiency.

When the Bible speaks of God's mighty hand in the Old Testament (which Peter knew well), it was usually in reference to God's power to save, as when God brought Israel *out of Egypt with a mighty hand*. (Deuteronomy 9:26).

Peter is saying if we want God to rescue us with His mighty hand, we must first humbly submit ourselves under that mighty hand, *that he may lift you up in due time*.

- Second, we are told to cast all your anxiety on the Lord (5:7; Philippians 4:6)

Verse seven contains a wonderful invitation: *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Philippians 4:6 tells us: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (NIV)

We cannot be steadfast in faith if we are all burdened down with anxiety and the cares of life.

Throw it all on the Lord because He cares for you!

Third, to be steadfast in faith, we must

- Resist the devil (5:8-9; James 4:7)

1 Peter 5:8-9 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

James 4:7 says, *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* (NIV)

We are told we must be self-controlled and on the alert to danger because we have an enemy of

our souls that seeks our spiritual and physical destruction.

Satan is *the thief [who] comes only to steal and kill and destroy*; (John 10:10 NIV)

*Resist him, steadfast in the faith . . .* (1 Peter 5:9 NKJV)

Resist! Stand firm against the flow. Don't follow the crowd. Don't compromise the truth. Don't cave in to opposition. Don't lie down and quit; and certainly don't stick your head in the sand.

So, rejoice in suffering; be steadfast in faith

And finally,

❖ **Stand fast in grace** (1 Peter 5:10-12)

1 Peter 5:10-12: *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. <sup>11</sup>To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

*<sup>12</sup>With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.*

Steadfastness is a work of God's grace in us and in our lives.

It's not something we have to muster up; we can't.

Immovable steadfastness is a gift of God's grace. He is the God of *all* grace. Every good and perfect gift comes from His hand.

So, stand fast in grace. Stand with you feet firmly planted on the promises of God; on the rock who is our Lord Jesus Christ—our refuge and strength and a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).

Stand fast and firm and immovable, not in your strength, not with your good intentions, but in

God's grace. Grace is God's underserved favor toward us in Jesus Christ. It is God's gift of forgiveness, salvation and strength. It is God's power overcoming our weakness. God promises: *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Not my self-sufficiency, but God's sufficient grace.

We have been told, *God gives grace to the humble.* (1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6)

So, *<sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

By His grace, God will lift you up by His powerful hand, and give you immovable steadfastness.

Let us pray . . .

Benediction: (1 Peter 5:10) And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. <sup>11</sup>To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.