

GET READY FOR TROUBLE

I. Suffer It Consciously

II. Share It

III. Be Christian about It

1 Peter 4:12-19

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2021 | CHRISTMAS

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

<i>Old Testament</i>	Isiah 42:1-9
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 18
<i>New Testament</i>	1 Peter 4:12-19
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 2:13-23

COMMUNION

GRANTS PASS

Divine Service, Rite Two, ELH p. 60
The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 119 Away in A Manger
Chief Hymn – ELH 141 Once He Came in Blessing
Distribution Hymn – ELH 165 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord
Closing Hymn – ELH 163 O Rejoice, Ye Christians Loudly

MEDFORD

The Common Service, CW p.15
Psalm 18, p. 69
Opening Hymn - CW 68 Away in A Manger
Hymn of the Day – CW 54 Where Shepherds Lately Knelt
Distribution Hymn - CW 28 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord
Closing Hymn - CW 45 O Rejoice, All Christians, Loudly

Faith & Our Savior Lutheran Churches
Medford & Grants Pass, Oregon
Edward L. Bryant, Pastor

1 Peter 4:12–19 (CSB)

¹² Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. ¹³ Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler. ¹⁶ But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin with God's household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God?

¹⁸ And if a righteous person is saved with difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

¹⁹ So then, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good.

Dear fellow redeemed: Through His apostle, Peter, Our Lord prepares the church for the world in which we live, particularly in periods of oppression and persecution. In the section just preceding our text, Peter reinforces what he said in the first chapter, and what we emphasized on New Year's Eve, namely that as Christians we should love one another graciously, as Christ loves us. This is the way we live in this un-loving, un-Christian world. And then Peter closed with a doxology, a word of praise of our Lord Christ, "... *To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.*" (1 Peter 4:11, CSB)

However something happened right after that. The most common supposition is that he received word from the churches in Asia Minor that things had taken a turn for the worse, and that the "fiery ordeal" that potentially lies in store for every believer was now a reality. It isn't "if it comes," but "when it comes." So Peter adds this postscript to his letter.

The potential is something we should all be aware of, as Jesus made clear, "***Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."***" (Matthew 16:24, CSB) This is to be our mindset as Christians.

GET READY FOR TROUBLE

I. Suffer It Consciously

II. Share It

III. Be Christian about It

I. Suffer It Consciously

Many of our brothers and sisters in the faith are "in the fire" as we speak. Boko Haram carried out deadly attacks again on Christmas, martyring some dozen believers- at least.¹ It's become a usual thing. How many of you would have come to worship on Christmas Eve or Christmas day if you knew there were roving gangs shooting up Christian churches and setting fire to them with worshippers inside?

The "fiery ordeal," however, often comes only at the end of a long campaign of deceit. The devil is above all things a liar. The offensive against the Christian faith in our era takes the form of educational policy, scientism, secularism, and social justice, to mention the most significant.

¹ <https://news.yahoo.com/boko-haram-kill-villagers-christmas-172143214.html>

The offensive doesn't use physical force so much as group dynamics, the cancelling, ridicule, and marginalization of those who express unpopular truths of Christian faith. Yet we should be neither surprised or despairing. ¹² **Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you.** ¹³ **Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.** ¹⁴ **If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

Let's look at the types of deceit in a little more detail:

Educational policy since John Dewey has dictated that transcendent truth or morality is irrelevant to daily life.² By this, public education has been divorced from Biblical truth virtually as a legal requirement. It should be no surprise, then, that generations have grown up ignorant of the claims of Christianity or hostile to them by default.

Scientism, treating science like a religion; secularism, insisting that the Christian faith has no place in the marketplace of ideas; and social justice, saying that equality of outcome is the measure of morality, and not the moral action of the individual, have displaced Christianity in the mind of society.

The problem is that many Christians don't even know that these are trials of faith. Christianity and secularism live in separate compartments of their minds, so they don't even realize the contradictions between them. We need to be conscious of the attacks on the Christian faith long before someone torches the church building.

A couple more examples:

Like the free-love movement before it, the LGBT movement isn't just benign concern for people with different feelings, but an assault on the divine order for humanity to the extent that Christians are open to conviction for living their faith.³

Neo-Darwinism, the truly failed attempt to account for the origin of life and of all living things, isn't really a religiously neutral science, but is itself a materialist religion that has hounded science itself out of schools and the courts.⁴

If we understand these things, we will see the economic sacrifices parents go through to keep their children in Christian schools, or to homeschool them, as part of the soft persecution of the faith. We will recognize the laws that punish those who practice their Christian faith in life, not just in church, as not-so-soft persecution. We will understand that those who have lost their jobs or their positions in education because of their faith, to me economic martyrs to the truth.

II. Share It

Peter speaks of a dimension of this "fiery ordeal" that we probably don't think of much. **Rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.** Any struggle because of our faith is part of something greater than all of us. If we follow Christ, He says, we carry a cross as well. Paul says, "**The Spirit**

² "The process of secularization arises not from the loss of faith but from the loss of social interest in the world of faith. It begins the moment men feel that religion is irrelevant to the common way of life and that society as such has nothing to do with the truths of faith." -Christopher H. Dawson, *Religion and World History, A Selection from the Works of Christopher Dawson* <https://www.iwp.edu/articles/2018/02/01/the-tragedy-of-american-education-the-role-of-john-dewey/>

³ No time in a 20-minute sermon to fully lay out the argument, but I would love to engage my readers on this.

⁴ Ibid.

himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8:16–17, CSB) He and Peter are singing from the same hymnal here.

If we all share the trouble with Christ, then we share it with one another as well. This says something about our communion as a church. The world portrays church membership as “belonging, not believing,” as though our unity is in all buying a membership in the same gym or something. But our unity is in sharing faith in the same truth of the Gospel which God has revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures.

III. Be Christian about It

This brings us to the point that Peter really emphasizes. We need to make sure that the Gospel of Christ is out front, and that the trouble we deal with glorifies Him. **¹⁴ If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler. ¹⁶ But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name.**

The term “Christian” is only used three times in the New Testament, although it came into wide use in the first century Roman world. It was a term of opprobrium. A “Christian” was countercultural, didn’t quite fit in. Though compassionate, practical, charitable, and helpful here and now, the great hope of the Christian is in the resurrection.

In two things especially the Christian was out of step, the pursuit of status or honor, and the pursuit of vengeance.

This is because of the Gospel, the fundamental truth that has been revealed to the world.

The real problem in this world is sin, disobedience, and death as a result. Because we are sinners we are all born alienated from God and doomed to the same in eternity.

The real solution, the “good news” or “gospel” is that God the Son became the greatest man ever, but He did so by humbling Himself to be the greatest servant – bearing the sin and guilt of the world and the suffering of the damned on the cross. So we find greatness not in status or honor, but in service.

Because of His sacrifice, God graciously offers forgiveness to everyone in the world, without holding our sin against us. So we see one another, not as objects of vengeance, but of mercy.

So dear fellow believers. Get ready for trouble, indeed it is already here. Abide in the truth and so understand why we are at odds with the world. Realize that if we are faithful to Christ, we will face the same rejection He did, and that we are all in this together. And finally make sure that you suffer as a Christian, and for Christ and the gospel, with the humility and mercy of Christ out in front all the time. **¹⁹ So then, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good.**

AMEN.