

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, May 21st, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Depths of God's Love
Seventh Sunday of Easter
1 Peter 4:12-19

Welcome

BIBLE TRIVIA

The waters parted, and the Israelites were able to walk on dry land through:

Select one:

- a. The Red (or Reed) Sea
- b. The Jordan River
- c. The Euphrates River
- d. a and b
- e. a and c

(You have to come to service or do your own homework to find out the answer)

Announcements

BIBLE TRIVIA ANSWER

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Call to Worship

This is the day that you have made, Lord.
Help us to rejoice in it and be glad!

Remind us of the privileges we enjoy as your people:
 to come to you in these moments,
to confess our sins,
to receive forgiveness and give it,
to pray and sing and listen,
to renew our fainting spirits,
to rest in all your promises.

Open our eyes to see you, Lord.
Open our ears to hear your Word.

Visit us through your Holy Spirit,
and help us to celebrate our faith. Amen

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of glory and majesty,
 in Christ Jesus
 you came to live among us, sharing in our joys and sorrows.
 After he suffered and died for our sake,
 you raised him and took him up in glory so that he might fulfill all things.
 As our ascended Lord,
 he gives hope to your people in all places,
 in every generation and every situation.
 So, we claim that hope this day,
 for ourselves and for the world you love,
 offering you our praise and worship in the name of Jesus Christ,
 who now lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 the One True Living God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #370: "Hallelujah! Sing to Jesus"

Hallelujah! sing to Jesus,
 his the sceptre, his the throne;
 Hallelujah! his the triumph,
 his the victory alone.
 Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion
 thunder like a mighty flood;
 Jesus out of every nation
 has redeemed us by his blood.

Hallelujah! not as orphans
 are we left in sorrow now;
 Hallelujah! he is near us,
 faith believes, nor questions how.

Though the cloud from sight received him
 when the forty days were o'er,
 shall our hearts forget his promise,
 "I am with you evermore"?

Hallelujah! King eternal,
 thee the Lord of lords we own:
 Hallelujah! born of Mary,
 earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne.
 Thou within the veil hast entered,
 robed in flesh, our great High Priest,
 thou on earth both priest and victim
 in the eucharistic feast.

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Great God,
 we are embarrassed to come before you,
 for we have preferred the ways of this world to your ways,
 for we have rebelled against your wisdom
 and we have gotten into trouble,
 for we have rejected your fatherly guidance
 and have gotten lost altogether.
 To you belongs righteousness, O Lord,
 and to us confusion of face.
 Great God,
 incline your ear to our troubles.
 Hear us when we pour out our sorrows before you.
 Forgive us,
 not on the ground of our own righteousness,
 but on the ground of your great mercy.
 On the ground of your great mercy
 in the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ.
 It is in his name that we pray,
 for he is our Savior and the mediator of the covenant of grace. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

While it is true that we have sinned,
 it is a greater truth that we are forgiven
 through God's love in Jesus Christ.

For all who humbly seek the mercy of God it is said,
in Jesus Christ, your sin is forgiven

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.**

Music Ministry: "I Will Keep My Eyes On You" Choir

Responsive Reading

Psalm 69:32-35

³² O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God;
sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*

³³ **to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens;
behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.**

³⁴ Ascribe power to God,
whose majesty is over Israel,
and whose power is in the skies.

³⁵ **Awesome is God from his sanctuary;
the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people.
Blessed be God!**

Children's Hymn: "Sunbeam"

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam to shine for him each day
In every way try to please Him at home, at school, at play.

CHORUS

A sunbeam, a sunbeam, Jesus wants me for a sunbeam
A sunbeam a sunbeam I'll be a sunbeam for Him.

Jesus wants me to be loving and kind to all I see
Showing how pleasant and happy this little one can be.

Chorus

I'll be a sunbeam for Jesus, I can if I but try
 Serving Him moment by moment and live with Him on high.

Chorus

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

1 Peter 4:12-19

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And

**"If the righteous is scarcely saved,
 what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"**

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Sermon

How do you deal with the trials and tribulations that you go through in life? Do you put your trust in God, laying all your burdens upon him? Peter suffered, Peter suffered as a follower of Christ, he failed while he walked with the Lord, more than once, yet through all of his suffering, all of his trials, and all of his pain, God changed the man who was weak and stumbling through his faith into the 'Rock' of the Church of Jesus Christ. The book of Peter is not some theoretical exploration of faith, it is the true lived out experience of Peter, it reveals his struggles with his faith and how he recognized God's hand in His life.

Suffering and glory are the two absolute truths of the Christian faith. It should not be surprising to anyone that our suffering and our glory walk hand in hand. As we spoke about last week our suffering as Christians comes from the fact that we go against the world when we seek to repent and obey the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Many Christians are surprised when something difficult or trying happens in the life of fellow Christians. There is a very popular theology taught in some churches today that teaches the sun always shines on the lives of good Christians, they are wealthy and healthy because they are blessed by God. This theology says that the only possible reason for suffering is that we are not good Christians, and it is often used to get more money out of the people sitting in the pews.

Yet Peter teaches something that shows the falsehood of that theology. Peter says that good Christians will suffer, they will suffer because they are doing God's good. He says if you are a faithful Christian do not be surprised when fiery trials come your way. He wants us to remember that we are in fact involved in a very real spiritual war with the devil himself. Christians have been facing trials, tribulations and suffering since the very beginning of the Church, and we know that those trials, tribulations, and suffering will continue until the prophecies of the book of Revelation are fulfilled.

1 Peter 4:12

¹² Beloved **do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.**

Peter tells us that we need to acknowledge the absolute truth that we will suffer. The beloved of God, the believer, is going to suffer and it is the knowledge that we are loved by God, that we are blessed by God that gives us joy even in the midst of that suffering. True believers should not be surprised when we are put to the test, when we suffer for our faith, or when we are persecuted for what we believe and how we live. Being Christian does not exempt you from bad times, in fact it ensures that you are going to go through them. Every Christian who spends time in the Scripture knows and understands that the world's ways, the ways of the flesh and the devil, take great offense at the ways of God. So, Peter is telling the believer that they should know that there are going to be inescapable times of suffering in their life if they are true to their faith and have Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of their life.

It is the suffering, the trials, and the tribulations that Christians go through that often lessen the grip of sin on their lives. Suffering causes, us to look at our lives differently, it helps us to see the importance of eternity over the temporariness of this world, and because of that it frees us to do more of God's work here on earth. Christians should see our suffering as part of the spiritual growth that we go through in this world.

One of my favorite terms that Jesus uses to describe his presence in our lives is the living waters. The image of water does so much to explain the power of God in our lives, we need water to sustain our lives, we use water to cleanse our clothing and our bodies. In the past we have even used water to power machinery and contraptions.

The power of water is undeniable; if you have ever looked at the rocks at the bottom of a fast-flowing stream you will see that all of the stones, regardless of their size have been

rounded out and smoothed by the power of the water rushing over them. If you were to toss a rough, jagged edged rock into the stream and come back years later you would find that it too has been rounded out and smoothed by the power of the waters that have been flowing over it.

This is what the living waters of the Holy Spirit do to each of us. We begin as rough and jagged people, sharp around the edges. We can cause damage to others and to ourselves, and through all of the trials, tribulations and suffering we go through in this world, if we have that living water, our edges are worn away, we become more well-rounded and begin to take the shape of the people of God, people who reflect the Glory of God and his love back into the world. Christians know that even though the things we might be going through are devastating, physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, or financially that God is using them to refine our character, making us into patient, humble and obedient followers.

We all want that living water that washes over us to be like a slowly tricking stream so we can live an easy, undisturbed life. However, God sees all our rough edges and knows that he can only remove them by testing us in the heavy waters of a rushing river. For the faithful these times of struggle and suffering should remind us just how much God loves us, he does not abandon us to our own devices, instead he works on us and in us to make us into the people we have been called to be in His Kingdom. He is smoothing out our roughness and making us into smooth stones that reflect the love of Christ into the world around us.

Peter describes some of the trials we go through as fiery trials. This is the same word in Greek that is used to describe the fire in a furnace that is used to remove the impurities in metals. Peter is saying that the life of a believer is like a refining process. It is not meant to destroy the material, instead it is meant to make it stronger and more valuable. When God put us through trials, they are not meant to cause us harm, they are meant to purify our faith, to help us learn things about ourselves and about this world that we not even be aware we need to learn or that we are learning. God alone knows what it takes for us to become more Christlike in this world and that is why at times the Holy Spirit is like that trickling and babbling little brook in our lives and at other times it is like the dam has collapsed and we feel as if we are going to drown. God is doing what he needs to do to shape us into Christlikeness and because of that we can find hope and joy in our suffering.

Everything that God does in our life is out of His love for us and we can never forget that. He has a special purpose for everyone of His Faithful, He wants us to reflect Jesus Christ in our lives, to be the salt and light of this world, so that others can see the goodness and glory of God in our lives. God uses our trials, our tribulations, and our sufferings to prepare us to serve Him here on earth and for all of eternity in heaven. That is why he works to purify us, to make us stronger, to remove those rough edges from our life that cause harm and by doing so he shows just how much he values us, which is why we can find joy in suffering.

1 Peter 4:13-14

¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Suffering and Glory go together. When God created Adam, he had the Glory of God. Adam was living in full and direct relationship with God. After sin, that glory was removed, the relationship was tainted and since that time mankind has been seeking out how to fill that empty space, that void, in themselves. Many people seek out the things of this world to fill that space, but they find that nothing actually fills it. Christians know that only a relationship with God can fill the void that was left when Adam sinned.

It is the sufferings we go through in life that make us aware of that void in our lives and how nothing, but God can fill that void. It is the sufferings that we go through that make us aware of the need for a relationship with God, and as we suffer, we find that our relationship with God is strengthened, and that Void is filled with a little bit more of God's glory.

It is that heartache, setback, or difficulty we face every day in our life, those things which cause us suffering and pain, that ultimately bring us joy in this world and in eternal life. The prophecies of the book of Revelation will come true one day, perhaps even in our lifetime, and on that day every Christian will rejoice in their suffering for Christ as they are brought into the Kingdom of heaven where there is no more pain or suffering.

We are truly blessed by God when we suffer for Christ. James the brother of Christ said this.

James 1:12

¹² 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.

We persevere and rejoice in our suffering because we know the blessing that comes from God. There is an irony in the fact that by dying to self we in fact gain eternal life, in our suffering we actually gain glory.

Anything that we suffer because of our faith in Christ, anything that we suffer because of our obedience to God's Word is a privilege and not a penalty. When we suffer for Christ, it shows that the Glory of God is upon us, and our knowledge of that blessing should give us hope and joy.

This is why Christians can find joy in the very worst of their circumstances. They know that even though everything in this world is against them, the blessing of the Lord is upon

them. They know that the suffering and persecution that they suffer at the hands of the world, actually brings Glory to God and that is what sets them apart from the rest of the world.

Mankind says it is not fair that people suffer, people are tested, people go through trials. Mankind tries to say that a life without any form of tribulation is a glorious life. That is another false teaching of the world. Look at the lives of the rich and famous, look at the lives of Hollywood stars, musicians, and influencers, they are filling their lives with the sins of the world, constantly reaching out in an effort to fill the void in their lives, which often leads to addiction and suffering in their lives.

The world tries to teach that the absence of suffering brings happiness, but that is based upon circumstance. The Word of God says that it is suffering and pain that brings joy, a joy that is not dependent on the circumstance we find ourselves in, but instead is based upon our relationship with God and our understanding of his Eternal blessing in our lives.

1 Peter 4:15-16

¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And

**“If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”**

Peter also reminds us that not all suffering brings Glory, some of it is deserved. Some of our suffering is the result of our own sinful nature. Peter wants all Christians to remember that we are to be set apart from the world, to be strange. The truth is that when we suffer unjustly, we often want to strike back in retaliation.

Peter reminds us that when we undergo persecution it does not excuse rebellion or lawlessness. We do not retaliate against the things of this world. When the world attacks us physically, we are not to respond with violence or murder. When the world takes away our property, or attacks us financially, we do not respond with theft. No matter what the world does to us because of our faith in Jesus Christ, no matter the trials, the tribulations, the pain, or the sufferings we are called to respond in love, not in the ways of this world.

For Christians the walk of faith will cause trouble in their lives. The world will try to teach you that you are wrong because of your adherence to the Word of God. The world might cast stones at you, physical stones, or metaphorical stones, telling you that

you are evil, telling you that you are wrong, telling you that you are to blame for all of the wrongs that exist in this world.

Don't believe them, do not be ashamed of the Word of God in this adulterous and sinful world. When you are attacked by the world for obeying the Word of God, do not give into the false guilt and shame that they try to lay upon you. Remember that this was the same thing that happened to the apostles of the early church when they stayed true to the Word of God as they faced the accusations of the Sanhedrin in the book of Acts.

Our suffering at the hands of the world serves a purpose. God purifies us, he purges out the sins of the world, through our suffering. Christians need to remember we are exempt from the condemnation of God for our sins, but we are not exempt from the judgement of this world.

Peter wants Christians to know and understand that earthly discipline and earthly judgement is used by God to purify our lives so that we learn to not live in this world. It is our earthly disciple, and suffering helps bring about that Godly character that Christians are slowly being transformed into by the Holy Spirit. Through our pains and suffering, our heartaches, and losses we are being made more Christlike, less focused on ourselves and more loving and caring for God and for others in this world.

Peter clearly says that Christians have hope and joy in their sufferings, but for those who reject God, who reject Jesus, who reject the Word of God there is no hope. When final judgement comes, those who have rejected God will endure pain and suffering for all of eternity. Peter reminds us that it is far better to endure the temporary pain and suffering here and now in this world than to join the unfaithful in the eternal suffering which they will go through.

'The righteous is scarcely saved', It is not easy to be one of the righteous here on earth. God calls for us to live in faith, to trust in him, to be set apart from the ways of the world. To obey His Word regardless of what it costs us in this world. God is testing us, purifying us, increasing us in value through the circumstances and experiences we have in this world.

Hebrews tells us:

Hebrews 12:7

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Christians do not live their lives just for the sake of the here and now, they live their lives for their eternal future. The Christian life is full of challenges, full of trials, full of

pain, full of suffering, full of God's love because His concern is like that of a father. God is concerned about our eternity, not just our happiness here on earth. Life is hard for everyone in this world. Some will suffer here on earth and others will suffer for all of eternity. When Christians suffer, they suffer with the knowledge that they have direct access to the only one who can guarantee them an eternal life of hope and joy.

1 Peter 4:19

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Look at the simplistic beauty of this verse. Christians who suffer because of their faith and obedience to the Word of God should entrust their lives to the Lord. The faithful can be sure that any suffering that they are going through in life is for the Glory of God's kingdom.

God is at work in each of us and through each of us. God, who is the creator, is working through the Holy Spirit to bring us back to the creation that he intended for us to be before the fall of man, before sin entered the world.

We need to trust that God is always with us, in all of our pain and suffering, and it is happening for His good purpose in our life or in the lives of others. It is always the will of God, and it is always appropriate for us to be obedient to God and His Word, even in the most painful and hurting and suffering circumstances that we may find ourselves living through. This is what Paul and Silas did in the Philippian Jail. This is what so many of the apostles endured in the final days of their lives and this is what Faithful Christians have done since the day of Jesus's resurrection. Living every day for Christ, suffering when we are called to for the Glory of God, knowing that it comes not out of anger or malice but out of God's love for his people.

God taught me this lesson in a very strange way, marriage. Now I do not mean that marriage is suffering, I mean he gave me a wife who loves me the way that God loves me.

I make mistakes, I do things wrong, I am not perfect. I used to think that when she criticized me or told me to change the way I did something she did so because she did not care about how I felt, or she did not understand the work and reasoning I put into what I did. But the truth is that she is not trying to hurt me. She is doing it because she loves me and wants me to be a better person and have a longer and happier life with her. She loves me too much to let me live in a way that would take me away from her.

She loves me the way I am, and she loves me too much to let me stay that way. Let that sink in a minute.

That is how God loves all of us. He loves us just the way we are, with all of the imperfections and failings. God loves us even though we struggle with our sin. He loves us even though we will never be perfect, He has forgiven us and accepted us into his adopted family because we have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we are trying to repent and live in obedience to his Word. He loves us just the way we are, but he also loves us too much to let us stay that way.

God loves us and God wants us to be a better person and a better relationship with Him. This is why in all of our trials, tribulations, and temptations, all of our suffering in this world and all of our struggles with sin he tries to help us develop a character that will bring us closer to him. A character that will make us more like Jesus, a character that will make us want to know God better and spend more time with Him, a character that builds up our relationship as it strips away the things that cause harm and suffering in that relationship.

People of God, remember that as we face all of the difficulties of life in this world that God Loves you! God wants a personal relationship with you! That he wants to use all of the trials and tribulations, all of the pain and suffering to make you a better person, and to give you a closer relationship with him. When we keep this truth in mind it makes it much easier for us to commit ourselves to God and to live faithful and obedient lives as the salt and light of the world.

Let us Pray,

Grant Us Courage and Comfort to Continue Steadfastly in Your Testimony

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 we give thanks that through your Holy Spirit
 you have appointed us to bear witness
 of your dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
 Just as the world cannot endure such testimony
 and persecutes us in every way,
 grant us courage and comfort
 that we may not be offended because of the cross,
 but continue steadfastly in your testimony
 and be found always
 among those who know you and your Son,
 until we obtain eternal salvation;
 through your Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Sunday after Ascension

Hymn: "His Mercy Is More"

What love could remember no wrongs we have done;
 Omniscient all knowing He counts not their sum
 Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore
 Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

CHORUS

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more. Stronger than darkness new ev'ry morn
 Our sins they are many, His mercy is more.

What patience would wait as we constantly roam
 What Father, so tender, is calling us home
 He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor
 Our sins they are many His mercy is more

Chorus

What riches of kindness He lavished on us;
 His blood was the payment, His life was the cost.
 we stood "neath a debt we could never afford;
 Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Chorus

Invitation to Offering**Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspertthoffering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #377: “Come, Children, Join to Sing”

Come, Children, join to sing
 Alleluia! Amen!
 Praise to our Servant King;
 Alleluia! Amen!
 Let all, with heart and voice,
 Saved by God’s gracious choice;
 Now in this place rejoice.
 Alleluia! Amen!

Come, lift your hearts on high,
 Alleluia! Amen!
 Let praises fill the sky;
 Alleluia! Amen!
 Christ calls his people friends;
 Lost, out-cast he defends;
 With love that never ends.
 Alleluia! Amen!

Loud now our voices raise,
 Alleluia! Amen!
 No power can still our praise;
 Alleluia! Amen!
 On heaven's blessed shore,
 God’s goodness we'll adore,
 Singing forevermore,
 "Alleluia! Amen!

Pastoral Prayer

Faithful God,
 We give you thanks for your steadfast love
 that provides courage and comfort for your people in every challenging time.
 Continue to surprise us with your grace, O God,
 and breathe your Spirit upon your church once more,
 to draw us together in worship and witness.
 Renew our faith so that we may serve you with courage and creativity,
 offering the hope, we know in Christ Jesus
 to this struggling world.

God of peace,
 thank you for sending Jesus into the world,
 to reconcile the world to you through the forgiveness of our sins.
 May the fruits of the reconciliation and peace he offers

continue to work in places of hatred and hostility.
O God, do not let us be resigned to injustice or indifference.
Inspire us to build renewed Christian relationships in these troublesome days

God of fellowship,
we pray for our church and our community.
Inspire our congregation with a fresh vision for our ministry.
Comfort those who mourn the loss of dear ones,
and support those who are sick,
and those recovering from setbacks or failure.
Give strength to people who are worn out or discouraged,
and calm the anxiety or anger that can keep us apart from others.
Bless and encourage any who are struggling in their faith,
and guide those with questions to your truth.

Faithful God,
By your Spirit, fill us with the faith and courage to do the work
Jesus commissioned his followers to undertake wherever he leads us.
In the name of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God,
who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit as our one true living God,
now and forever more we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

May God go before you to lead you.
May God go behind you to guard you.
May God go beneath you to support you.
May God go beside you to befriend you.
Do not be afraid.
Let the blessing of God—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—
come upon you today and settle in around you.
Do not be afraid.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Amen.**