***Never Lose Hope – Never!***

When we think of Jesus as our good shepherd, we draw comfort. The peaceful ideas of Psalm 23, swim around us. We meditate on the comfort its words give us.

I think one of the reasons we like this psalm so much is that it gives us a respite from the trouble the world gives – its trials, temptations, and testing. In it all the Christian can look to the watchful eyes of our good shepherd.

One of the greatest attributes of God, is that he knows our trials. He knows the struggles we go through. He is always ready with word that he brings to our mind for encouragement. Some 2000 years ago, He led Peter to send a letter to Christians dispersed throughout the Asia minor, world at that time, as an encouragement. In a sense reminding them to keep the main thing, the main thing. They were maligned, denounced as criminals, abused verbally and some physically all because of their faith in Christ.

When we read today’s gospel and epistles, we cannot help but wonder if Peter kept our Lord’s teaching as the good shepherd in his mind as a word of comfort. He would have known the Psalm 23…. And probably prayed it often in his life.

As we noted a couple weeks ago, Peter began this letter of encouragement with the simple significant truth. We were chosen by God and live in this promise. A new enduring living hope, which will be fully revealed in glory when Jesus Christ returns in His glory. We are alive in Christ. The world rejected Him, abused Him, lied about Him, and killed Him in the cruelest way of the time.

Yet many of us today, struggle with our current situation. Where’s God in all this. We are separated from those we love; some look at their bank book wondering if they have sufficient money to buy food. Where’s God!! It is all too easy to question our own worth. When will all this end, when can I go to the grocery store, doctor’s office, or go for a walk without the fear of becoming sick? We cry to God asking the same question the psalmist asked numerous times…how long.

Martin Luther King wrote, amidst the civil rights struggle that ‘*We must accept finite disappointment, but we never lose infinite hope.*’ It’s a good reminder for us today. His words echo the word of hope Peter penned 2000 years ago. The trials we face today are finite, temporal and will not last. Compared with the infinite glory and joy God has in store the things we find difficult today will not last. We have a Good shepherd who keeps his eyes on us. They are part of our living hope given to us in Christ’s resurrection. The trials, and disappointments we face today are limited - finite. These too shall pass. We have a period where we're going through a dark time. Peter wrote in “f*or this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering,”* We must always remember that our discomfort of today’s trials will end – we have a living hope in Christ and this hope is infinite. We must always bear in mind the finite nature of today’s disappointments and hold to the infinite promises of our Lord Jesus Christ, our good shepherd - the one who lives in us. Our living hope – our promised green pastures, paths of righteousness, and festive table will always outlast today’s disappointments. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, *we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (2 Cor 4-12).* As Paul wrote to his young protégé Timothy he reminded him of this same spiritual principle *If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; … if we are faithless, he remains faithful.” (2 Timothy 2. 11-13).* It is easy to become overwhelmed by difficulties and Peter reminds us that our worldly trials are finite. Remember God’s living hope is infinite. Therefore, as we await the day when we can be together, we embrace God’s promise – the promise of the resurrected Jesus Christ. And Since we have been raised with Christ, let’s set our hearts on Christ, our good shepherd who is seated in the heavenly’s at the right hand of God, the Father, making intersession for us.

This is our undefiled, imperishable, and unfading hope. Our Good shepherds living hope. So never lose hope. Let’s never lose hope – never.

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