

Sermon on **1 Peter 3:13-22** for 6th Sunday of Easter
St. Paul's Lutheran – New Ulm, MN – Pastor N. Scharf

What was your first job? Graduates are entering into the workforce. Young people are turning 14, 16 and able to do different jobs. What were the hard things you learned and experienced that seemed to surprise you at first. Maybe you thought it would be easier. Maybe you thought everything would always go as you imagined. You thought, "Find the right job and you'll never "work" a day in your life." Did you survive? Peter wrote to Christians who were facing very real difficulties that may have seemed like surprises as they followed the risen Christ. Peter gives courage in Christ. Don't be surprised or afraid when you face suffering and persecution for living your life for Christ. Jesus calls you to this!

Jesus Lives to Call Me to Live for Him.

1) Fearlessly live a godly life.

2) Testify to the hope you have.

3) You are a baptized child of God under Christ's rule.

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits – to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

If you do something naughty you expect a time out, a spanking, getting written up, a ticket.. But what about when you are

doing something right, honest, good? We would expect we should be rewarded, not suffer. Maybe you've found that as you seek to live a Christian life. More and more you hold Christ as the central figure in your heart and mind and then suffering or persecution finds you. Small ways – being mocked for having morals in business and relationships, clean language, not joining in on the gossip, not crossing boundary lines that God set up for good purpose. Most of the time this heat may come from unbelieving friends, relatives or neighbors, but sometimes it may even come from fellow Christians who don't want to feel bad about their sin so they want you to join in it. The hard part is that it often comes from inside your own heart – the sinful nature which seeks your spiritual death and wants the real you, your new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness, to be shut up, hands tied, and booted out. The temptation is to give in, to sin, to cross the line, to act just like everyone else, even celebrate sin rather than repent of it. Talk dirty like the rest of the world, think unclean thoughts and let them linger. Let your anger fly and your mouth spew gossip, accusations, loveless words. Let greed take hold of your heart and this life is all about me. Too often we've done this. Peter calls you out. **Jesus Lives to Call You to Live for Him.** "Even if you should suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed." Jesus said the same thing in his sermon on the mount. You are different!

Fearlessly live a godly life. It doesn't make sense to the world, nor your sinful nature, but we have reason to do this. Peter quotes Isaiah, "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. When you find a good job, with good benefits, with a great boss who has your best interests in mind, with a mission that you can get behind, you never want to lose that job, no matter how difficult it gets. Enlightened by God's Spirit who worked faith in our hearts, turned the lights on in our spiritual darkness, we see that we didn't know where to look. We knew we couldn't even try for "the job" if we wanted to. We didn't meet the qualifications to serve God or be his. But Jesus put his qualifications on the application. Jesus gave us perfect references, his own. Jesus washed away our negative record of sin in his own blood. God accepts you. Not only are you justified-declared not guilty because of Jesus' cross and empty tomb, you are sanctified – set apart as God's own child and special possession, chosen to be his very own. Set apart Christ in your heart as first, the one you want to please and bring glory to because he has made you free, forgiven and loved by God. Don't be afraid of some

heat. **Fearlessly live a godly life.** Jesus did it for you to give you everything. As you live that godly life, look for opportunities to tell others about it that they might have it too. **Testify to the Hope that you Have.**

Nowadays we have painkillers. We have everything on the market that promises to solve your pain, cure your ills, and oftentimes we don't just listen, we run after them. So it is strange that you would be willing to take heat, to suffer, and to do it unafraid. This stands out. People wonder why you are weird, I mean, different. You are living for something, someone, greater than yourself. You are living as a citizen not primarily of anywhere on this globe, but a citizen of heaven. *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”*

Tell your story, the story of God's grace to you, Jesus' story. Sometimes people will attack you. Jesus lives. Don't be afraid. We don't have to fear what the world fears, even for ourselves. We focus on Christ and serving him. How do we share our hope with trouble makers or friends? Pastor Jeske in the People's Bible, Staff Minister Dave Malnes with Praise and Proclaim Ministries speak of “key words.” What are some key words you could use to help you share your faith even when being confronted? Repeat after me, “Sin” “Jesus died.” “Jesus rose.” “Forgiveness.” “Faith.” “The Bible.” “God's Love.” These words help spark your statements. Practice with a friend after church. “Sin.” “God's Word showed me that I am a sinner.” “I already knew that though. My conscience has always convicted me when I've done something wrong.” “The Bible explained it all in a way so clear – it nailed me.” “But it also showed me Love, God's Love, that he could choose to love a sinner like me.” “That's why he sent his Son – to suffer the penalty I deserved for my sin, so that I can be forgiven, and that he wants me in heaven with him.” “His Word shows me the best way to live to say thank you and to keep turning away from the sin that tries to trip me up.” “It even makes me willing to suffer for what is right, rather than go along with the crowd with what is wrong.” “I'm not perfect in this. I know, but God is strengthening me to live for him and witness for him.” **Testify to the Hope that you Have.** It gives God glory and others will come to know Jesus!

The Holy Spirit will strengthen you through Word and Sacrament to Live for Him because **You are a Baptized Child of God under Christ's Rule.** *For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits – to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

Jesus suffered too. We follow Christ as Christ-ians. We share Jesus' mission – “to seek and to save the lost,” “not to be served, but to serve.” How did people react to Jesus? Some people clung to him. Some people reviled him as his perfect life, his perfect love (sometimes hard words of truth spoken in love with firmness) bore witness to them and exposed their false motives, their insecurities, their greed and idolatry of self. They persecuted him and crucified him. What should we expect as we follow him? What did Christ's sufferings accomplish? Your salvation. You, the unrighteous, have been brought to God by the righteous one. You have peace, forgiveness, life.

We might be tempted to complain how bad we have it, how hard it is to deny our selfish sin nature and choose to live each day for God. Replacing quick to anger with patience and understanding, forgiving so many people who don't make it easy, following Christ when it hurts. Noah had it worse. He and his family were the only ones left who were faithful to the Lord. What persecutions he suffered, what words, what mocking, as he built an ark. Through the waters of the flood God lifted that boat off the ground where destruction consumed the unbelieving generation surrounding Noah. Thousands of years later, Jesus institutes a washing with the Word of God that saves us because it connects us to Christ and his resurrection. It washes away our sins just like the waters of the flood washed everything away. *Baptism now saves you.* You have a clear conscience toward God. He's claimed you and washed you clean.

And the one you are connected to, into whose name you've been baptized, rules over all things for you.

Jesus came alive *in the Spirit* Easter Sunday and descended to hell to proclaim his victory. Thursday we'll celebrate his ascension. He rules over all. He has earned your spot as a child of God.

We have the greatest calling, the greatest "job" if you will. It's hard. There are surprises which are difficult because of sin and a sinful world, but we do it willingly. **Jesus Lives to Call Me to Live for Him. 1) Fearlessly live a godly life. 2) Testify to the hope you have. 3) You are a baptized child of God under Christ's rule.** Amen.