

Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16

Psalm 22: 22-30

Romans 4: 13-25

Mark 8: 31-38

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

There is great suffering in this world. People even in this country go to bed at night with an empty stomach. In the far reaches of this world, there are people that go several days without food, and people who have to drink water that will make them sick, or even die. People are unemployed; people struggle to make ends meet with house payments and purchasing food.

We at Holy Comforter have had suffering, loss of a loved one, sickness beyond what we thought we could endure, and you can think of other examples that I have not mentioned.

Jesus came to his disciples to teach them what was going to happen, and the most important part of what he said was ignored. They had little faith. The part that was so important was the message, "I will rise again in 3 days." Peter immediately took Jesus aside from the others, trying to protect him, probably not hearing anything other than Jesus was to have great suffering, be rejected, and be killed. If Peter would have been listening to every word, he would have asked Jesus, "What do you mean, rise in three days? And what affect will that have on us?" Jesus felt the devil in Peter and told him that he was not thinking properly. "Get behind me Satan, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Jesus was not turning his back on Peter; he was trying to explain to him that what he needed to do was be behind Jesus as a disciple, spreading the Gospel to all people. Jesus goes on to tell his disciples that if they are only thinking of themselves and not being concerned with the rest of the world, they will miss the kingdom of heaven.

So what have you done in your life when you have faced suffering and events that have not gone the way you had hoped they would? Did you trust in God and ask God to be with you during that time in your life, giving you the courage and strength to continue on?

While I was writing this sermon Thursday, the volunteer at the desk came to my office and stated that there was a woman here to see me. Being that one of my tasks as deacon at Holy Comforter is to take care of those people in need, I knew in my heart it would be someone that would want to tell me their life story, and then expect me to give them some money to help pay their gas or electric bill. I was really in deep thought as to what God wanted me to say to you this morning, and I was put out having to interrupt my train of thought. It would have been easy for me to say to the volunteer, "Tell them to come back tomorrow and I will see if I can help them". Knowing what God has called me to do and not thinking of myself, I went to the desk and asked the lady to come back to my office and I would try and help her. She came to my office from being out in the cold and walking with a cane so slowly that it crossed my mind that you may not end up having a sermon Sunday morning!

She sat down in my office, relieved from the short walk from the hall, and I asked her what could I do for her? Well, it turned out that she had been one of our guests in Room in the Inn and when she had spent the night there several months ago, she was sick and rather frail. She had asked one of our volunteers to keep some of her belongings until she could come later and pick them up, as she could not carry them in her condition. She hoped that she could come back within a few days and pick them up, but it took several months for her to get well. I was aware that they were in the room in the inn closet in the YAC, and I was delighted to finally meet the person the blanket and clothes belonged to. I told her to just sit there and I would go get them so she could take them back to where she was living now. I was thankful our volunteer had so neatly put the things in a bag with her name on them and she was doubly thankful that she would now have a warm blanket to sleep under.

Two things happened in what I just told you about: one is that she had been trusting that we would keep her stuff, and the other was that God helped me in my humanity to not let my worldly worries keep me from doing what I needed to do.

What did you do during times of suffering? With the loss of a loved one, did you turn to God for strength to help you get your life back together with God's love giving you the courage and ability to be yourself again? In the economy that we have now, do you take more time to be in prayer with God

to give you the ability to endure whatever may happen? We must be willing to allow God to be the power in our life.

We are coming toward the completion of our “What Matters Most” campaign that will decide what programs we can do and where can we increase some of them here at Holy Comforter. This is a special time, and you need to be on a higher level, asking God what can you do as a family to make sure that you are supporting the church the way God would want you to, getting always closer to tithing.

I can assure you that if you act as Peter did and take the easy way, not the way Jesus would want you to do, you may find yourself missing what God calls you to do. Jesus had to tell Peter to think of heavenly things. We all need to be reminded of how our faith and love of Christ will benefit our lives. I would encourage all of you that have not filled out a pledge card to do it now, and those that have filled one out, to look again and see if you are following what Jesus would want you to do.

During this Lenten Season we want to be more like Jesus and not take the easy way, but instead take the right way, which will bless our lives on this earth, and in the next life.

Amen