**“Engaging the Epistle” + Easter 7 + 1 Peter 4:12-19 + Weekly Devotion + 5/24/2023**

*“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. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” (1 Peter 4:12-13)*

**Read 1 Peter 4:12-19**

We didn’t get to hear this reading in church last Sunday because we used the Lectionary readings for our Lord’s ascension. St. Peter takes up the topic of suffering again in this passage as He has elsewhere in his first epistle.

He begins, “do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you…” (1 Pt 4:12). We shouldn’t be surprised when we suffer, especially when we suffer for our faith in Christ. The world hated Jesus, it’s no surprise that it hates us also (see Jn 15:18-25).

But here, St. Peter is referring more specifically to God testing our faith in order to strengthen it (see 1 Pt 1:6-7). That’s ultimately why God allows us to suffer anything; He does it in order to refine our faith like gold that is refined through fire. That’s why St. Peter writes, “rejoice insofar as you share in Christ’s sufferings…” (1 Pt 4:13). We rejoice because we know what God’s doing with us through suffering. We know that God will accomplish His good purposes through it.

St. Peter experienced these things for himself. We can read all about them in the Gospels and especially in Acts. Peter and the other apostles suffered much for testifying to the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and future return of Christ. But they often responded with joy and praise because not only were they sharing in Christ’s suffering, but God was strengthening them through it.

St. Peter concludes this section of our reading by writing, “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good…” (1 Pt 4:19). That’s about all we can do, humanly speaking. We entrust our lives to God in every circumstance, whether the Lord permits us to experience good or evil, blessing or curse.

God is faithful; after we’ve suffered a little while, He will rescue us from this “valley of sorrows” and take us to be with Him in paradise. We continue to do the good things that He’s commanded us to do as we entrust all aspects of our lives into His almighty hands.

Prayer: Almighty God, we know that we’ll experience suffering this side of heaven. Sanctify us with Your Spirit and thereby enable us to suffer for Christ and with Christ. Come what may, whether good or evil, help us to say with Your servant Job “blessed be the name of the Lord.” Amen.