

Tested and Genuine

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Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today.

If you're new or visiting with us, welcome. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we've become convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace, and no one's so bad that they can't have it, which means that God has something to say to every one of us in His Word, which is why we keep coming back week after week.

If you've been with us, you know that we're in the book of 1 Peter, and the book of 1 Peter is a letter. It's a letter written by a man named Peter, and he writes it in the first century to churches that are in modern-day Turkey, and he writes it to do two things.

He writes it to encourage them and also to instruct them. He wants to encourage them that Jesus is worth it, Jesus is worth living for, He's worth loving for, and that Jesus is worth suffering for, and He's worth dying for.

[1 : 07] And he doesn't just write them to encourage them, but he also writes them to instruct them, that they would know how they should live as Christians in the world, and that they would also know how to respond when they face opposition from the world.

That's the situation that they're in. They're feeling out of place in the world, facing opposition from the world, and so that's why Peter writes to them, to encourage them and instruct them in that situation. Now, the last couple weeks, we've been heavy on encouragement.

Peter tells them in verses 1 and 2 that they're exiles, but they're also chosen. He helps them understand their identity. They've been chosen by God, and they belong to God, which means they also feel out of place in this world. And then we looked last week at what it means that God is their Father.

It means that they have an inheritance, and it also means that God is coming back for them. And so all this is great encouragement, and still, Peter's readers are in the situation of feeling out of place, and facing what Peter's going to refer to as trials.

And so despite all this encouragement, they're still in the same place they've been left in. They're still facing these struggles. And Peter's not unaware of that, and so he's going to continue his encouragement this week, and he's going to address how to find hope in suffering.

[2 : 15] And so part of our question this morning is going to be, how do we find hope in and through suffering? And as we come to this, it's important to give some clarity, some definitions for suffering, because when we talk about suffering as Christians, we're often talking about all sorts of different things that fall into different categories.

And I'm going to give you at least three different categories for suffering that we find in the Bible. First of all, category number one, there's just general suffering. This is suffering that we face because we live in a world where sin and evil are present.

If you lose someone that you love dearly, it's not necessarily your fault. That's just the result of evil and destruction in this world. If you face a debilitating illness, that's general suffering.

Not necessarily your fault. It's not necessarily something that you did, but it's the result of sin in this world. Second kind of suffering is suffering that happens because of foolishness or sin on your part. So if you go to Cripple Creek and you put it all in black and then you walk away and you're \$25,000 in debt, that is a type of suffering.

[3 : 21] That's suffering because of your foolishness. That's suffering type number two. And all of us experience at various times and in various degrees suffering of types one and type two, whether we're Christians or not Christians, because we live in this world where people who make foolish decisions and we're people who face the consequences of sin.

And then there's category number three, the third and final category of suffering. And this is suffering that happens because we follow Jesus Christ. And so this is not suffering that happens to all people, both those inside the church and outside of the church, but this is specifically suffering that happens to people who love Jesus and follow Jesus.

As we come to this passage this morning, we are going to be talking about type number three. And I don't mean to minimize one in two types of suffering, but I want us to be clear about what the Bible is talking about in specific passages.

And so I don't want to make the right point to you from the wrong passage. And so just from the front, we're talking about the kind of suffering that comes because we love the name of Jesus Christ and we follow him.

This is the kind of suffering that the receivers of Peter's letter are facing. They're facing social ostracization, probably. People are talking bad about them. They're slandering them, Peter tells them at one point. They're saying that they believe things, perhaps, that they don't believe.

[4 : 35] They're saying things about them that are not true. Maybe they have the loss of job opportunities or employment because of their faith in Christ. That is the kind of suffering that these believers are facing. And so we're going to talk about how do we find joy in suffering, suffering specifically for the name of Jesus Christ.

The second thing we have to clear up right from the front is we talk about suffering when American Christians, Christians in North America, think about suffering. Often we think of the place that we live as a place of great struggle for Christians.

Now there's an organization called Open Doors and they make a ranking of the most difficult, challenging countries where it is to be a Christian, the places where Christians face the most difficult persecution.

And they only rank the top 50 countries. What number do you think the USA is on the top 50 countries of places where it's difficult to be a Christian? We don't make the list.

We live in one of the easiest places and times to be a Christian. And so it's helpful and important to keep that in mind as we come to this passage. We're not people with a victim complex who are constantly talking about how difficult and hard it is for us to be Christians on the one hand.

[5 : 47] On the other hand, we're aware of the difficulty of being a Christian around the world. One in nine Christians right now face intense persecution. And we're also aware that just because we live in a country where it's very easy to be a Christian, there are still times where, like the readers of 1 Peter, we feel out of place in this world.

And so on the one hand, I don't want to minimize what it is that we experience as Christians. On the other hand, I don't want to exaggerate it. We face real struggle and suffering in this world because we're Christians. And if we lived in another country, it would be a lot worse.

With that, how do we find joy in suffering? That's our question. We're going to be in 1 Peter 1, starting at verse 6. And as we come to verse 6, you can find it to read along in your worship guide or on your phone or in your Bible.

And remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so that's why we're so intent to learn from God in his word. And so we're going to read now, starting in verse 6. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 15] Verse 8. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Father in heaven, we thank you, as we do every week, for your word. We have not seen Jesus, but we love him.

And we don't see him, but we believe in him. And so we want to rejoice with joy that's inexpressible. We thank you that even though we haven't seen Jesus, you have given us your word.

And so we ask that you would use it this morning to help us. You'd use it to help us understand how we can rejoice in our suffering, how we can rejoice in you, and ultimately that we would understand your love for us and that we would respond to it.

We ask these things not because we have earned them from you or we deserve them, but because Jesus has earned them and he deserves them. And so we ask them in his name. Amen.

[8 : 24] Some of you know, I recently purchased a home really close to this church. And of course I'm going through, the house is about as old as this church is, almost 25 years.

And so there's all kinds of deferred maintenance and things going on. And I've inherited a sprinkler system, which I've never owned before. And I went out one day and I noticed that I was doing an excellent job of watering the sidewalk and the street.

And so I asked my neighbor, I said, is that my sprinkler head or your sprinkler head? And she said, oh, that's absolutely your sprinkler head. So I turned off all the water of those sprinklers and I turned down the system and I went out and I bought one of those sprinklers that you hook up to a hose, you know, the ch-ch-ch-ch-ch.

So I'm out there in my front yard, I'm setting up the sprinkler and I'm trying to figure out the right angle to get so that I'm watering as much grass as I can and as little sidewalk as I can. And of course, I don't know what I'm doing, so I'm just running around trying all these different angles and I'm imagining it's kind of like high noon, you know, all the windows are flipping open around the neighborhood so that everyone can watch this kid who doesn't know what he's doing.

And my neighbor Dan comes out and Dan's helping me. He says, you know, I'm sure, Matthew, you know all these things. I said, Dan, I don't. So you just tell me whatever wisdom you have.

[9 : 43] So he helps me position the sprinkler in the right place and we figure it out and probably the whole neighborhood is still watching. And as Dan and I finish, Dan says, Matthew, I just, one final question.

Do you like, do you like football? Do you watch football? Is that something you follow? Dan, not, I mean, not really, not really a sports guy. I don't, I don't really follow football and I'm feeling bad, right?

Because he's kind of asking me if I want to be his friend. And so Dan says, well, you know, we like to watch the Broncos and we're not, we're not super into it but what we really like to do on a Sunday is we, we like to make some wings and we like to make various dips and put them out and we just like to sit and eat those things and watch football.

And I said, Dan, I love football. It is actually my favorite sport. Dan said, that's great.

Sue and I will have you over sometime. The point is this. Some people are just there for the snacks, right? I'm just there for the snacks.

[11 : 00] If you invite me over to watch the Super Bowl, yeah, I'm really about it. I'm really concerned about which team wins. I won't be there to watch the game but I'm really concerned about which team wins. Because I'm just there for the snacks.

And if you're there for the snacks, when the snacks disappear, so will you. In the church, the same is true. Some people are just there for the snacks.

People come to church for all sorts of reasons. Some people come to church because they know it's a wonderful place to find community and fellowship and friendship. Maybe they feel isolated and they think this is going to be the place where I'm going to get connected.

Some people come to the church thinking this will be the wonderful place for me to find a spouse. Some people come to the church thinking I'm a good conservative person, whatever that means, and I think people in church are good conservative people.

They care about the same family values that I do so I want to hang out with those types of people. And then there are other people who think those people in the church, they're good liberal people. They care about the poor in the way that I care about the poor and I want to go hang out with them and I want to be with those kinds of people.

[12 : 02] And then there are people who come to the church and they're in the church because this is what they've always done and this is their tradition. This is how they've always operated, this is how they're going to continue to operate and they just come to church because they come to church.

But for whatever reason, they're there, they're there for the snacks. Now some of those things aren't necessarily bad, it's not wrong to come to church for community, right? That's part of what we believe, that we're the body of Christ and we're here to support each other and love each other. Not necessarily a bad reason to come because you've always done it. Hopefully you're doing it for more than that. But we as a church, we are not here for the snacks.

We are here because we live in a world that's filled with evil because of our sin and God has offered us a way of redemption through the judgment of his son who he poured out the judgment that we deserved so that we could experience salvation and he's called us to be a people who witnesses that to the world.

That is why we are here. And I am not here for the snacks. I did not move from the East Coast because I get really jazzed about paying off mortgages or because I get really jazzed about what type of coffee we have.

[13:22] That is too small a thing. Now those things aren't bad things, they're not wrong things, right? But I'm here because God longs for his people to know his word and because God has called a people to himself and he's given them a mission.

He has commanded us to be a light to the nation so that when people look around they could see what it is that happens when God's people walk in God's ways and he's given us a mission that we would go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them everything that Jesus commanded and that we would live out what Jesus called so that we would be in a world that's filled with God's love and his mercy and his goodness and his justice.

We are not here for the snacks. We are here because God is calling a people to himself redeemed through the blood of his Son who suffered in our place.

You might be wondering what does any of that have to do with joy in suffering? People come to church and are part of the community for many reasons.

Sometimes it's for God and his mission and sometimes it's not. Peter writes to encourage these people in verses 6 and 7 In other words when you suffer for the name of Jesus Christ it demonstrates and shows to you and to the world that you are not here for the snacks because the snacks have disappeared.

[15:22] There is nothing comfortable or convenient about being a Christian for the recipients of this letter in modern day Turkey in the first century. They are facing many trials and yet they have remained faithful to God.

He is telling them your faith it is genuine and tested. It has been proven to be real faith. Verse 7 You can now know more than you've ever known before how much God is your Father and you belong to Him.

This is the proof in the pudding of your faith. If you had any doubts about it before you can now know how much you belong to God.

How much as we saw last week that His power is working through your faith. So why is it that these people find joy in their sufferings? It's because Peter is telling them you are suffering because God is your Father and you can now know more than you did before how much you belong to Him.

You can now know with more confidence than you had in the past that you belong to God. And so even as you face trials and sufferings you can find joy because it shows how much and how secure your faith is.

[16:55] Not that it rests on your faith but this confirms your faith. It shows to you and everyone else. It shows to the world that you're not here you're not a Christian you're not in the church because of the things that you can get or gain but you're here because of Jesus.

And so that's what fills Peter with joy and it's what fills these people with joy as well. They can have confidence that they belong to God more confidence than they've had in the past.

He tells them that there he gives his own illustration here in verse 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire. He's using an image here of gold. Gold is something you're being tested right?

You're facing opposition for your faith. Gold is also tested. Gold is really valuable. Guess what? Your faith is even more valuable.

Gold can be tested tested by fire but gold can also be destroyed by fire as well. Think about Frodo's ring for example.

[18 : 04] On the one hand incredibly resilient on the other hand it can be destroyed. Your faith cannot be destroyed. You think about gold being tested?

How much more does this show the value of your faith? How much more hope and confidence and trust can you have since your faith is even more resilient and valuable than gold?

Even gold that perishes your faith will not. Instead your faith is going to be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And this image here is probably something like you've been separated from someone for a long time and both of you have been on adventures doing things and you come together and you're able to share and praise each other for the things that you've done well.

There's a sense in which we hear in Matthew 25 that God's going to tell those who are faithful to him well done good and faithful servant. That's the language of verse 7 here.

[19 : 06] It may be found to result in praise and glory and honor in other words found to result in God saying to you well done good and faithful servant. when?

At the coming at the revelation of Jesus Christ in other words at Jesus' second coming. These people can find joy in suffering because it's suffering that proves that they belong to God and it's suffering that proves that their faith in God is real.

It doesn't make their faith real. We don't need to be seeking out suffering. We don't need to try to find persecution but when we face it God uses it to confirm that we belong to him.

He uses it to assure us and reassure us that we are his and so that's why these people in this letter are able to find joy in their suffering. Peter by the way found the same kind of joy in his suffering.

We're told a story in Acts chapter 5. Peter after Jesus has left he's going around and preaching and teaching he's in Jerusalem healing people and the high priests arrest him because they're not thrilled with him going and telling people about Jesus and healing in his name and if you know the story Peter gets out of prison there's an angel who lets them out and they find him again and they beat him.

[20 : 30] This is in Acts chapter 5 and after they beat Peter do you remember what he does and what they do when they leave? Peter and his friends leave rejoicing.

Peter and his friends because they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. And so as I've been emphasizing in the other portions of Peter Peter writes here to people about what he has personally experienced and knows.

Peter knows what it's like to find joy in suffering. He knows what it's like to understand and see how real his faith is to have it confirmed to him because of what he faces for the name of Jesus.

And so sufferings in the present bring joy because they confirm everything that we've seen in the previous verses.

They confirm what we have in the future. That the glory of the future belongs to us. Praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ verse 7.

[21 : 35] And so what Peter has to tell us here it's not there's nothing really complicated about it or sophisticated about it. It's really that simple.

You're going to suffer in this world. You're going to suffer because you've been chosen by God and because you've been chosen by God you're in exile. You're going to be out of place in this world and its customs and its ways and its traditions and its beliefs.

And that's going to lead to trials. When you face those trials you're going to stand and continue to face them. You're not going to leave because you weren't there for the snacks.

You were there for Jesus. And as you walk through them it's going to confirm your hope and your trust and your faith in him and you're going to find joy because you're going to know more than ever before how much he's your father and how much you belong to him.

And then Peter piles on another piece of encouragement. Remember Peter's encouraging and instructing and his goal here at the beginning is just to lay on encouragement for these people who are facing suffering for Jesus. Verse 8 Though you have not seen him you love him.

[22 : 44] Though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

And as Peter's writing this of course he's aware of the story of Thomas.

You remember at the very end of the Gospel of John we have Thomas who's a follower of Jesus and he hears the word that Jesus has risen from the dead and he doesn't want to believe it.

And I'm going to read it to you just a little bit from John chapter 20 verse 24 it says Now Thomas one of the twelve was not with them when Jesus came so the other disciples told him we have seen the Lord but he said to them unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side I will never believe.

Eight days later his disciples were inside again and Thomas was with them although the doors were locked Jesus came and stood among them and said peace be with you. Then he said to Thomas put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side do not disbelieve but believe.

Thomas answered him my Lord and my God and Jesus said to him have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

[24 : 02] Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Peter knows that unlike him who walked with Jesus and lived with Jesus these people did not. and yet their faithfulness in suffering proves that even though they haven't seen Jesus they love him.

The same faith that's proved by their suffering is the faith that they experience. You believe in him that's a faith word and you rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

In other words these people have joy not just because their faith is confirmed but because of what it confirms. Not just that it confirms that they belong to Jesus but everything that comes to them the inheritance that we talked about last week that it's looking to that in the future as it's confirmed in the present that allows them to rejoice in their sufferings rejoicing for their sufferings for the name of Jesus Christ.

If you follow the news you know there was an article that came out in May of this year about a man named Jordan Hubber and Jordan did not know who his father was but he knew an English aristocrat who he suspected was his father and he tried to prove this for a long time unsuccessfully until this man died and he decided he was going to be able to do a DNA test.

Now Jordan was working class he was struggling to make things work from week to week financially he wasn't doing well and this was his last shot to be able to do this DNA test to figure out whether or not this man who had just died was his father and it came back and there was 100% positive proof that this man he believed was his father and so Jordan got to move in to this 1500 acre estate in London which was worth over 50 million pounds and then on top of that received an allowance of I believe 1000 pounds a week.

[26 : 24] Jordan because this man was his father received the full inheritance and it was the DNA test that he went through that proved that he was the son who belonged to this man.

Brothers and sisters Peter is telling us that when we suffer for the name of Jesus Christ it is the DNA test that proves definitively that we belong to God and so we rejoice first that we belong to him and then second because that's true the full inheritance is ours and so that's why we find joy in our suffering for the name of Christ because we experience that salvation now in part and we will experience it in full verse 8 though you have not seen him you love him though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls please pray with me

Father in heaven we thank you that you've chosen us and we belong to you we thank you that you have a mission for your church and you want us to be a part of it and we confess that that mission involves trials in this life for your name and we thank you that you use that to bring us joy we ask that that would become more and more real in our lives that as we face opposition because of our faith in you that it would cause us to rejoice knowing even more how much we belong to you and looking forward to the inheritance that is ours we ask these things not because we have earned them but because Jesus is our older brother and it's his inheritance that comes to us and so we ask it in his name amen