



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

The Seventh Sunday of Easter (A) – 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

Focus: *Encouragement*

word of life

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” (1 Peter 4:12 NRSV)

Read 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

“Beloved!” What a beautiful beginning for this passage. The author does not write out of anger or with disappointment, but with love. The recipients are in need of encouragement because following Jesus is proving not to be easy, but rather full of challenges. That is true for believers today as well. Be assured, others have faced challenges as well.

1. *What does the word “beloved” suggest about the relationship between the sender and the recipient?*
2. *How receptive might the receiver be to the message after hearing “beloved”?*

““Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” (1 Peter 4:12 NRSV) No one wants to be tested by a fiery ordeal. And yet, it is fire which is used to purify gold. Some tests no doubt do precisely that—they test resolve. Pop quizzes are part of this journey of life. Thus, do not be surprised when tests come along. Do not treat difficulty as something strange and foreign.

3. *When did you realize on your own Christian journey that there might be tests along the way?*
4. *How might challenges bring a Christian closer to Christ?*
5. *Do you find Christians today expect to face a fiery ordeal because of being a Christian? Explain your answer.*

Reversals are part of being a Christian. In facing death, Jesus brought life. In suffering for the sake of Christ, we share in his glory. For that we give God thanks and experience a glory which comes from God alone. “But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed.” (1 Peter 4:13 NRSV)

As we humble ourselves, we make room for mighty God to be at work in our lives. As we experience anxiety, we take our cares to God. As we die, we too shall live again. Again and again, reversals shape our lives as Christians.

6. *Give other examples of reversals in Christian living.*
7. *How can we discover the might of God when we are humble?*

It takes discipline to keep alert and steadfast in faith. Be prepared to encourage others who face suffering and challenges. Be ready to remind others that fiery ordeals are part of the journey of faith. And in reminding others, we remind ourselves how God is available to help us through challenges. “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:10-11 NRSV) Once more, a reversal: from suffering to a doxological song of praise.

8. *What are ways that the God of all grace extends grace to those who suffer?*
9. *Does the prospect of fiery ordeals scare you enough not follow Christ?*

Word among us

As much as the dynamic young pastor was getting a reputation for unorthodox ways of doing things, no one could question his faithfulness to Christ. His life story was one of personal tragedy and challenge, but nothing seemed to deter his loyalty to Christ. Those struggles only strengthened his faith and his passion for the gospel. He took great joy in sharing his own story, including the ways God had been active in his life—bringing triumph from defeat. And he knew God was not finished with him yet. He could not wait to see God at work in his daily life.

Thus, it should not have surprised anyone in the church when he began his class for prospective members from a reading from 1 Peter. “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” (1 Peter 4:12 NRSV) This is not the typical verse of scripture read when inviting people to join the church. Who wants to be part of a group who is promised challenge and hardship? And yet, this young pastor loved those in his class—people he just met—enough to speak of the risks in following Jesus Christ who was crucified on a cross.

1. *What is your reaction to this young pastor’s selection of scripture for the prospective member class?*
2. *At what point should Christians learn of the risks of following Christ?*

After a discussion, the young pastor continued with the following words from 1 Peter, “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:10-11 NRSV) God promises to be present in our suffering to restore, support strengthen and establish.

3. *How does God restore those who suffer?*
4. *Who does God send to support those who suffer?*
5. *At what hour does God strengthen those who suffer?*
6. *What does it mean for God to establish those who suffer?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

The First Letter of Peter is a beautiful and tangible example of one Christian giving encouragement to others. In a day when people write fewer letters to one another, it is a reminder of the lasting power of the written word on a hard copy which can be distributed to people of all ages (no matter their computer ability). Though this letter was written hundreds of years ago, the words still give encouragement today to us. No doubt our fiery ordeals are different from first century persecution when people were literally burned on a stake by fire. Nevertheless, we also need to hear words of encouragement to keep the faith.

7. *Who has encouraged you to keep your faith?*
8. *Who do you know who needs words of encouragement? What is the best way to encourage that person?*

Prayer

Maker of the universe, during our hour of suffering, keep us steadfast in faith. Restore, support, strengthen, and establish us in the name of Christ. Amen

last word

This week encourage someone to remain steadfast in Christ.

Daily Faith Practices

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