

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

January 10, 2021

Fully Trusting our Faithful Creator

I Peter 4:12-19

Pastor Paul Jackson

[music: "Great is Thy Faithfulness"]

Nancy Jackson:

Welcome, everyone! It is always really great to be able to see everyone, and it is a joy to be able to gather together. Greetings to you who are online.

A few things this morning as we start the new year. One of the best ways to start is to begin a Bible reading plan. And, of course, that daily interaction of engaging God's word shapes us, and that's what we want. We want to be shaped to be like Jesus. And so there are three of them, and you will find them on the table in the foyer. One just takes you straight through the Bible, reading sections chronologically. Another takes you through four points in the Bible on a day. And then, the other is through the Bible Project, the Gospel Project, so there are videos-- there are content-related videos that are excellent. So, three different ways, and of course online there are other ways. But this is right at your fingertips right as you exit, so be sure to take one.

And then, as we look to other Bible study opportunities, for women, there will be, coming up here on Monday night, Tuesday morning, via Zoom, starting on January 18th and 19th-- it is called *Finding God Faithful* by Kelly Minter, and this is a look at the life of Joseph. You can sign up at Glenwoodcc.org, as it shows up here. And we really encourage you to be a part of that.

And so, now, will you pray with me?

Father, we thank You. We thank You for this new day. We thank You for this new year. And we thank You that whatever lies ahead in 2021, that You are our portion and all that we need. I echo the words in Lamentations 3. This I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Your steadfast love, Lord, never ceases. Your mercies never come to an end. Every morning they are new; Your faithfulness to us is great. You are my portion and all I need, therefore I will hope in You. You are good to those who wait for You, to the soul who seeks you. Father, we ask for Your courage and strength to wait, knowing that You work on our behalf. And God, amazingly, You take all things, all things - the sorrowful and the joyful - and You work them out for our good and for Your glory. And we thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

Ben Rico:

Amen. As we continue worshipping together this morning, would you lift up the cry of your heart with me as we cry out to Jesus, as we cry out to the One who holds us in the storm, as we cry out to the One who is with us and carries us through the fire? Would you lift up the cry of your hearts in worship with me?

[music: "Only Jesus"]

Pastor Paul:

Good morning. Thank you, Ben Rico.

We're going to pause for a moment, take an opportunity to express our gratitude to Nathan and Emily Nymeyer, as Nathan has been in our staff for ten years and I-- in a few moments Nathan's going to come and say a few things. But I remember

when we first interviewed you guys, and we did so from a distance, online, on computer. That was ten years ago. And you were sitting on a couch, snuggled close together, in Emily's parent's basement. And my first impression, whenever you began to talk is, "I don't think they're old enough to drive!" You still don't look old enough to drive.

But it has been just a great ten years, as God has flourished and blessed you with Charlotte, John, and Elanor. To see you guys love Christ together in the home and raise your family and nourish them in ways of Jesus has just been an absolute delight for all of us. Five years as director of highschool ministries, five years as executive pastor, working closely with Al Curtis and me. It has been a privilege, Nathan, to share a love for Christ, to share our gifts, to share in the same church, to love the same people, to pray and figure out how better to serve Christ here and around the world. So, it has been a privilege and-- going to ask if you will come, Nathan, and then that will be followed by Orv, Orv will come up, and he's going to pray as the Nymeyers move on in ministry, but remaining here by God's grace, remaining here with us. Please come, Nathan.

Nathan Nymeyer:

Thank you, Paul. I remember that phone call too. One of the fun things about that call was that, I think Steve said, "Is your wife pregnant?" Steve Sager was on the call, and that's something you should never ask a woman. But she was pregnant with Charlotte, and I had neglected to tell them, apparently.

It has been-- time has flown, and I am grateful for this time. Thankful for you, Paul, for serving together. I remember when I transitioned to become the executive pastor, I wondered what that would look like, in my early 30's, with two guys who had been around the block. I used to joke with them, they could both easily be my father.

[congregation laughs]

I thought it was funny. But you guys let me in, and you trusted me, and you helped me to grow; you kept me from making some dumb mistakes. And it's been a good ten years. It really has been a privilege. Beyond those guys, our whole church staff, I'm thankful for them. I'm thankful for our church board and for our many lay leaders that we have partnered with over the years. And, for myself personally, but also for my family, the people who invested in them, who have challenged and encouraged and equipped them. For my kids, their Sunday school teachers and people who know their name and love them. This really has been our church home.

And, some of you know already, but part of what I want to tell you is some good news. It is going to continue to be our church home. When I stood up here three months ago and told you what our plan was, I really didn't know what our plan was. A very wise woman who I talked with later said, "What are you thinking, Nathan?" I didn't know what the plan was. But God has opened a door with an organization called European Leadership Forum, and I've accepted a position with them. I actually start tomorrow. It's a remote position. The organization functions in Europe; they run conferences; they manage networks and mentoring relationships with Christian leaders throughout Europe. And we actually have connections here. I saw Dianne nodding her head, because I know Johnny and Brooke Stevens have been connected; the Melands are connected; Rob Trenkmann. God just opened the door, and we're excited to walk through it. The position is remote, so I'll be in Vancouver. I do get to travel to Europe every once in a while.

So we are giving thanks to God and thanks to you for praying for us, for supporting us. We have so been encouraged by your notes and by your prayers these last three months. So thank you.

Orville Christesen:

We want to pray for Nathan and his family. And I just consider it a real privilege, because when the Nymeyers first arrived here, we were privileged to host them until they found a home. And it was just Nathan and Emily and their newborn daughter Charlotte, and we just had a real good time connecting with them. So, would you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, we come before You, and we're so grateful for all that You have done. We think of the Nymeyers and how You have worked with them and through them, Father. I remember Nathan starting out as just a young man entering the ministry full time at our church. And Father, You have gifted him; You have matured him; You have honed him into the man that he is today. And Father, as he enters into this new phase of life, this new position, Father, we pray that You would continue to use him in great ways for You. Father, we are also so grateful for the fact that they're going to remain here as a part of this body, and we look forward to our relationship in a little different way. So Father, thank You. We have been blessed as a church. And we pray, Father, that as he enters this new phase, Father, that you will continue to use him and grow him and that Your blessing would rest on him greatly. We pray this. And Father, we also want to think of our nation today. Father, we live in so much turmoil right now. And we pray for our leaders. We pray this that we might continue to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Ben Rico:

Amen. And as the next one to speak, I too just wanted to express my appreciation for the Nymeyer family and Nathan. In actually preparation for this service today, I asked Nathan what he thought might be a song that they have connected with over the years here at Glenwood as a family, and I agreed that this song would be a good one, maybe, to show who God is, even in our life's transitions, even on the

road that takes turns that can be towards trials or joys. I agreed that in Christ we find our Rock, we find our center, and we find our motivation for ministry, whether it's at Glenwood or beyond. And in Christ alone we live in His power and we live in His life. Would you meditate on these Scriptures on the screen that sort of guide us through this song? This song comes from Scripture, and that's where we find the word of God, that's where we find our hope in Christ. Let's meditate on that together.

[music: "In Christ alone"]

Paul Jackson:

Well said. "Here in the power of Christ, I stand." We're ten days into 2021, and I hope that you have joined us, jumped in our Bible reading plans that we have suggested. There are the three that were mentioned earlier in the service that are accessible online, available in the foyer.

If you have joined us these past ten days in reading through the Bible, we have all read - no matter which plan you began - we have all read similar passages of Scripture. We started in Genesis; each one of the plans starts there. And we've seen in those opening pages of Scripture that God is good and He's gracious and that we rebelled against in Him in a place of plenty in which God had given to us everything that we could ever dream or desire or long for, that it still wasn't enough. We wanted to be as God, and so we bought the lie, and we rebelled, and we sinned against God, and the world would never be the same. And sin would damaged and break the soul of every human being, do damage to our families and to our relationships and our communities, to nations around the world. Sin is humanity's problem. And it's our greatest problem that we are powerless against outside of Christ.

Today, we look around our world. What do we see? What's going on in our world? The same thing that went on in the garden in the opening pages of the Bible. By the time we got to Genesis 6, God looked at the world that He created and the destructiveness of choices people were making in real time. And in Genesis 6:5, it says "*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was continually evil.*" And so the Lord judged His creation with a world-wide flood. He preserved Noah and his family, a righteous man. Noah and his family survived the flood. The Lord covenanted with Noah to bless and to flourish his family.

And that covenant that the Lord made with Noah is in anticipation of the ultimate covenant God would make with humanity. The crown jewel of all covenants in the Bible is the cross of Jesus Christ, where Jesus would deal with sin by becoming our sin. The sinless Son of God, God so loved He gave, and in His grace and His goodness, He gives His own Son, so that through faith in Jesus Christ, we can become daughters and sons of God, that we can be forgiven of our sin.

There is a coming judgment. Jesus suffered our judgement on the cross. Those who have confessed faith in Jesus Christ and because of His death and our confession of faith in Him, we are forgiven of sin, and He, in an ultimate sense, became our judgement, so that we are secure in Christ, so that when we stand before God, because of Jesus, we're embraced into the presence of God. But there is still a coming judgement for everyone, and that coming judgement is yet future, and all will be judged for what we have done in the body, whether good or bad. But we will be pronounced forgiven because of the judgement that Jesus has already paid for us. And those who are outside of Christ incur the judgement that is coming on themselves.

That's yet future. But even now, right now, in this moment, we still experience God's judgement. Even though we are forgiven of sin, and as believers we are no longer slaves to sin, we still incur God's judgement as His people for God's purposes. And that's what we find in our passage, in I Peter 4. We're going to look

at verse 12-19. God creates in us a new person. He is creating a new people. We are called the household of God. And one of the tools that God uses to shape us more like Him is the refining fire of His discipline, of His judgement, in the way of fiery trials.

So check out I Peter 4, let's read 12-19. *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on You. Make sure that none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or as an evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but he is to glorify God in this name. For it is time for judgement to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."*

Peter is writing to a group of believers who had come face-to-face with some really ugly and difficult things. Whether that difficulties were just the normal mortality of the body that is attached, or that has the consequences of death because of sin, or the difficulties and trials that we experience because of our own sin, or the sin of others, or the trials that they were increasing because of increasing hostility to Jesus Christ. Because of the hostility toward Christ that was then attached to the followers of Christ, so if you went public about Jesus, then you experienced and you incurred that painful trial and suffering.

1 Peter 4:12-19, we see God on the move. We see God at work in a broken world, and these words give us perspective about the purpose of trials, and the temporary nature of trials, and what our Creator-- how He is faithful to continue creating a new person, a new people, a new church.

What do we know about fiery trials? Well, first, in verse 12, fiery trials are common to followers of Jesus Christ. Let's read verse 12 again: "*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.*"

The very opening line of verse 12, there are two ideas that don't seem compatible, at least to those who don't know Christ. We're called "*beloved.*" We are loved by God. How can God love us and still purpose fiery trials like this? Well, it's for our good and for His glory in shaping and creating. That's why we can entrust our souls to our faithful Creator, because He is going to be faithful to create.

But the opening word is the most-- it is the most important of words to remember whenever we're in a fiery trial. And that is, that we're loved, by God! By no less than God! And, if we doubt that, then we'll interpret God through the difficult experience, rather than interpreting the difficult experience through the truth of God - that He loves us, that He is intentional about shaping us to become increasingly like Jesus Christ. If we don't believe we're loved by God, then, when life gets hard - and it will get hard - we'll curl up inside ourselves in self-pity, and we'll wonder, "Why doesn't God love me?" We'll think that, if God loves us, He's going to do things that, in that moment, we find easy, or we like, and not those things that we would rather avoid.

We are loved by God! He loves us so much that He gave His son so that we can become daughters and sons of God. You're loved.

So first, fiery trials are common to followers of Jesus Christ. There is nothing new about fiery trials. And, in the hands of our faithful Creator, they are purposeful. In Proverbs 27:21, fire is a means of testing the purity of gold and silver. So here, when Peter talks about this fiery trial, it's for the purpose of testing. And in that testing, it shows the evidence, or it shows the quality, or it shows the nature, of our relationship with Jesus Christ. It shows us how we're not yet like Christ; it can

convict us of our sin; make us ask and answer hard questions. And in the difficulty, when we rely on Him, then it shows the kind of relationship-- and strengthens our relationship to depend on Him, so that we can find God's good purposes behind painful experiences.

So first, fiery trials are common to followers of Jesus Christ.

Second, fiery trials, for the sake of Jesus, have a profound, and even in some ways unexpected, result, and that's God's abundant blessings poured out on us.

And what are those blessings? Well, check out chapter 4, verses 13 and 14. *"But to the degree that you share the suffering of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice, with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed..."* Why? *"because the Spirit and glory of God rests on you."*

When we follow Christ, we will naturally share in the sufferings of Christ. Jesus did for us what we can't do for ourselves. His death was the death that really only He could die. Only Jesus lived the perfect life. Only Jesus could die and atone for us. His death was unique. But we share in the sufferings of Jesus when we say "yes" to Him, identify with Him, associate with Him, as we're public about our love and devotion for Him, as we're public about His ways and His words. We share in the sufferings of Jesus when we take up our cross and follow Him. We share in the sufferings of Jesus when we die to ourselves, when we're faithful to Him in the messiness of our broken world.

And when we suffer for Him, with Him, we have cause to rejoice. In a way, suffering with Jesus confirms that we're following Jesus. We don't seek suffering to find Jesus, but when we seek Jesus, we will share in His suffering. And if we can rejoice in Jesus in this moment, the day is coming, when He returns in His glory, when our joy will be too great for a vocabulary, when we will exult; we will rejoice beyond words. And, for my part, I expect that when I finally see Jesus Christ, I'll

wish I would have loved Him more than I did before I died! He is so much more, so much greater. So that if we rejoice in this moment of difficulty, trusting that right now is not beyond His providence, His loving care and shepherding us as a faithful Creator who is making us someone we never have been, and we're becoming someone-- three years, four years, five years-- we're becoming someone new until finally, we see Him and do become fully like Him.

One of the earliest histories of Rome was written by a guy who was born in the first century, and he describes what life was like in Rome in the first century when Peter was writing this letter. Peter wrote the letter from Rome. And this ancient historian spoke of Christians, and he called them-- he didn't like them-- he called them "a group of people despised by the populous." They were called "Christians." And they were called "Christians" because they were named after Christ, who was crucified by Pontius Pilate. So now they bear the name "Christian." It is the name of a person who has said "yes" by faith to Jesus Christ. It doesn't necessarily mean that anymore. "Christian," to some people, is ethnic, or it's the country that you were born in, the west, or born in the east.

A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ. So, to call oneself a Christian, is to bear the name, to identify with the name of the Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself.

So the Christians in the first century were reviled; they were despised. There was incredible resistance to the Gospel. It was satanically inspired persecution and suffering, and it continued into the second and third century. And believers who bore the name of Jesus Christ, they were faithful to suffer for Him courageously. They cared for the poor, the weak, and the needy. They rescued babies that were left outside, to expose the baby to the elements so that the baby would die. And believers rescued them; they adopted them; they brought them into their homes; they helped others. And it caught the attention of a watching world, and it was such a winsome witness that people became followers of Jesus Christ, and they thought, "We can see the work and the power of God and the Gospel of God advancing,"

because of the name of Christians. Because they lived according to the name, to their Founder, to the One they loved, to the One who died.

It is so important, as we go public about the name of "Christian" and "follower of Christ," that we're honest, we admit we're fallen, flawed, broken, not yet who we will be, but by God's grace we're not who we once were. So that people can see at least the integral honesty as we say "yes" to God, and as we represent the name of Jesus Christ.

Peter says when you are "*reviled for the name of Jesus Christ, you are blessed.*" And that blessing is wrapped up in God's nearness. For my part, some experiences are so difficult that we can wonder, "God what are you up to? I'm not feeling really loved right now." But we are. There is another response that we can have, and that is, when it gets really hard, we can feel all alone. And we're not. In Christ, when we live for Christ, we are never alone. So that, in that moment of fiery trial, Peter says the Spirit of God's glory rests in you.

When we confess Jesus, He gives us His Spirit. But Peter is talking here about obedience and faithfulness to Jesus in profound moments when we suffer for the name of Jesus. In a special way, we experience God's Spirit, His nearness, in ways that help us to do what we could never do on our own.

It's normal for us to worry about tomorrow. It's normal for us to dread the next hard thing. But God's promise is not that we won't experience hard things tomorrow, but that when we experience hard things and we lean into Jesus Christ in obedience to Him, we know that God is near and that God's Spirit is resting on us, that He is sufficient in that moment, in that next hard thing for us to obey Him and to say "yes" to Him. And it reminds me of II Corinthians 12:9, when the apostle Paul says the same thing in different words. "*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.*" When we wrap ourselves with the name of Jesus, the Spirit of glory rests on us, provides for us.

What do we know about fiery trials? Thirdly, fiery trials are the birth pangs of God's coming judgement. That's in verses 15-18.

There is a kind of suffering that is occasioned by our own sinful actions. Wrong-headed actions, sinful actions against God, against other people-- self-inflicted suffering. Verse 15, *"Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler."* This is not an exhaustive list of sin. It is a for-instance, that as we disobey God in any and every way, in anything called sin, that it can occasion our own real-world consequence.

But in the hands of God, that's where a fiery trial has a purifying effect. A purifying effect, an eye-opening, wake-up, "do you see what you're doing against God and against others"-- so that we repent, confess, renew, embrace, follow Jesus Christ again with a whole heart, and a giving of ourselves to Him in any and every way. But when we suffer because we bear the name of Christ, as a Christian-- look at verse 16. *"If anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name."* To glorify God, God does in us what only God can do, so that when we obey Him in this humble faithful obedience, it glorifies God in the name of Jesus Christ, so that we wear the name of Christ, "Christian"-- we wear in rightly and well. It glorifies God who is at work in our world, so that our actions in the name of Christ point to the power and love and goodness of Jesus Christ.

There is a coming judgement. An ultimate judgement, but for those in the room, those of us who have confessed our faith in Jesus-- we are part of the household of God. We're part of His church. There is a judgement for us that has already begun. It starts with us, and then this judgement moves outward. Verse 17. *"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey...?" "...Who do not obey the gospel of God?"*

"Household of God?" That's us. "But," you say, "Jesus already bore our judgement on the cross. He already died for us, so in what sense are we still judged?" Well, we

are forgiven of sin, and we are no longer slaves to sin, but we still sin. We're tempted to sin; we confess our sin; we're forgiven of sin. And sin is self-destructive, and sin distorts the image of God in us, and it keeps us from becoming more like Christ. So here, in verse 17, the judgement that has already begun is God's purifying judgement, or the refiner's fire.

Reminds me of Hebrews 12:10, which tells us that God is our loving Father, and our loving Father disciplines us for our good. And what is our good? So that we can share His holiness. So that God's judgment starts with His children and spreads outward. So that we're saved by the life and death of Jesus on the cross. So that in difficult times we lean into Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of God rests on us.

But if you don't know Jesus, you go through life alone. You're on your own. You're on your own during the hard times. You face mortality alone, and you face God's judgement alone. You reject Christ, you get what you want, you don't have Christ, and that makes you alone forever. Verse 18, *"If it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?"*

So thank God for Jesus Christ, because in Christ and Christ alone, we have life right now and life forever. But the outcome for the godless person who rejects Jesus is the rightful judgement of God for their own sin, their own stuff.

What do we know about fiery trials? Well, fourth, we can fully trust our faithful Creator even when we suffer. Verse 19, *"Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."*

Our soul-- our soul is who we really are. Our soul is what makes us us. Our soul is eternal, but for now our soul lives in this house we call a body. Our body is pretty amazing, created by God. For now, this life, our soul resides in our body. But one day, our body will die, and those who have Christ will be with Christ. But, for now, our soul resides within us. And when we suffer in our body and in our relationships,

we can shrink back with our soul, with who we are, and we can withdraw from God, and we can turn from Him, and we can harden to Him, and become indifferent to Him. It results in a shriveling of the soul.

Peter exhorts us to trust our soul-- to trust our soul with our faithful Creator. When we suffer according to the will of God, the presence of the Spirit of God rests on us so that we're not alone, so that God will use the moment to make us more like Him, because He is the faithful Creator, and that's what He does! He creates! So, you can trust Him with your soul, because He's going to create and shape and make the obedient follower of Jesus increasingly like Jesus Christ. So, in the moment that we'd rather not be in, that's the moment for us to trust the One we know, who's up to something that only He can do in creating us to be more like His Son.

C. S. Lewis connected pain and suffering. He connected pain and suffering with the love of God. And he wrote in his book called *The Problem of Pain*-- he wrote, "We may wish indeed that we were of so little account to God that left us alone to follow our natural impulses, that He would give over trying to train us into something so unlike our natural selves. But once again, we are asking not for more love, but for less. To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God."

Our God is our faithful Creator. No matter what rattles and shakes the foundations of our world, of our nation, God is faithful; He is Creator; He is up to something; He is creating us into a new you. He's not yet done with us, creating us into someone who is more like Him. So, we can trust Him with all that we are.

In a couple of weeks, we're going to be in I Peter 5, and I want to end with I Peter 5:7, where you have the word "cares" repeated. "*Casting all our cares on Him, because He cares for you.*" Let's entrust our soul to our faithful Creator because He cares for us.

Will you bow with me please?

Heavenly Father, thank You that You are so persistent in Your faithfulness, that You are faithful to show Your mercy every morning. How great is Your faithfulness. Thank You that You have sent Your Son. Thank You, Jesus, for loving the Father and loving us, and for living the life that we should have lived and have failed miserably to live. Thank You for this salvation we have in Your name. Thank You for the victory we can experience with Your Spirit and obedience to You. For the good You've given to us, and the good You've worked in us, and the good that is yet future for us in this world. Jesus, we do look forward to seeing You so that we can rejoice with exaltation. Help us to so trust You in this moment and the days to come, that we can rejoice right now where we are because of Jesus. Amen.

Ben Rico:

Amen. As God alone ordains the discipline of those He calls His children, let us humbly obey and trust Him on that road, that He will be faithful to hold us fast so that we might glorify Him at every turn. Let us cling to Him as He holds on to us.

[music: "He Will Hold Me Fast"]

Amen. Cling to Christ as He holds on to you. And go in peace.