

Sermon Draft

Text: 2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1

Sermon: “Hang In and Hang On to Jesus”

The Old Testament Reading and Gospel from Genesis and Mark coincide in that the evil one is at work, and once peaceful homes are divided. It is meet and right that the Psalm use language that conveys the voice of the broken heart *“Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!”* (Psalm 130:1–2).

The Epistle is of a modified continuous reading of four different letters during the Pentecost season. This pericope presents the resurrected Jesus as the one who will bring all the broken to him, for they know that when their earthly home (the body) is totally destroyed, they have an eternal building from God.

Paul begins his second letter to the Church at Corinth with a brief reminder that he is an apostle by God’s will (1:1), not man’s will. He lauds the ministry into which he was called by the mercy of God (4:1).

The use of the first person plural (we) is not to create walls between the apostolic office and the hearers. The apostle Paul and all who share in the ministry (Timothy, Silvanus, Titus, etc.) are neither above the church nor outside the church. They are in the church. They are not called only as saints; they are called as “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

There is nothing as devastating as division. It was a great burden of the apostle Paul. He saw the Church at Corinth, of which he was truly the “father,” divided. Some were of Cephas, some of Apollos. Some said they followed Paul. Another group said they were of a new spirit, a free spirit. Suddenly, everything became “open questions.” Can’t a man marry his father’s wife? Can’t brothers in the faith sue in court? Can’t we divorce? Can’t brothers eat food sacrificed to pagan idols? Can’t women and men pray in any covering they deem acceptable? Can’t we believe whatever we want about the Lord’s Supper? Issues like these can divide and destroy churches.

They can *break* hearts, and they can also cause shepherd and sheep to *lose* heart, to say, “The world is getting worse. Evil wins all the battles. What’s the use?”

Not quite. Yes, the devil does win battles, and afflictions do weigh heavy on us, and our own sinful nature seems not to improve. However, do not lose heart. These things are temporary. They will pass away. They are not eternal. Adam and Eve suffered when kicked out of the Garden of Eden, but they came to repentance. Jesus’ family was divided from him early in his ministry but was of one accord (Acts 1:14) after the ascension.

As your pastor I preach and teach, “Don’t lose heart. Keep looking ahead. Suffering is short. Glory is eternal.” I do this knowing of the faith that has been poured into you, so that rather than losing heart, in faith we speak, we suffer, we anticipate.

In faith as Paul writes we speak, we share our faith. The same faith as those who have gone before us, the saints who have preceded us. Paul had the same spirit of faith as Noah, Abraham, David, Isaiah.

We have the same spirit of faith as Paul . . . and as our Lord himself. They looked for things they didn't yet see with their eyes. We often have only God's promises in Scripture to go on. But we do have that! We know God raised Jesus from the dead, and we also have his promise that he will raise us (4:14).

Faith that God had raised Jesus and that he will raise all his believers moves the saints to speak. Paul and the other apostles just couldn't keep silent! They traveled the world and even went to their deaths spouting the resurrection. How can we not tell a dead and dying world about the life we believe Jesus won for all people? Look at the world around us especially right here in our own country, people need to hear the truth, they need to hear about Jesus. There is so much false narrative out there it is up to us through the power of the Holy Spirit to share God's Word of truth. We speak for their sakes (4:15).

In faith, we speak and we suffer (4:16). There's perhaps no greater evidence of the faith of the early Christians than that they were willing to suffer for it.

Paul and countless others were killed for their believing in Jesus. They could have saved their necks by renouncing him. But they went to crosses, flames, the arena, the sword (4:8–11; 6:4–5; 11:23–27). And why? Because they were that certain Jesus had risen and would raise them (1 Cor 15:32).

Yes even today, we face plenty of sufferings that could cause us to lose heart. In our Baptism, we were united with Christ, died with him, so that we will suffer with him. If not lions and crosses, then rejection, isolation, mocking. All for speaking the truth of God's Word, for sharing the Gospel. So, can our faith also endure such sufferings? It can if—and because—we anticipate.

In faith, we anticipate (4:17–5:1). Jesus went to the cross believing that God would raise him. We have hope and look forward that glorious event. Jesus' afflictions were anything but light; they were the full punishments of hell for the sins of the entire world. An eternity of sufferings were compressed into hours of time. But they were not forever. God did raise him.

We also look beyond the transient, the earthly, the seen, to a greater weight of glory. Anticipate! Heaven will be beyond all comparison, and it will be forever. Streets paved with gold, living and being in the presence of God, no illness, no pain all gone. Then just perfect peace, joy and happiness. And it will be forever; we will see that today's afflictions were but momentary! So, do not lose heart! You have been united to Jesus. In his death. In his resurrection. By Baptism. In Jesus name,

Amen