Easter 7 1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11
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Rejoice in Your Ascended Lord!
I. As you suffer for His sake.
II. As you humbly live under Him.

Dear Christian friends, and especially you **Caleb/Brady**,

Last Thursday was **Ascension Day**. **Today** we're finally able to **be back** in church. We have your confirmation too! AND we have these verses from 1 Peter.

HOW can we possibly tie all that **together**? Peter does that for us. Peter is here talking to us about our DAILY CHRISTIAN lives. He makes it so clear that IT'S NOT and it WON'T **be easy** to be or stay a Christian. The devil is after us ***"like a roaring lion."*** The world hates God and what God says. Our sinful natures **don't want** to be Christians. Sounds real encouraging, doesn't it? PERFECT VERSES for your confirmation!

They are perfect for today and they are encouraging too. Peter makes us all FACE UP to **real life** in our **real world** and Peter shows us that we do that with OUR EYES ON our **ascended Lord**. So for you today as **you're confirmed** in your Christian faith – for all of us as we CONTINUE our **Christian walk** in a world more and more **anti**-Christian - Peter encourages us all - REJOICE IN YOUR ASCENDED LORD! **Rejoice** in Jesus 1)as you suffer **for His sake** and 1)**as** you humbly live **under Him**.

I. As you suffer for His sake.

We know the FACTS of Jesus' ascension. REJOICE in what they mean! Jesus' ascension proclaims His MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. Jesus had come to ***"seek and to save that which was lost – to take away the sin of the world – to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light."*** With His perfect life – His innocent death on the cross – His triumphant resurrection from the dead Jesus has DONE JUST THAT. All sins of **all people** have been fully paid for. Heaven's doors stand wide open. Jesus could NOW GO HOME – His work done. Before He left Jesus gave us this promise. ***"In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and take you to be with Me."*** With a promise like that what a REASON TO REJOICE!

Our Lord **now** "sits at right hand of God the Father almighty." Jesus is not sitting around TWIDDLING His thumbs **waiting** for Judgment Day. Our Lord is FIRMLY in control and He's working all things **according** to HIS PLANS and promises. **Much of life** may be out of our hands but we are SAFE IN the hands of Him who **is in charge**. With comfort like that what a REJOICE TO REJOICE!

REJOICE – but understand that's not God's promise of an EASY life. EVIDENTLY these Christians had forgotten that. Peter reminds them, ***"Dear friends, do not be surprised by the fiery trial that is happening to test you, as if something strange were happening."*** These Christians were SHOCKED – UPSET – CONFUSED by what was happening to them. **If Jesus** is now at God's right hand in control of **all** things then WHY were all these bad things happening to them?

Peter explains our sufferings in this life. **First** he distinguishes between sufferings we DESERVE and suffering FOR JESUS' SAKE. There is a world of difference between the two! ***"Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or as a meddler."*** If we do something wrong we have NO REASON to **complain** if we get punished. We had it COMING.

If however we suffer FOR JESUS' SAKE we shouldn't complain either! Then we REJOICE in our ascended Lord. ***"Rejoice whenever you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted in connection with the name***

of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Do not be ashamed, but praise God."

Peter doesn't deny that this suffering HURTS. He calls it ***"the fiery trial."*** Nobody enjoys going through that. But don't complain – don't WALLOW in self-pity – REJOICE in your **ascended** Lord!

The devil has learned that ***"sufferings"*** and ***"insults"*** are POWERFUL WEAPONS. We want to avoid ***"sufferings."*** Nobody likes to be **called** WEIRD or different. Peer pressure is **powerful** and NOT JUST on young people! Yet with our Christian faith and **morals** we are OUT OF STEP with the world. **As Christians** we can't go along with the world's WARPED MORALS and ways **as if** there was nothing wrong with them.

We shouldn't ***"be surprised"*** when people MAKE FUN of us for our **Christian faith** and values. **As Christians** we ARE different. We have a whole different set of **morals** and values and priorities in life. We should expect **ridicule** and **rejection** as our world becomes EVER MORE ANTI-Christian. If we weren't trying to be faithful to God and His Word we wouldn't have those problems. If you KEEP QUIET about your **faith** people won't pick on you. But we CAN'T **keep quiet**. So we end up suffering FOR JESUS' SAKE.

We suffer – and REJOICE! We have our ASCENDED Jesus. He suffered and LOOK AT HIM **now**! There's no need for us to ***"be ashamed"*** or **embarrassed** about our Christian faith. ***"Rejoice whenever you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed."*** We can rejoice in our **sufferings for Jesus** because we have His promise to come again. Our sufferings won't last FOREVER but heaven will. So we are promised, ***"If we endure, we will also reign with Him."*** Or again, ***"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."***

Our ASCENDED Lord is ruling over **all** things. He has promised to **return** for us. That's our comfort and hope. **In the meantime** REJOICE…

II. As you humbly live under Him.

"Therefore humble yourselves under God's powerful hand." "Humble" yourselves UNDER God. We are not God's EQUALS. We are God's dear children but we are not God's BOSSES. Humility rules out **complaining** or **arguing** with God. If we ARGUE with God we're acting **as if** GOD DOESN'T KNOW what He's doing – **as if** we're smarter than God. That's pretty stupid, isn't it? If we COMPLAIN **we're saying** we deserve better than whatever. That's pretty ridiculous. **If** I ever think God OWES ME BETTER than what I have then **it's time for me** to take another look at myself and my life in that MIRROR of God's law. When we're honest about all our sins well be GRATEFUL FOR ANYTHING God does for us and gives to us.

"Humble yourselves under God's powerful hand." That's **not** a groveling, degrading humility. To live humbly under God **is a life** of GRATEFUL DEPENDENCE on God. It's being confident of GOD'S WILL and **ways** even when we **don't understand** them. We ***"humble ourselves under God's powerful hand"*** TRUSTING that ***"He will lift us up at the appointed time."*** We ***"cast all our anxiety on Him, because He cares for us."*** We have our share of cares, worries, fears, problems. We're often NOT SURE what to do. We don't have ALL the **answers**. We can't fix every **problem**. That can make for an ULCER or SLEEPLESS NIGHTS. "Give up," Peter tells us. "Give up ON YOURSELVES. Give it ALL UP TO GOD." ***"Cast all your cares on Him."*** Dump it all **in God's lap** and let God figure it out.

We can humbly do that ***"because He cares for us."*** Jesus is the ULTIMATE PROOF of God's **love** for us. How can we ever doubt or **question** God's love or care? We ***"humble ourselves"*** under God and we see Jesus who ***"humbled Himself"*** to be our Savior. Look again at what we've seen this **first**

half of the church year. Jesus – the eternal Son of God born our **brother** and **Savior** in Bethlehem. Jesus living for us the life of **perfect love, trust** and **obedience** that we owed God. Jesus suffering and dying on the cross to PERSONALLY PAY for every one of our sins. Jesus rising triumphant from the dead and sharing His victory with us. And NOW Jesus ascended into heaven to ***"prepare a place for us"*** – Jesus ruling all things for our good – Jesus one day soon returning to take us home to heaven. Oh, God cares for us – and **because He does** we now enjoy His forgiveness and confidently look forward to eternal life in heaven.

Now we HUMBLY live ***"under"*** Jesus. ***"Be self-controlled and alert,"*** Peter tells us. We are not to BE CONTROLLED by our **bodies** or by **others** but are to be in control of our bodies – our desires, **language**, et. We are to be ***"alert"*** – ON GUARD – because ***"our adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."*** The devil is our ***"adversary"*** – ENEMY – not the friend he **pretends** to be. He's after us. You DON'T MESS AROUND with him.

"Resist him by being firm in the faith." The devil is out to destroy our faith in Jesus. **He knows** that if we can get us away from Jesus – away from Jesus' Word and **house** and **table** – he HAS US. If he can get whatever to COME BETWEEN Jesus and us – we're done for. The ONLY WAY to ***"resist"*** the devil and ***"be firm in the faith"*** is BY STAYING IN God's Word.

Resist the devil – live humbly under Jesus - and ***"after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you."*** The devil wants us to SEE GOD as mean – **cruel** – UNFAIR, UNLOVING. That's just not true! God is ***"the God of all grace."*** **In grace** God loves us – forgives us – watches over us – answers all our prayers – works everything for our good – promises us heaven. We need God's help **every day** and **every day** God IS RIGHT THERE for us.

Our present sufferings are only for ***"a little while."*** God ***"has called us into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus."*** Trusting in our ASCENDED Lord Jesus we look forward to eternal life in heaven. We handle life now with our EYES FIXED on our **ascended** Lord. We find our joy in His **promises** and **protection**. That's what you NEED TO HEAR as **you're confirmed** today. That's what we ALL NEED to hear! Amen.

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