

*From today's Epistle Lesson:*

*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

In the opening statement of the Epistle, we see two bookends of the Christian experience, that is to say, (1) the sufferings of this present time and (2) the glory that shall be revealed. As we sojourn through this transitory life, often times, we focus too much on the present time. Instead of setting our minds on things above, we choose to instead focus on the sufferings of the present time. However, if we hear the words of the Apostle Paul this morning, we will see how foolish it is to have such a focus. We will see how we have so much to be joyful over, even now in our present sufferings.

This morning, we ought to rejoice because, as Saint Paul makes clear to us, our current sufferings cannot compare to the glory that is both (1) in us now and (2) shall be manifested more fully, when, we, as the sons of God, receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.

Hear the words of Saint Paul this morning, as he boldly proclaims that "the sufferings of this present time are *not worthy* to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." Think about that for a second...If this is true, if our sufferings are not worthy, if they pale in comparison so drastically to the glory which shall be revealed in us, why then do we spend so many hours of the day focusing upon them? Why do we chose to live in the reality of defeat when our reality is the victory of the Son of God?

We ought to take Saint Paul's statement very seriously today. For, as we know, Saint Paul suffered much for the sake of the Gospel. His words are not a glib utterance from the lips of an inexperienced wolf in sheep's clothing...no, his are the words of an Apostle..the words of one who suffered for the faith, even unto death.

Saint Paul did not suffer for nothing. He suffered so that he could be among those who will be manifested as the glorious sons of God. You see, Saint Paul understood that the glory of God dwells even now within the faithful, though they suffer much as they await the redemption of their bodies and their manifestation as the sons of God.

In one of his epistles to the Corinthians, Saint Paul describes some of his sufferings. He does this not because he wants to focus upon his sufferings more than the glory that dwells within him, but because is defending the authenticity of his apostleship. Paul connected his suffering directly to his authenticity as an apostle. In that epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Paul compares himself to false-apostles and claims that he is "...in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." He goes on to say...

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

I don't know about you...but my sufferings pale not only in comparison to the glory that dwells within me, but to the sufferings of so many Christians, who, like Saint Paul, undergo persecution for the sake of the Gospel. All of us here at Saint John's have so much to be thankful for, even though we suffer in this present time...We must ask ourselves honestly, are we giving thanks to God for the glory that dwells within us? Are we looking forward to our manifestation as the sons of God? Or, are we instead, choosing to focus on our sufferings, which pale in comparison to the glory that awaits us?

If we are still for a moment today, if we lend our ear to the Son of God, we can hear Him as the Suffering Servant say unto us, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

We will have tribulation in this world...we will suffer in this life...but as those who have the glory of God within them, we join in the song of the saints, crying out, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death. And upon those in the tomb, bestowing life.” Brethren, the light of the victorious resurrection shines upon our faces. May we let it warm our hearts, even now, as we are afflicted by the sufferings of this present time.

As Christians we have an obligation to be joyful. We have an obligation to rejoice because of the salvation that has been given to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. And this rejoicing, this joy, is mandatory, even in our present sufferings. It is true that different days of our lives have different degrees of suffering and that we undergo different struggles at different times with different weights of gravity.

But it is a fact of the Catholic faith that these sufferings cannot compare with the glory that is to come...and that this glory is already in us and accomplishing the work of our salvation. It is for this manifestation of glory that we join with the whole creation, groaning and travailing in pain together, awaiting that glorious day when all will be made well...all will be made whole.

We would be wise to remember the words of Saint John today, the patron saint of our parish who offers the harmony to Paul's melody.

SERMON – THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY – 14 JULY 2019

St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Father Tyler W. Phass

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Saint John says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

With Saint Paul, Saint John the Evangelist affirms the Catholic understanding of salvation: That even though we presently suffer...even though we do the things we do not want to do...even though life hurts and our souls are heavy, as Baptized Christians, we have the first fruits of the Spirit, and, thus, the hope and joy of the resurrection. We are being healed by Jesus Christ.

It is not yet manifested what we shall be, but we know that, when the Lord Jesus Christ appears, we shall be like Him. This is the good news of the Gospel. This is our salvation. That one day, we will be made whole...we will receive the adoption of the sons of God when our bodies shall be raised from the dead to die no more. On that day, our faces will shine with the radiance of the light of Christ.

Today, may you give thanks to God, even in light of your sufferings...for he has chosen you for his beloved children and has given unto us His beloved Son, so that we may learn from our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the saints who follow in His most holy steps, what it means to suffer unto glory.

*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*