



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

91 – Imitation in Suffering

Announcements:

10/25 @7:30 -

Prayer

10/26 @6:30 -

Grace Group

10/29 @8:30 -

Sunday School

10/29 @6:00 -

Family Night

GAME NIGHT!

ICE BREAKER: In a “good news, bad news” situation, which would you want to hear first, and why?

There are some things that I love to preach because they are easier; things like the hope of the gospel, the assurance of salvation, the goodness and mercy of God would fall into this category. But then there are 4 other things that are much more difficult. One of the points that we covered on Sunday, that we are to imitate Christ, **EVEN IN HIS SUFFERING** most assuredly falls into the second category. Contrary to what you may think of me, I don't like to be the one that says: life will be hard, you will suffer. I would much rather talk about the fun and things! With that being said, we cannot back down from what Scripture says, and this topic is no different. In fact, Scripture is filled with exhortations of this very thing, and what we can see is that there are many reasons that we might face suffering. So today we are going to look at just a few different ones.

READ: Colossians 1:24-25

Here Paul says something that sounds very strange, and is something that most of us would struggle to ever say with complete honesty: “I **rejoice** in my sufferings for your sake!” Moving past *that* he would say it, we can dive into *why* he would say it. First we note that it is “for the sake of his body, that is, the church”. So the first thing to note is that Paul is willing to not just suffer, but to rejoice in that suffering, if it is done for the sake of the church. But what in particular is the suffering for the church doing? It is “making the word of God fully known”! (the NIV here is also helpful, they translate this passage “present to you the word of God in its fullness”). In other words, for the sake of the thing he loves (the church) that is filled with people he loves, he is willing to endure. So if we ask: why must I imitate Christ even in his suffering? The answer in this passage is that it may be helping the church know more fully the word of God. While this does not take away the suffering, or lessen the pain, it can give hope that God is using it to reach others.

DISCUSS: How can we foster a mindset like Paul has here?

READ: James 1:2-4

Here James, the brother of Jesus, gives us another reason that we can rejoice (here “count it all joy”) when trials come our way. It is so that we can be more like Christ. Here is the case we are building: We imitate Christ in suffering so that others may *hear* the word. Then we imitate Christ in suffering so that we can better *be like* the WORD (a.k.a. Jesus). Sure suffering is difficult, but the case that James lays out is not just a simple “you will be better”. James says that as we endure, and as we go through these things we will eventually be “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing!”. Even in saying this, it is important that we don't just use thoughts like this to shrug off the pains and trials and sufferings that we all experience. These are real things, but they are not **POINTLESS** real things, and that is our hope. One of the ways that we can think about this is that a huge goal (being “holy as he is holy”) requires a huge tool to get there.

DISCUSS: How can knowing that these things are working in us better help us endure whatever it is that we are going through? What hope do we have when we cannot see this immediately (or sometimes worse, see *how* it will work)?

READ: Romans 8:15-18

For the final layer of the case we are making here we can say something like this: we endure so that others hear the word, we endure so that we may be made like the word, and we endure so that we may **GLORY** in the word! In this thought Paul is taking us beyond here and now, beyond even who we will be this side of eternity and is calling us to “suffer with him in order that we may be glorified in him”. So here, part of why we imitate Christ in his suffering is that in doing so we are also sharing in his glory. The most basic way to think of this is that we get **ALL** of Christ when we come to him, and as we have seen over the past few weeks (and will continue to see in the rest of Matthew) there is a lot of suffering in his life, but this will culminate in his greatest glory: the resurrection. That is our hope too! The other way to look at it is where Paul goes in verse 18 by having us do some quick calculus: (Temporary suffering) < (future (heavenly) glory). It sounds simple, but it is true.

DISCUSS: How can future hope help us with present suffering? How can we maintain this sort of mindset?