

# Presbyterian Church of Henderson

Worship Service 10:30 AM

May 17, 2020 - Church Facebook Page

## Piano Prelude

Kristin Jones, Director of Music

## Call to Worship

Bless the Lord, O people, sing!

**Let the sound of praise ring out.**

Come and hear what the Lord has done,

**the Lord who has made everything!**

## Hymn "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

1 My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Refrain:

On Christ, the solid Rock I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.

2 When darkness veils His lovely face,  
I rest on His unchanging grace;  
In every high and stormy gale,  
My anchor holds within the veil.  
(Refrain)

3 His oath, His covenant, His blood  
Support me in the whelming flood;  
When all around my soul gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay.  
(Refrain)

4 When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
Oh may I then in Him be found,  
Dressed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.  
(Refrain)

## Call to Confession

Brother and sisters, God not only asks us to repent, but also assures us of forgiveness. Therefore, let us confess our sins to the one who is steadfast love.

## Prayer of Confession (unison)

**Loving God, we do not always keep your commandments; we fail to love you; our conscience is not clear. Wash us in the water of life that we may live again through the grace and mercy of Jesus, our resurrected Savior. Amen.**

## Assurance of Pardon

Sisters and brothers, God forgives, restores, and strengthens us through the risen Christ. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.

## Passing the Peace

For the Passing of the Peace, I encourage you to pick up your phone, and text someone (in or outsider church family) a blessing like "The peace of Christ be with you" or any words that would bring a blessing into a person's life.

I will give you a minute to do that.

### **Prayer for Illumination**

Come Holy Spirit, our helper and advocate: Open our hearts and minds this day, entice us with your presence. Spark us with a word of life— a message that we may share with others as we seek to live Christ's love in the world. All this we ask in the name of God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us. Amen.

### **First Reading** Acts 17:22-31, Lucy Williams

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

### **Second Reading** 1 Peter 3:13–22, Mark Hardy

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

## SERMON "Living for Christ in Insecure Times"

1 Peter 3:13-22

- This morning we continue in our series called Standing Firm in God's Grace from the book of 1 Peter. Here we find Peter continuing to address those fairly new Christians scattered throughout Asian minor.
- Peter initially celebrates the faith they have in Christ
- Then he calls them to watch their actions
- Then in the main part of his letter, he encourages those who are under persecution and suffering.
- After instruction his readers could love each other in relationships, he goes back to the theme of enduring suffering while doing good.
- *1 Peter 3:8-9 Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing.*
- This morning we are going to approach our text as how God would want us to live our lives during these times of uncertainty and difficulty.

Living for Christ in Insecure Times—

### 1. Honor Christ as Lord

*13 Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? 14 But even if you do **suffer for doing what is right**, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, 15 but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord.*

- Let's work through this section of text backwards, starting from the bottom.
- The word for "sanctify" means to make holy, set apart, to dedicate.
- This means to put Jesus in a category by himself—the highest place, the greatest value, the most supreme treasure, the greatest admiration, the most cherished prize, the one you esteem and honor and love the most out of all persons and all things in the world.
- Why would Peter be saying this?
- In verse 14, "Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but...in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord."
- To sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts is Peter's alternative to fearing people or circumstances.
- How does one do that?
- **KEY: In the midst of the most intense suffering, cling to God.**
- Look at verse 13.
- If Peter's readers are suffering for doing good, he is encouraging them that they are blessed or more well off.
- Rather than allow suffering to bring about anger and resentment because of the unfavorable circumstances, we are to revere God, to worship Him, to cling to Him, to find all your hope and strength in Him.
- Peter is telling his readers to be fearless in these situations because they have the ability to draw near to God by clinging to their faith in Jesus Christ.
- The more a person loves God, our circumstances and problems do not go away, but take on a different perspective.

- Rather than “poor me, I am so oppressed,” our perspective changes to “how can I make Christ the most valued part of my life?”
- Question: Do you turn to God more intimately and closely when circumstances or situations do not go your way?
- The challenge to us, is to Honor Christ as Lord.

Living for Christ in Insecure Times—

## **2. Have Ready Defense**

*Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; 16 yet do it with gentleness and reverence.*

- A person can look at this text, and come to the conclusion that Peter is advocating passivity.
- Passivity is allowing others to do things to you without complaining or pushing back.
- Here is where Peter’s instruction is different from passivity when he says, “Always be ready to make a your defense to anyone who demands it from you”
- For the first time, Peter is calling the early Christians to speak up (when asked).
- Notice, it does not say argue, or bad mouth, or “give them a piece of your mind”
- Peter IS saying that “to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the HOPE that is in you” be ready to articulate.
- Friends, this is at the heart of a person who follows Christ!
- If someone came to you today, and asked in a condescending way, “Why would you even go to church today?!?! Nobody does that anymore!”
- What would you say?
- Remember in the first chapter of 1 Peter 1:3-4; 8-9  
*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...8 Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*
- Peter articulates the faith we have in Christ.
- Based upon Peters words alone in chapter 1, we could talk about mercy, new birth, living hope, Easter, faith, and salvation.
- You cannot tell me you have gone to church all your life, and cannot articulate your faith!
- Maybe we need to start all over and really learn from our Bible studies, or Sunday school classes.
- Friends, Peter is calling us to endure hardship and suffering because all that Jesus has done for us so that we can have life in Him.
- BUT, Notice the way we are to articulate our faith, “yet do it with gentleness and reverence”
- A hope in Jesus Christ is not arrogant, boastful, or obnoxious but our faith is gentle which is one of the fruit of the spirit.
- When we lash out in anger, we push out the spirit of God in our lives, and we demonstrate the opposite of the fruit of the spirit in our lives.

- When we have the spirit of God dwelling in our lives, we demonstrate: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
- So, we are to be able to articulate our faith with gentleness and also “reverence.”
- Reverence carries the idea of fear, respect, intimidation, sense of awe.
- When we cling to the holiness of God, a natural outcome in our speech is reverence or respect
- Peter is teaching us that it is our fear of the Lord that enables us to bear witness in **humility**.
- To have a ready defense is to be prepared, speak with gentleness, and to speak to others with respect.

Living for Christ in Insecure Times—

1. Honor Christ as Lord
2. Have Ready Defense

### **3. Maintain a Clear Conscience**

*Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil.*

- Conscience can be defined as a person’s inner awareness of the moral quality of their actions
- This means that we should live in such a way that we won’t have to keep looking over our shoulder, hoping that the wrong we have done isn’t about to catch up to us.
- What is interesting here is that Peter, of all people, could speak first hand to the idea of conscience.
- Remember when Peter denied know Christ?
- It was his own conscience that failed before the rooster crowed three times.
- It was probably his conscience that plagued him for a long time until Jesus brought restoration to his life on the shore of Galilee when Jesus said, “Peter do you love me?”
- Paul, in the New Testament, also speaks of this “conscience” when he was standing trial after his arrest in *Acts 24:16* *Therefore I do my best always to have a clear conscience toward God and all people.*
- By operating this way, our behavior and words will speak volumes to those around us or those who come against us.
- The witness of a good conscience is crucial for the simple reason Peter states at the end of verse 16: (NIV) “So that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”
- Moving on in verse 17, Peter repeats himself at least a third time how it is better to suffer for doing good than to suffer for doing evil.
- The phrase, “If suffering should be God’s will” affirms the idea that uncomfortable, discomfoting, and even suffering is a part of the life of the believer.
- ILL: Christian apologist and author Lee Strobel, in doing research for his book THE CASE FOR FAITH, once asked Barna researchers and pollsters to conduct a survey to determine the one question most people would want to ask God if given the opportunity.

- "By far, the number one question that people wanted to ask God is 'Why He allows pain and suffering in this world?'"
- Suffering is real, and Peter would simply point to what Jesus Christ has done for us.

#### **4. Know the Significance of Christ**

*18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,*

- Verse 18 give one of the Bible's simplest, brief summaries of the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ.
- This meaning begins with the fact that Christ died.
- The love God expressed through Christ has no value if Jesus Christ did not die physically on the cross. (John 3:16 - For God so loved...)
- Beyond that, his death has no value spiritually except that Christ died for sins
- Our willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ is grounded in the wonder of Christ's willingness to suffer death for our sake.
- In the OT sacrificial system, something had to die so that sin is removed.
- Christ is like a sacrifice to take away sin and cancel sin's effects.
- However, Christ's death served as the perfect sin-offering for the sins of others because he himself was sinless.
- In the OT sacrifices were made repeatedly, but Christ died once and for all, Christ died for "the righteous and for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God."
- Christ died so that humanity can have a direct and immediate relationship with God through is Son, Jesus Christ.
- [Pic of Biola's "Jesus Saves"]



- I went to seminary at Talbot School of Theology which is the graduate school of Biola University.
- Biola is an acrostic for the Bible Institute Of Los Angeles.
- When the campus was in downtown Los Angeles, it faced a major highway with the words, "Jesus Saves" on the side of the building.
- This picture was a way to honor the past history of the school, and to remind students of the history of the institution and its passion to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ.
- The remaining section of the text is probably one of the most difficult passages of Scripture to interpret.
- I am going to call it quits for now, and remind us that—

Living for Christ in Insecure Times—

1. Honor Christ as Lord
2. Have Ready Defense
3. Maintain a Clear Conscience
4. Know the Significance of Christ

### **Offering**

God, the divine giver, gifts us with life and breath and all that is. In gratitude, let us offer our gifts in return for the goodness and grace of God in Christ.

#### **Prayer of Dedication**

O loving God, we give you thanks that you have placed in the hearts of your faithful people the gift of generosity and the desire to keep your commands. Bless these gifts and use them to reveal to all tribes, nations, and peoples your love in Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Affirmation of Faith** (Apostle's Creed)

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

The Lord be with you.

#### **And also with you.**

Let us give thanks to God who listens and gives heed to our prayers.

#### **We praise and we bless you, our true and loving God.**

We pray for all who search for you: may they find their way in you. Bless us with lips that sing your praise and lives that tell the stories of all that you have done for us. Open our eyes to find you among us as we share your love with others.

Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for all who are oppressed by governments or institutions: for those whose voices are not heard or believed, those with no one on their side. Bless us with a joy for justice and the strength to persevere as we work toward your coming realm. Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for all who hunger, and those who worry each day how they will care for their families. Bless us all with meaningful work and fill us with good things, as we love and care for each other and find our sustenance in you. Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for all who suffer the violence and scars of war, for all soldiers and their families, and all who live and serve in war-torn places. Give them courage in the face of fear; in times of trouble, do not let their feet slip. Bless us with your vision of peace, for you have made us one family by giving life and breath to all. Lord in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We remember before you all who have died, and pray for all who will die today, that they may know your peace. Bless us with the gift of faith, that we may know you and love you, and enjoy life eternal shared with you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and now, with confidence as children of God, let us pray:

### **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

### **Hymn** "Be Thou My Vision"

1 Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art--  
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

2 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,  
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,  
Great God of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

3 Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word;  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

### **Benediction**

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace both now and evermore.

### **Piano Postlude** "Soon and Very Soon" by Andy Crouch