**“Enduring the Cross”**

Psalm 119:81-88

Jeremiah 23:16-29

**Hebrews 11:17-31 (32-40; 12:1-3**

Luke 12:49-53 (54-54)

Pentecost 9, August 13/14, 2022

Please hear more from the “faith chapter” of Hebrews: “And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

Things can, often, feel pretty good … until it doesn’t. **Duane Everding’s** dad died this week, so we’re reminded that **flesh** dies ultimately from its frailty, which awaits us. We’ve each (I know) **watched** as an active life turns to something that’s “not that”. And we watch the youth of our children and it almost mocks us, seeing the energy of their bodies … and remember (sort of) what it was like to have such as that, and then hips deteriorate into something arthritic (what God had brilliantly made to be an effective machine of ball and joint that smoothly flexes together). But it loses its smoothness and gets very rough such that it, either, limits our ability to walk and more or we have to replace it with some metal components shoved inside of us after having our bone cut out. **I** don’t like the fact that what God made to be so good and functional has, now (at my young age) became (in me) painful and a hindrance …

**Text**

… yet Jesus **lectures us on** **our** **SURPRISE by the PHYSICAL CORRUPTIONS of the fallenness of this world. They are realities, each, that are 6,000 years mature and building upon the fallen world we’re on. He, though, adds, that we ought not also ever be SURPRISED IN THIS WORLD BY THE “HOSTILITIES” directed at those redeemed in Him … even from family. UNSURPRISED AND ENDURING should always be our posture.**

“**I came** to cast **fire** on the earth, and would that it were already kindled? **I**”, Jesus said, **“have a baptism to be baptized with**, and how great is **My distress until it is accomplished**! Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather **division**. **For from now** **on [even] in one house** there will be five **divided**, three **against** two and two **against** three. They will be **divided**, father **against** son and son **against** father, mother **against** daughter and daughter **against** mother, mother-in-law **against** her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law **against** mother-in-law.”

And here’s where the lecture on our **SURPRISE BY THAT** comes in:

“‘When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, “A shower is coming.” And **so it happens**. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, “There will be scorching heat”, and **it happens**. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but **why do you not know how to interpret the present time?**’” “Do you think that I have come to give **peace on earth?** No, I tell you, but rather **division**.”

Unbelief and rejection is judged by Jesus’ coming, but also in the meantime by His work and words. I know so many with obvious **divisions in their families** and strife … all over Jesus’ **words**. We try to get along, but there is for many these **divisions** that hold true brother and sisterhood at bay … even within **families**. Among **nations** bloody conflicts ensue because of Jesus’ work and words. Egyptian believers were (not long ago) in the news videotaped beheaded by extremists from the Islam doctrine of belief. Brothers and sisters by creation (created, all, by God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) hate each other and take that to war, with Christ crucified and risen he reason for it.

Today, the signs loom of a return by Christ and final judgment on wrong from right. “Wars and rumors of wars” are all around (the signs are there), and Satan’s maybe fully unbound (as He’ll be at the end) deceiving people in mass. These are the “clouds overhead”. Of our young between the age of 15 and 25, 40% (that’s 4 and 0 % / almost half) self-identify as in an LBGT category. The Psalm that we read before the service recounts that “all Your commandments, God, are sure; and they **persecute** **even so close as me with falsehood; help me, Lord!**” I know that many of you (and people you know who are trying to stay faithful to God’s Laws) have family members and loved ones and even others in sympathy tugs that willingly conflict with divine Law. And states (like California) have chosen (I’d heard) to **exclude the Bible from any authoritative place** since it’s so clear that it opposes certain human will. 60% of pastors of churches (of all backgrounds) say only of the Bible that it’s flawed, and they can hedge on its clarity, deceiving hearers to feeling quite fine with dishonesty.

Yet saints before us were **challenged**. Some of the issues may have been the same (no doubt), but many were graphically worse. Some of our challenges might be tougher because they’re less blatant and more subtle, yet “divisions” and “persecutions” affecting, likely, effecting deeper parts of our flesh and blood and soul, and, so, maybe more destructive. “**Abraham**, though, was tested to prepare Isaac as a sacrifice” and learn how God will feel as He actually has to carry that out. **Moses** denied the physical pleasures of being Egyptian royalty to lead God’s chosen people at the cost of his own name and, potentially, life. **A whole nation of people** picked up all their belongings to move quickly away from the only home they’d known, crossing the bottom of an ocean with (on each side of them) massive walls of water held back for the moment miraculously. Then **Gideon, Barak,** Hebrews continues, **Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets** facing lions as dinner entertainment, sharpened swords upon ready to cut their necks, torture (even enduring in those tortures instead of stopping them by denying God), mocked and flogged may were, chained to prison walls, stoned, and even (it says) “sawn in two” by brothers doing those things to (by creation) **brothers and sisters**.

**Application**

And most profoundly, **Jesus**: “Are you able to **drink the cup that I drink**, or to **be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized**?” His father actually “forsook” Him (as He never, ever, would us) because **He became** everything that justice required the Father to **cast away from Himself** …

… and that’s where the last section of Hebrews “faith and faithfulness” chapter rings most beautiful for **our endurance**. **We ought not be surprised by physical death and earthly hostilities because Christ endured them all … all the more**. For those who have gone before us in faithfulness … and even more since Christ has Himself … hear this: “Since we are **surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (present in story and account, but likely also in eyes and presence and watchfulness much like Jesus is)**, “let **us also** lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and **let us run** **with endurance the race that is set before us**, **looking always to Jesus, the Founder and Perfector of our faith**, who **for the joy that was set before Him” (as we have joy and not a dissimilar glory set before us) “endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God**. Consider **HIM** who **endured** **from sinners such** **hostility against Himself**, so that **YOU** may not grow weary or fainthearted.” In +Jesus’ name. Amen.