

1 PETER 5:6 – 7.

(1 Peter 5:6-7)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ

Text: 1 Peter 5:6-7

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because He cares for you.

Dear friends in Christ,

Elections! Love them or hate them, they are a fact of life in a democracy. Candidates are selected from all persuasions: from the Labor Party, to the Liberal and National Parties, to the Greens and independents etc. From the day an election is announced to polling day candidates are on the hustings, hoping to win a seat in Parliament.

So, when in the Book of Acts, Peter told the assembly that '*it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*', in effect he declared the apostolic seat formerly held by Judas Iscariot vacant. Now, there was no vying for the office of apostle since it was up to the assembly to choose. After due consideration it nominated both Joseph (called Barsabbas, also known as Justus) and Matthias on their service.

As it happens, when two or more candidates stand for office, there's an election. ²⁴Then [the disciples] prayed, "*Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen.*" The lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven. Matthias drew the 'short straw' and was called to the office of apostle.

Mind you, neither of these two had it easy: according to tradition, Matthias was stoned and beheaded for his Christian faith; and Joseph, being the Bishop of a small city not far from Jerusalem, was martyred when Vespasian razed it in 68AD.

Having heard how Matthias was called to the apostolic office, would you be surprised if I told you that God has also chosen you to fill an office? Yes, it's true. Each one of you have offices and callings in life where God has chosen you either to serve, or not to serve. So, sometimes you are a Matthias, and at other times you are a Joseph.

However, this can cause problems: sometimes you might long for a calling you don't have, or dislike the calling you do have. Then again, you might be happy with your calling right now and when life gets tough you would rather be in another place. But, as with Matthias, it's you the Lord has chosen ... and His choice is always right.

One of life's ironies is that we find God's choices hard to accept. In good times we relish where He places us, but when society treats us unfairly or persecution raises its ugly head we begin to doubt God's wisdom. The inconvenient truth of Christian life is you shouldn't be shocked to discover that the world is pitted against you. For if it happened to your Shepherd, Jesus, it will happen to you too.

Now, Peter writes, do not be surprised at the painful trials you are suffering (1 Peter 4:12). So don't be surprised that in all your offices and callings in life – be it as a parent or child, a worker or student, married or single, rich or poor, healthy or sick, young or old; a devout member of the Church, or even a pastor – don't be surprised if 'cross and suffering' come your way. So, according to St Peter, if you suffer on account of your actions, repent and change your ways. And if you suffer because others despise you, forgive them! But if you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (1 Peter 4:12-17)

Now, that's a different way of thinking, isn't it? But many Christians take Peter's words of encouragement, 'the Spirit of glory resting on us', to mean that life will be relatively easy and bad things won't happen to us. But the problem is we aren't in eternity yet; the life of glory will come, but only after you have suffered a little while (5:10b).

Don't be anxious, my friends, for as we wait for our Lord's return '*the Spirit of glory and of God*' still '*rests on you*'. This is because you have received Jesus' Spirit in the water and Word of Baptism. However, the glory for which we yearn, and that for which Jesus prayed, are very different. Christ's glory was that, as the chosen One, He went to the cross to fulfil His office as the sin-offering to God, for the sin of the world.

Now, being a sin-offering doesn't sound too glorious, does it? But the glory of the Father is to send His Son to be the offering for our sin so we might not die, but live. And the glory of the Son is that He '*came not to be served but to lay down His life as a ransom for many*' (Matt. 20:28). In other words, God the Father is glorified by Jesus' sacrifice for it shows us that the Father is a giving, loving, and serving God. A God of atonement and forgiveness. Yes, a God who would rather die for you, than live without you!

My friends, this is the Great Exchange. Jesus drinks the cup of wrath and condemnation in your place, so you might drink the cup of blessing (in His blood) that gives you forgiveness of sins, life to conquer death, and salvation instead of condemnation.

Indeed, Christ gives you His body and blood that you may have strength to live in the offices and callings in which God has put you. By the power in His Word and Sacrament our merciful and loving Shepherd gives you strength to lay down your life for others – thereby glorifying God.

Now, the offices or callings in which God places you might not be easy, but He places you there to bless others through your Easter faith. Indeed, God places you there so you might also grow in faith – an Easter faith that lives in the confidence of the empty tomb.

This is what Easter is all about: knowing that your death has been conquered by Jesus' resurrection. And believing that your new life in Christ is joyful and eternal. Amen.

Christ is risen! response... He is risen indeed!

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Ernie Kiss
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