



## Christmas Hope: How Can You Keep On Rejoicing in Suffering?

1 Peter 4:12-19

**Three truths from 1 Peter 4:12-19 to believe them with all your heart:**

1. Believe that God is working, and suffering is not the end. (1 Peter 4:12, 19)
2. Believe that God is with you, and His love for you knows no end. (1 Peter 4:13-14)
3. Believe that God is worthy, and that you can trust Him to the end. (1 Peter 4:15-18)

Sermon Discussion Questions – December 20, 2020

1. Last week, we considered what it means to truly make our lives count for the sake of the spread of the gospel. Did you find yourself re-thinking any personal goals, ambitions, priorities, or desires you may have previously held in order to increasingly make your life count for the gospel?
2. Read 1 Peter 4:12. What 'fiery trials' (either your own or those of others) have you walked through (or, are you walking through)? Describe your understanding or image of God and His whereabouts in those difficulties.
3. Have you ever suffered (e.g., through social isolation or rejection, loss of job or economic opportunity, loss of freedoms, loss of loved ones) specifically for being a Christian or because of your faith? Are you prepared to suffer faithfully and incur losses in the future for being a Christian? If so, what is the basis of your confidence? And if not, what the fears or doubts might be shaping your response? How might the truths from today's message impact your response?
4. Why might it bring us comfort and healing when we talk to or interact with others who have experienced the same kind of suffering or pain that we might be experiencing? Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Like us, Jesus experienced temptation (Mark 1:13), poverty (Matthew 8:20), frustration (John 2:15-16), weariness (John 4:6), disappointment (Luke 13:34), rejection (John 6:66), sorrow (Matthew 26:38), ridicule (Mark 15:19), and loneliness (Matthew 27:46). How might it bring us comfort, healing, and hope knowing that we follow and serve a holy God who sympathizes with the difficulties we often face?
5. In Christ's body, all suffering is shared suffering. Read Isaiah 63:9, Matthew 25:40, Romans 8:16-27, 1 Corinthians 12:22-27, and 1 Peter 4:14. How are you impacted by the reality that you do not bear your suffering alone, but instead that your suffering is shared by the Lord, as well as with other members of His body? How does this reality impact your response to the suffering of others?

6. We learned this week that, even in our suffering, we can be confident that the good, kind, and loving God of the universe is working, building us into something beautiful (1 Peter 4:12, 19; Romans 8:29-30; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2-3). C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* described it this way:

*“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”*

Think back to a previous time of suffering and pain in your life. In what ways did that circumstance or experience draw you closer to the Lord? In what ways did you see the Lord use that circumstance to make you more like Him? Have you been able to thank the Lord for how He worked in you through your suffering and pain?

7. Are you walking through a season of particular pain and suffering right now? If so, how has it been difficult? Have you found yourself questioning God’s purposes or presence in this season? How can your group members support, care for, and encourage you as you walk through this challenging time?
8. Read Psalm 46, Isaiah 9:6-7, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 4:19, and Revelation 19:11. God is the Lord of hosts, Immanuel (which means, “God with us”), the Faithful Creator. In what new and unprecedented way is the Faithful One inviting you to trust Him with your life and circumstances this week? From what we learned this week, what truths will help you to “be still and know that He is Lord” in the days ahead?
9. Is there anyone whom you can invite to watch our Christmas Eve/Day online program, as an opportunity to share the gospel with them? (A trailer that you can share is available on the McLean Bible Church Facebook page). Our virtual program, “The Weary World Rejoices,” will be filled with music and fun for all ages! **Tune in live, every hour on the hour, beginning at Noon on December 24, and all day on Christmas.** The program will offer the opportunity to watch in Korean, Spanish, or Mandarin, as well as in ASL.

If you or someone you know decided to trust in Jesus, or if you have questions about what it means to trust in Him, text the word “decision” to 571-581-6297. We would love to connect with you!