

Sunday June 7, 2020

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Steve Mc)

Welcome everyone to our service this morning, where even though we may be physically apart, we are still able to spend time singing or listening to songs of praise to our God, speaking to Him through prayer, and hearing from His Word.

As I reflect on all that has happened over the past few months, one of the things that has particularly struck me, is how people have cared for each other throughout this crisis. Charities and community organisations have stepped up to help not only the most vulnerable people in our community, but also those who are now doing it tough. People have been caring for their friends and neighbours, helping with jobs, doing shopping for them, or just making sure that they are ok. And even the way that everyone has abided by the social distancing requirements, shows that people care for others, through seeking to ensure that they are not contributing to the spread of COVID-19.

And today as we look at the last Chapter of 1 Peter, we will see that it is all about caring. For not only do we have a God who cares for us, but we are also called to care for others, and be careful as to how we live our lives. And what exactly does this mean for us and how we are to live our lives? We will find out when Stephen speaks to us later, but now let's pray.

Our Heavenly Father, You are truly a wondrous God, a majestic God who is worthy of praise. You are glorious and righteous, and are faithful to your Word. We know that you are an all-powerful God, and in control of everything. Lord, we know that all is done according to your wishes, according to your perfect plan. And we thank you that as part of your plan that you have set us apart Lord, to be your chosen ones, and that you have gathered us to be with you. We thank you that you care for us, provide for us, and have given us all that we need. And we thank you for the most wonderful gift of all, that you sent your son Jesus Christ to earth to take the punishment upon himself that we deserve for our sins.

For we know that we are sinners, Lord, and that there is nothing that we can do to make this up to you. Lord, we know that we are not worthy to be in your presence, we have failed your perfect standards. For this we are truly sorry. But we thank you that you are a gracious Lord, and filled with love and mercy. We thank you that you have fulfilled your promises to us through your Son, Jesus Christ. We thank you that because of his death and resurrection, the punishment for our sins has been paid, and we are able to be with you for eternity.

And Lord, we thank you that although we are not able to meet together, we are still able to sing praises to you, speak to you in prayer, read your Word and hear it being preached. And Lord, help us to be open to your Word, that we will learn from it and that we will apply it to our lives, and that we will use it to let others know about you. And we ask all of this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Songs: This is Amazing Grace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPQKj2Zptr0>

Praise my soul the king of heaven

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuLmDye_5ys

Bible Reading – 1 Peter 5:1-14 (NIV)

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not

because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.”⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

¹² With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.¹³ She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Announcements

- **Church in June.** It is great news that a weekly service is going to start for Swansea (from today and up to 24 people), Sunday @ 6 (from next Sunday and up to 50 people) and Charlestown AM (from Today and up to 50 people.) Hopefully by now you will have received an email or contact from Stephen explaining how it will all work. Not everyone is ready to come back to Church and we understand that. We hope everyone who is ready will be able to make it to one of our services during June.
- **Lords Supper.** We will be taking the Lord’s Supper together today as part of our service of worship. So please can you organise the bread and the wine/juice and prepare your heart to remember Jesus.
- **Christianity Explored:** started last Wednesday night but it is not too late to join. So if you know anyone that would like to spend the next 6 Wednesday evenings 7:30-8:30 thinking about what Christianity is all about please email Suzie on aaronandsuzie@hotmail.com and she will contact you with the Zoom meeting details. Please be praying as to who you can invite and that people will want to join in the course.
- **Balance.** On Sunday 28th June, Jo and Stephen are holding a ZOOM webinar on Balance. Are you finding it hard to balance work, home & Church? Then why not tune in between 3:00-4:30pm where we will have a combination of teaching, practical application and group discussion on the issue of balance. More details to follow.
- **Focus for June – Family.** Every month we set aside time and energy to focus on another aspect of the Christian life – this month it is family. How is your family life going? Are you investing enough quality time in it? Are you investing enough quantity time in it? What areas of your family life need working on? Would you be willing to pray for 5-10 minutes each day this week specifically on your family – praying for faith, godliness, future, hope, courage and love?
- **Prayer.** Don’t forget that every Monday and Thursday evenings at 7pm we are meeting to pray via ZOOM. Please join us. You don’t have to pray aloud. But it would be still great to have you there. And if you can’t join us, why not stop at that time and bring your praise and prayers before our mighty God?

- **Pastoral Care.** Are you in need of pastoral care? Please don't be shy in asking. We have a number of people in the Church willing and able to help with shopping or getting medicines from the chemist or even help in your garden. Just speak to Jo, Jon or Stephen. And if you are self-isolating because you are waiting for a COVID-19 test or even if you have found out that you have this or any other ailments please let us know so that we can pray and provide any physical or spiritual help that you need.
- Stephen is trying to work out **who is accessing our interactive services** and Facebook sermons and who isn't as well as which weeks they are doing that. This information allows us to see if what we are doing is working or whether we should try something else. To help us with this please each week can you either like the sermon or share it with someone if you are going onto Facebook to hear it. Or alternatively can you fill in the one-minute survey monkey form whose reference address you will find at the end of this service each week that you complete the interactive service. Thanks.
- **Facebook.** Not part of our Church's Facebook group at the moment? Then why not join us at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/563984673762656/>
- **Elvanto.** And while you are online please check out and update your Elvanto profile at the Church Elvanto page. This will help us greatly as a Church. And if you haven't signed up for Elvanto as yet, please contact Liz Hyslop on (gehyslop@optusnet.com.au) and she will help you sign up.

Song – All I have is Christ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugGucoYMmKg>

Family Matters – Lords Supper

Social distancing works in a crisis. It removes us from the source of all possible danger. It reduces the spread of disease. But it also means that it changes some of the things that we love. Like meeting together as a Church. But over the last two months we have found that we can still meet even if we are not in the same building. We can meet virtually, spiritually even. As we read the same prayers together, listen to the word read and preached together and participate in worship together, we are drawing closer to God and we can still draw close to each other. We can still meet and worship.

But what about the Lords Supper? It is deeply symbolic as we take a small piece of bread from a larger loaf and proclaim the Lord's death, together. And as we take a small thimble of grape juice taken from the one bottle and look forward to Jesus coming again, together. Can we possibly do this virtually as well?

I believe you can. Jesus says whenever "you meet together, do this in remembrance of me". We are meeting together today so let's take the Lords Supper and do it in remembrance of Jesus. While we are social distancing, let's draw near to God and let's knit our hearts together by celebrating the Lords Supper together. Some of the symbolism will be gone, it won't be the same as it normally is, but as we do so we will be obeying the command of Jesus to take, eat in remembrance of him.

So, to begin let's read Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 (NIV). *"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves".*

What we do today is for all those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what age, denomination or maturity. So, we now set aside these elements of bread and juice so that they may act as a reminder to us of what Jesus did for us. For on the night that Jesus was betrayed he took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said *"Take eat this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me"*. So please pick up your piece of bread and consider how Jesus drew us near to the Father through dying on the cross to forgive us our sins.

"Take eat in remembrance that Christ died for you and be thankful".

And in the same way, Jesus took the cup and said, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins, do this as often as you drink in remembrance of me."* So, take the cup and think about that covenant, that new covenant God makes with us. That he will be our God and we will be his people. One day soon, he will send his son Jesus to gather up the elect and there will be no physical distancing between us and him at all!

"Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful"

Please spend a few moments in quiet reflection and prayer...

Pastoral Prayer (Tom B)

Our mighty Lord and heavenly Father, as we see the chaos in the world around us and the increasingly devastating effects of sin, we can become discouraged, disillusioned and troubled in spirit. To our human minds hope and even You, Lord God, can feel distant or absent. Help us to remember, in the very depths of our being, Your promises to us, Your love for us and what it cost for you to bring us into your kingdom. Give us the words to pray for the terrible events in our world rather than giving in to despair.

Father, we do pray for the terrible events in the USA. Not only has the nation been devastated by COVID-19 restrictions, cases and deaths but now the alleged murder of George Floyd has led to rioting, destruction and further deaths. It seems a world gone mad and sometimes all we can do is weep. And pray. Pray for the family of George Floyd. Pray for the families of the police officers involved. Pray for those enacting hatred and racial tension. Pray for those affected by it. Pray for leaders in the US. And Lord, we pray for a change in human attitudes, that race will not continue to be a cause for hatred. Even if it is one person at a time, we ask that you will act, Lord, and do something to alleviate this horrifying aspect of human existence. Yet beyond that, Father, we know that true unity can only be found in Jesus Christ and we pray that we, as your people, will be at the forefront of promoting that truth.

Although COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, significant implications for our lives, we want to thank and praise you for how successfully it has been managed in Australia thus far. We thank you for the sensible restrictions that have been put in place and pray that we, as a nation, will not now grow complacent. Yet we pray for those who feel isolated at this time, both in our own church and in the world around us. For those who have limited resources to cope with the pressures of COVID-19, in terms of physical and mental health, disability, financial pressure or sheer loneliness, we ask that they will avail themselves of the services that are available. Help us as a church to shine your light as we face these different challenges together. And although Australia has fared quite well, we pray for those countries where the disease continues to ravage communities. In the US, Russia, Brazil and Indonesia COVID-19 continues to take a heavy toll on human life. Many other countries, like Germany, Italy, China and the UK have also had terrible casualties. We pray for each nation's recovery in Your time.

Furthermore, Lord, many of the poorest and most vulnerable people are affected by this disease. In many ways this reflects the nations of the world, where the poorest countries could be even more devastated than others. We pray for protection of those nations, that this pandemic will not destroy the economies

and livelihoods of those who already have so little. Help us to find ways to be generous, despite the toll COVID-19 has had on our own country. We continue to ask for a slowing of the disease and that you will help nations as they begin to assess how to rebuild in a post-COVID-19 world. And we pray for a vaccine to be developed and tested thoroughly so that Your world might begin to recover from this pandemic.

The nation of Algeria has a history of persecuting Christians and this sadly continues to flourish today. Father, we want to thank you for the courageous work that is being undertaken there by missionaries and the growing Christian community. Please bridge the gaps between religious hatred and persecution so that home churches are permitted in the country. We praise You for the incredible ground Christians have gained for Your kingdom in Algeria and pray this might continue. Ultimately, we hope for a change of policy that allows Christians to safely and freely worship the Lord of all creation.

Our thoughts turn to the nation of Vanuatu and especially Hog Harbour, where Cyclone Harold and COVID-19 have wreaked havoc. We continue to ask for Your help in the rebuilding process and for wisdom on the best way to undertake that under COVID-19 restrictions. Give the government wisdom regarding the next steps for schools, business and the economy. Help the church to be a voice of reason and compassion during these trying times.

Father, it is easy to look at this string of events and to realise we are only scratching the surface of the Earth's ills. Yet among all this, we know of a certain hope, the hope of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected. When all gets dark, when the world is turned on its head and when hope seems distant, make us a people who listen to You, who speak to You and who share Your love with others. And we pray for this in the name of Your loving Son, Jesus. Amen.

Song. This I believe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-aSmurgrzA>

Sermon.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcx-Ccq7IW4>

Or <https://www.facebook.com/Charlestown-Presbyterian-Church-113127747005906>

It happened at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. Britain's Derek Redmond was about to run the semi-final 400m. If he did well, as he was expected to do, the next day he would run for gold. He started well but when he got to the 150 metres mark, he tore his hamstring and fell to the ground in great pain. His competitors continued on and finished the race and the medicos came out with a stretcher to carry him off.

But he pushed them away and set off for the finish line. His Dad made his way onto the track and said to him, "You don't have to do this". "Yes, I do," Redmond said, and kept hobbling down the track. He wanted to finish the race. His country hadn't sent him to start the race but to finish it. And so, leaning on his father's shoulders he hobbled to the end where 65,000 people gave him a standing ovation. By finishing the race, Redmond got the glory, it was just different to the glory that he wanted to get!

Peter has been telling us in his letter that as Christians we will suffer. But if we lean on our Father, we will also get the glory in the end. But how do we know that? Because God cares. That's the simple answer. He cares about what you are going through right now. He wants you to reach the end. He will give you the crown of glory on the last day. God cares

1. Carers (verses 1-5)

And one way he shows he cares is by placing us in Churches where he appoints elders, pastors, shepherds who are our spiritual carers. So, Peter goes on to day, *"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care"*

Peter is an apostle. The rock on which the early Church was being built on. But he doesn't throw his weight around. He doesn't say it's Saint Peter the Pope giving you a Papal bull you must follow. He says, it's Peter the elder, your fellow elder, appealing to you. I've suffered for my faith as you have suffered for your faith. I have been promised a share of God's glory just as you have been promised a share of God's glory. I am not above you, I am beside you!

So, my fellow elders *"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care."* And I am sure he is thinking of that time when he had let Jesus down. Remember three times he had denied Jesus on the night before Jesus crucifixion. Three times he denied ever knowing Jesus. But what happened next? Jesus restores Peter, he forgives Peter & he tells him to feed my lambs take care of my sheep, feed my sheep. Peter is asked by Jesus to shepherd Jesus flock.

So, Peter is asking the leaders of this Church in modern day Turkey to do what Jesus himself has asked Peter to do. To shepherd the flock. Now throughout the Bible, God is said to be the Shepherd of his people. In the OT he raised up Abraham, Moses and Joshua to shepherd his people on his behalf. He even set up David as his shepherd king. These leaders were to know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep. But the sheep were not their sheep, they were all a part of God's flock. And so now here in the NT, God sets up a new leadership structure of elders/pastors/shepherds who would be carers of God's flock.

Elsewhere in the New Testament the qualities of a leader are discussed and the roles are fleshed out, but here in 1 Peter 5, Peter wants to zero in on the elders' attitude. ² *"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock"*.

The attitude of a good leader of God's people is that they are willing to lead. They have not been pushed into a corner. They have not looked around and said I had better do it because no one else is willing to put up their hand. They are not leading because they were signed up 10 years ago to do a job and they are still there because there is no one take over from them. They are not leading because they must do it. They are happy to be a shepherd.

I think that is helpful for us when we are choosing leaders. Are they already doing the work of a shepherd? Do they already know the people around them? Are they feeding others God's word? Are they currently leading others, protecting others from danger? If so and if they are eager to serve, given them the title. God wants willing shepherds & eager servants.

Eager to teach not eager for cash. Eager to care not eager for praise. For some people love the attention. But a servant, a Christian leader isn't interested in that, they just quietly get on with doing the job. And can I say some of our best leaders are those who have signed up for the cleaning roster, for the crèche roster, for the finances or the youth group, or the millions of other thankless tasks that go on in this place. Shepherds, Christian leaders are servants.

And they are examples. Role models. Not lording it over others, just getting on with the job, quietly, efficiently, without any fanfare. Overseers not overlords. Not one-man bands because elders in this passage is plural. Together they give us a good example of the faith. Together they serve. The problem comes when you give power to one person. That's when you can feather your own nest, when you can

bully others to get your own way. And unfortunately, there have been many examples in Churches of that sort of poor leadership.

But the problem is not Church leadership, its poor Church leadership that's the problem. Leadership that fails to acknowledge the role of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus. Jesus was the ultimate Shepherd. He was willing to leave heaven and even die for his sheep. He served them, even taking up the garb of the servants and picking up the basin and the towel and washing his disciple's feet. Jesus provide us all with an example to follow. And one day he will give his under shepherds, *"a crown of glory that will never fade away"*.

Those leaders that don't have a love of praise, a love of profit, or a love of power but instead have a love of people, God's people will be rewarded when Christ comes again. Not with financial reward nor with more organisational power but with a crown of glory.

As US Pastor Harry Reeder once put it. "Elders are to be thermostats, not thermometers." They set the spiritual temperature; they don't merely reflect the temperature around them. They walk out in front of the flock and inspire the sheep to follow them.

And that's why Peter continues and says, *"In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders"*. If those who are older or more mature in the Lord set the pace, everyone else is to attempt to keep up. To follow them as they follow Jesus. For just as Peter has called slaves to submit to their masters, wives to submit to their husbands, all of us to submit to the government, so each one of us should submit to our Church leaders.

God has placed carers over us all. It is part of his good care of us that he appoints for us people to physically walk through life with us. Now the temptation for some of us will be to walk the Christian walk on our own. We have been turned off by greedy shepherds in the past. We have suffered spiritual abuse by power hungry leaders. We have been surrounded by leaders who seem to be on an ego trip. Who needs people like them? No one! But what you are rejecting is not leadership but bad leadership. And even in times like this you need good spiritual leadership. So, submit to your elders. Follow them as they follow Christ.

2. Cared For (verses 5-7)

Because it is part of God's care for you. So, Peter continues, *"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.'"* ⁶ *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you"*.

He cares for you... listen to those words closely, thoughtfully. He cares for you. The eternal wise maker of the universe, the one who made the galaxy, the one who has the whole world in his hands, He cares for you. It is not just that he is vaguely aware of you, it is not that he tolerates you, he cares for you. He knows what you are going through and he cares for you.

So cast all your anxieties on him. All that bad news, all those troubles, all those stresses and strains at home, in the workplace, in the news or your neighbourhood, don't hold them tightly to yourself. Don't let it bounce around and around your brain. Don't lie awake at night looking for a solution. Give it to God. Cast yourself and all your troubles on him!

But if you are going to do that you must firstly humble yourself. You must hand over your problems to God until you realise that you are not in control but he is. You have no power over this virus, this job situation,

this home disaster but he does! So, go right now to your clothing cupboard and take off your jumper of pride, your pants of self-confidence, even your underwear of arrogance and in their place put on the clothes of humility. For if you are going to face this world with all its troubles you need to have the right protecting clothing.

I was reading a while back about a doctor whose hospital had run out of protective facemasks and he was having to care for people who potentially had coronavirus and so was told to put on a bandana. And he said it was like “going to war with a butterknife!” Well we don’t want to go to war against the world, the flesh and the devil with the wrong clothing armed just with a butter knife. That is a disaster waiting to happen! So, humble yourself.

I love the way that the Christian author, F. B. Meyer put it. *“I used to think that God’s gifts were on shelves one above another and the taller we grow, the easier we can reach them. Now, I find, that God’s gifts are on shelves one beneath another and the lower we stoop, the more we get.”* Humble yourself. But if I try and think of myself less who will look after me?

And God says to us, try me out on this one. I will care for you. I will look after your children. I will make sure that you don’t miss out. In fact, by casting all your anxieties on to him, what happens is that you are freed from so many of your own burdens that you have the time and energy to deal with the burdens of others.

How about you try God on this one. How about you put this promise into action. Try today after this service to take the thing that you are most worried about and hand it over to God. Hand over that relationship that is causing you that stress. Give over to him your worry about the future. Cast upon him those things that are going around and around in your mind. And then call someone you know who has a problem, visit that person who has a need, care for someone who needs that sort of care. And see if God delivers on his promise.

3. Carers, Cared for & thirdly Careful (verses 8-9)

⁸ *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings”.*

If the enemy is around, you don’t want to be careless. If a lion is looking for dinner, you will need to be careful. But in the words of John Howard we should be alert but not alarmed. Because although the devil is like a roaring lion, he is not on the loose, he is on a leash. God is still in control. The Devil can only do what God permits him to do.

But I think it’s a really good illustration that Peter uses of a lion. A lion stalks its prey, waiting for the time when the hunted animal is at its most vulnerable. Or when he spots the weak one. Or he notices that one has wandered away from the rest of the herd. Then he pounces.

It is those who are firm in the faith that will be able to resist him. Those who are part of the family of believers that can draw upon the strength of others. Those who are following the chief shepherd who will receive God’s protection. It is those who have humbled themselves before the word of God that will be able to stand firm in the face of great danger.

Remember how Martin Luther put in his famous hymn? *“Although this world with devils filled/ should threaten to undo us, we will not fear for God hath willed/ His truth to triumph through us. The prince of*

darkness grim/, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure/, for o his doom is sure. One little Word, one Gospel word, will fell him." Believe the Gospel, and armed with the little Word of the Good News, you can stand your ground. For unless we stand firm, we cannot withstand. And we all need to stand firm in the faith.

4. Charis (verse 10-14)

And we need to stand fast in the true grace of God. For Peter wants to end with the word Char-is, which is the Greek word for grace. ¹² *"With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it".* Peter wants us to stand fast in God's grace.

Think about it, how does God reward the elder who is eager to serve with a crown of glory? How does God lift up the humble and save them from the strong? How can God make the weak be strong in the midst of a roaring lion? It's all due to his grace, his amazing grace.

None of this is earned by us at all. We don't work hard as a leader and then God rewards us with a crown. It is not because we have humbled ourselves that we earn the right to be lifted up. It is not the case that if we resist the devil now, we will deserve to join in the eternal glory of Christ later. No, none of us will get what we deserve, instead we get grace.

God's grace. In the words of John Newton. *"Through many dangers, toils and snares. We have already come. 'Twas Grace that brought us safe thus far. And Grace will lead us home"* Its grace, all grace. As Peter goes on to say, ¹⁰ *"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen"*.

It's God's grace that will you be clothed with his eternal glory. It is God's grace that will restore you after a life of suffering. It is God's grace that will strengthen you for the days ahead. It is God's grace that will ensure that where we stand is firm & steadfast because he has placed us on the rock that is Christ. He is the cornerstone our whole lives are built upon.

Which means that whatever situation that you are facing at the moment there is grace from God for you to stand on. There is grace for you in the COVID-19 crisis. Grace for you as you watch your investments decline. Grace for you when are fearful of the future. Grace for you as you struggle to raise your kids. Grace for you as you wonder how your family is going to navigate a tricky world. Whatever you are facing there is grace for you. So, stand fast in it.

But there is more. Grace from God but love in the Church. ¹³ *"She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings & so does my son Mark. ¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love"*. Peter sends his readers love. They may be in Babylon, code word for Rome and suffering persecution but they still send their brothers and sisters in Christ their love. If they were not social distancing, they would give us a kiss, a hug or at least an elbow bump!

Grace from God. Love in the Church and peace in Jesus. For he ends with the words, *"Peace to all of you who are in Christ"*. If life is tough, you have God's grace. If you are feeling all alone, you can still experience the Church's love. If you are having trouble within, you still have access to the peace of Jesus. Actually, all of us have storerooms full of grace, love and peace, enough for anything the world will throw at us!

You see Peter hasn't written an Instagram post that is gone a few moments later. Nor written a message on his Facebook page that we can just flick through with our fingers. He has carefully crafted a letter to us, the elect exiles of Lake Macquarie. It is the Word of God that you and I need this day. And the call is for us to stand firm in this. In God's grace. Why?

Because he cares for you! He cares so much that he has placed elders over you to act as your carers. He is willing for you to cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. He is telling us to be careful as the Devil is out and about prowling because he cares for you. And most of all today he has reminded us of his Charis, his grace that is available for us 24/7. God cares. So much that he will be like that Father enabling us to get to the finish line. All we have to do is lean on Him!

Church Engagement

To help us know who has participated in today's service would you please either

- Like the sermon on Facebook OR
- Share the sermon on Facebook with someone that you believe would benefit from it. OR
- Fill out a two-question survey (approx. 1 minute) at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6D9VPZK>

Song Grace awaiting me And can it be

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5opGbMAqFE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQeIGbKgiw8>

Benediction.

¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Virtual Morning Tea

Our morning tea is a vital way that we give and receive fellowship during a time like this. We don't want to be just consumers of Church; we want to be a part of the family of God. So why not join us on ZOOM for a virtual morning tea. You can connect by

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89081952206?pwd=aGVTCm1oOHp3VXMxYVg0bk5HSS9rZz09>

Meeting ID: 890 8195 2206 Password: 797654

Or it might work better for you to give someone you haven't spoken to a while a call.

Who might your ring now?