

+ In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti + Amen.

Text: 1 Peter 5:6

Theme: In Due Time



Dear followers of Christ Jesus,

God tolerates unbelief. He bears with wickedness, but He doesn't do so passively. He's always seeking, always searching, always renovating. He governs the dominions of the world in a such a way as to make possible the proclamation of His Word. The way He does this is by no means always clear to us. In fact, it often *appears* that God is powerless in human affairs. But, rest assured, nothing could be further from the truth. His judgement, His justice, and His mercy will all prevail and redound to His glory for eternity. Faith anchors us to Christ so that through the mystery of God's providence and the maelstrom of the world's fury, we are kept hidden in His wounds until- according to the apostolic injunction- we reach the final epiphany. The Spirit says to you, "*You died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*"<sup>1</sup>

But, none of us are in glory yet. And the devil would like to prevent us from getting there. Speaking to believers who were doing it pretty tough under persecution, the apostle says today, "*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*"<sup>2</sup> Now, that's completely contrary to human intuition. Surely if the Spirit of God rests on us we would be shielded from insult and injury? Surely life should be trouble-free?

And that's exactly the danger of domesticating Christianity and trying to make it serve the systems of the world. Last week I said that the contented ego is not shaken from its stronghold by the seduction of usefulness. I also said- as a parallel statement- that unbelief is not cured by arguments for utility. The decree of God attacks our egos. It especially attacks egos plated with the armor of self-righteousness. The ego must be dethroned. People who believe they are in charge of their own destinies naturally think paradise is in store for them. But that is the most tragic delusion imaginable. If your ego is ruling a kingdom with faulty foundations it will eventually come crashing down. The Scripture therefore says, "*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.*"<sup>3</sup>

Let's consider what the contented ego means. Contentedness generally means that one is happy with the current circumstances, not seeking something else, not yearning, not complaining. St Paul says, "*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*"<sup>4</sup> And again, "*If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*"<sup>5</sup> And finally, "*Godliness*

*with contentment is great gain.*”<sup>6</sup> So, the contented ego I’m referring to here is not the person who is satisfied with what God has provided. Contentedness with God’s provision is a godly thing, a gift and fruit of faith. Imagine how much less stress there would be in relationships specifically and life generally if people were content with their blessings!

Instead, I’m speaking of the person content in his or her own independence from God, in his or her own self-righteousness. It need not mean the person is an egomaniac *per se*. But it does relate to people who are satisfied with their position regarding ultimate authority, and finally, mortality and eternity. It is the person who is happy to either venture their final destiny without God *or* stand on his or her own merits before God’s throne of judgment. So, a person with a contented ego could be (and often is) a very religious person. Christ singled out the Pharisees as just such type of people. They had the appearance of holiness but were decidedly smug in their self-righteousness. As such, they were farther from the kingdom of God than repentant prostitutes and tax-collectors<sup>7</sup>.

Now the premise is that people with contented egos are not shaken from their positions of security (even though their consciences are falsely pacified), and are not shaken from moral and spiritual self-reliance, by the appeal that Christianity will be useful to them. Again, St Peter says, *“If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed.”*<sup>8</sup> How does that entice followers? An autocrat doesn’t stop being a despot because someone offers him assistance in consolidating power. But what about the average Joe? What will shake the contented person in Western society today, in our prosperous society; what will shake them out of unbelief or pseudo Christian faith? Will the fall out caused by the coronavirus do it? Perhaps? And if so, thanks be to God!

Neither Christ, nor the prophets before Him, nor the apostles after Him went out proclaiming: “Follow the way of Christianity because it will be very helpful to you.” “Follow Jesus because His teachings are full of useful ideas.” “Become a Christian so that you fit in with society.” No, the clarion call of the prophetic, Christological, and apostolic message is repentance and faith. So, the question is not whether God and the teachings of Jesus are useful to us but whether they are true. Are they authoritative? Are they destiny-altering? Are they definitive for the very meaning of life, its purpose and existence? Indeed, they are. The question then becomes, “In what way are we useful to God?”

Why do secular, officially atheistic, and sometimes even authoritarian governments tolerate, support, and even promote expressions of Christianity? The general answer is usefulness. When governments believe that Christianity, on the whole, is more of a positive influence on society than a negative one, they’re more likely to tolerate it. The key function of government is stability. The goal is prosperity and the betterment of temporal society. In so far as Christianity contributes to these goals it may be countenanced. Of course, key here is which goals or values are held by the majority of society or those in power, and do they align with Christian truth? It’s exactly at this point that friction is increasing between the unchanging divine truth and the morphing values of our society.

But remember, Satan is the real adversary and he has drawn a target on your back. St. Peter says, “*Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*”<sup>9</sup> Sin grips us, and we can’t shake it off with good intentions or enthusiastic attempts at moral rectitude. Satan knows this. Sin must be forgiven, and the sinful nature must be crucified. Satan hates that. These realities are worked out in your baptism and in its continual relevance in your life as the word again and again calls you to repentance and faith. The Holy Spirit wasn’t a guest at your baptism, He’s a constant companion, an advocate, an intercessor in your cross-bearing following of Jesus. We live a cross-bearing life that God makes useful for His kingdom according to His good pleasure.

Jesus Christ was sacrificed on the altar of the cross and there the dominion of sin was broken. His perfect life was given on behalf of sinners. Could you offer your life to atone for your own sins, let alone the sins of others? Could you compensate for your smallest indiscretion not to mention your most flagrant iniquities? Could you make a convincing argument that God should be patient with you? Lest you entertain for a moment that some measure of these things might be possible, hear clearly the holy word spoken by the Spirit of truth<sup>10</sup>, “*The ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough.*”<sup>11</sup> But the life of Jesus was more than sufficient.

We’re nearing the third of the three great Christian festivals. Jesus Christ ascended bodily to heaven forty days after His resurrection from the dead. The Holy Spirit was unleashed on day 50. But the Son hasn’t left us, and the Spirit isn’t ‘social-distancing’ from us either. The Father’s work is being done, often hidden behind the forbearance of God. Yes, Jesus has made the once-for-all sacrifice. But the activity of individual reclamation goes on until His final epiphany. The gospel is an inextinguishable light. The darkness will not overcome it. And we are already possessors of the divine promises. Dear friends, believers are not waiting to find out whether they will inherit eternal life (at least they shouldn’t be), we already possess it. So, just as we are pilgrims on earth, our feet firmly planted on the *terra firma*, while at the same time being citizens of heaven, we also operate in the dimension of time, while simultaneously participating in the rest of Him who transcends time. We are dual citizens.

Don’t be too quick, then, to judge what God tolerates. There’s more going on than meets the eye. God is patient. He is patient with sinners. But’s He’s not slow to shower us with His love. He’s not remiss in attending to our real needs. “*Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.*”<sup>12</sup> He will lift you up in due time. He will lift you beyond any memory of struggle or adversity, sorrow or despair, pain or rage. And He will do it not because it’s practical, but because without Him it is impossible. Amen.

+ In nomine Jesu +

Seventh Sunday of Easter  
24 May 2020  
Reverend Darrin L. Kohrt

<sup>1</sup> Colossians 3:3-4

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 4:14

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 5:6

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 3:11

<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 6:8

<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 6:6

<sup>7</sup> See Matthew 21:31

<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 4:14

<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 5:8

<sup>10</sup> See John 14:17

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 49:8

<sup>12</sup> 1 Peter 5:7

The

**PATIENCE**

GOD

of

B  
iblical  
simplicity