

The Lord's Message: What a Difference Easter Makes – Living Faithfully in an Unfair World

Date: May 7, 2023

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: 1 Peter 2:11- 25

This is the last message for our sermon series: What a Difference Easter Makes. The first Sunday, we discovered that because of Easter we have Eternal Hope. We have the hope that no matter what happens in this world God is going to be with us. We also have hope that those who believe in Jesus will enter Heaven and have God with them forever. This brings us to the second message. We explored what it means for the Call to Be Holy. God is Holy. Because of Easter all believers are called to be Holy. Holy means to be set apart. We are called to live in the world but not of the world. We should act differently than the rest of the world so that world will come to experience the love of God through us. That brings us to the message from last week. We are called to be Living Stones. Our faith should be strong as a stone. We should also be living faithfully, meaning that our lives should show love to God and others. This brings us to the message for today. We are called to live faithfully in an unfair world.

Let us pray.

My son Davey, who was 12 or 14 years old at the time, said to me, "That is not fair." This response was most likely to me telling him that he could not do something that his friends were doing or something that he wanted to do. I responded, "The world is not fair." I would suspect that you would all agree with me that this world is not fair. This world is not fair when civil discourse cannot be held without someone shouting and screaming obscenities at the people they disagree with. This world is not fair when people are being shot for no good reason. This world is not fair when a 39-year-old special education teacher, devoted father of three children, and loving husband is diagnosed with cancer. I am sure that everyone here can name numerous other circumstances that prove that we do not live in a fair world. The question that we must wrestle with is how to live faithfully in an unfair world.

The Bible provides us with the answer. I will be reading from The Message Bible. Starting in verse 11, we need to accept the fact that we are foreigners in this world. Every day, this world is becoming more foreign and hostile to Christians. Christians are being heckled, put in jail, business taken away from them, and even churches have been attacked. So as faithful people, we are not to become cozy or satisfied with this life. This is not our destination. We are aliens in a foreign world.

Now that does not mean that we do not care about this world. We are called to care about this world and the people in this world. The first requirement for living faithfully in an unfair world is to live an exemplary life. Verse 12 states that we care so much that we want to live such an exemplary life that we counter their prejudices. Some people believe that Christianity is boring. There are too many rules that confine Christians. You should not drink to excess. You should not look at pornography. You should not watch this movie or that movie. You should not tell dirty jokes or laugh at dirty jokes. You must get up and go to church on Sunday morning instead of lying in bed. What a dull and boring life! They do not know the truth. I have never found my life as a Christian to be dull and boring. I do not need a drink or a drug to get high on life. When I see the beauty around me, I am just in awe of God who created all of this. When I gather with other Christians, the praise that flows out of each of us is amazing. When I think what my Lord and Savior has done for me, I am humble and grateful. I will caution all of us, that one slip-up is remember by our non-Christians friends. They will bring that up most often when you are with them. By living exemplary lives, we will be judged and laughed at by the world, but we will also win people to God.

The second requirement for living faithfully in an unfair world is to respect the authorities in verse 13. In verses 14-15, Peter says to respect the government. We need to remember that when Peter is dictating this, he knows that this letter is going to Christians who are being jailed, tortured, and even killed for believing in Jesus by the Roman government. The Roman government sees Christianity as a threat to them. We are free from the bondage of sin because Jesus died on the cross. In verse 16, Peter tells us that we should not use our freedom to break the rules.

This brings us to our third requirement for living faithfully in an unfair world. Treat everyone with respect. In verse 17, it says to treat everyone with respect, to love our Christians brothers and sisters, to revere God and to respect the government. We are to obey the two laws that Jesus said were the most important in **Matthew 22:37-39**. If we treat everyone with respect, then we are not going to harm them or want harm to come to them. If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, then we are going to want to be with them and to pray for them. If we revere God, then we want to worship God and serve Him. If we respect the government, then we are not going to want to break laws, but instead try to follow those laws, unless they go against God. If the laws go against God, then we should stand up against those laws and suffer the consequences.

In verse 18, Peter goes on to say that if we are servants, then we should be good servants, whether our leaders are good or bad. In verses 19-20, Peter says that it is better to suffer for doing good, than to suffer for doing bad. Our example is Jesus. Peter, in verses 21-24 uses Isaiah 53, the suffering servant, to provide an example for all of us to follow.

Now, you may be thinking that suffering for doing good, remaining silent when being ridiculed, and submitting to an unjust government is stupid. I would like to remind you how effective this can be. Anyone remember Mahatma Gandhi? Gandhi used nonviolent resistance to lead a successful campaign for India's independence against British rule. Martin Luther King, Jr., used the same nonviolent resistance as the basis for civil rights. Where did Gandhi and King find the origins of nonviolent resistance? The Bible, right in these verses.

The reason for us to live faithfully in an unfair world is so that we will not fall away from God and back into our sinful lives. In verse 25, the distraction of this world causes us to follow our desires which gives us no purpose in life. Now, we are following the Great Shepherd. Our lives have meaning and purpose. The proof that we are living faithfully in an unfair world is found in **1 Peter 3:8-9**.

What a difference Easter makes! We have Eternal Hope. We are called to be Holy. We live faithfully in an unfair world, so that we can be a blessing to others and in return receive a blessing from God. Amen.