

Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter - I Peter 3:13-22

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

"It's not fair!" No, persecution and suffering are almost never truly fair. Even justice, meted out by fallible courts and legal processes is often not truly fair. I think every parent has heard a child speak those words at one time or another. It is one of the most difficult lessons of life for us to learn. The world is very unfair. Peter wrote to a persecuted group of first-century Christians in what is modern-day Turkey. Picked on by the dominant culture, perhaps hounded by legal authorities, it was not fair. But listen to what Peter says to them and us who struggle under the strictures of a pandemic shutdown.

- *Have no fear of what others do, nor be troubled. They cannot truly hurt you if you are doing good.*
- *Do good out of the hopeful expectation which comes from Christ and be ready to explain that hope with gentleness and respect. You will stand out and people will notice.*
- *You will be misunderstood but make sure that those who misunderstand have mistaken good deeds.*
- *There is good/meaning in suffering for doing good. Christ also suffered.*

Peter enjoined them and us to lead lives which were rooted in the reality of our baptism. God in Christ has broken into this world to claim you. Now you are the embodiment of that kingdom in this benighted world. He reigns through your good deeds. This pandemic has undoubtedly given you new opportunities to do good. They may be hard. They may be misunderstood. It might take courage and strength to do them. Do them anyway. You are a citizen of that kingdom.

God be with you until we meet again. In Jesus' love and mercy, Pastor Wulf