

Introduction to Series Easter 2020

This six-week bundle of resources for messages, bible study, puppet shows, home activities, and devotions is based on the letter of First Peter. The series aligns with the Epistle readings for the Easter season (April 19 through May 24) but could be used at any time.

The series is in development from volunteers from the Missouri District of the LCMS. They have produced these materials with the desire to support churches in simple ways with a message of hope and generosity as followers of Jesus. Recognizing every church has different needs, these materials are provided in a format that will allow pastors, small group leaders and homes to adapt, print, post and use them in ways that best meet their needs.

We encourage you to make these materials your own! This permission is given to you with our blessing! None of these materials, however, may be adapted, or published for sale (or the promotion of any product or service) without the written permission of the Missouri District LCMS.

A special thanks to Pastor David Smith and Becky Hohenstein for their contribution to the sermon studies and puppet show videos. These materials remain a work in progress. Updates will be posted online and available for download as available. The folder for all materials can be reached at <https://cutt.ly/molcms-hope>. If you would like to contribute additional ideas and materials to this series, please contact Bill Geis:

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Description of Online Resources

Sermons: The sermon could be used as a brief devotion read in the home or as a tool to assist pastors in preparing their own messages. The sermon paragraphs have section headings provided to aid preachers, teachers, and family leaders see the overall outline and teaching points of the message.

Bible Study: The Bible study provides an opportunity for further discussion of the topic of the week drawing upon the sermon themes and puppet show. The Bible Study also engages homes in practical activities as stewards of our Hope in Jesus (see below).

Household Activity: The household activity is included in the Bible study and also as a separate sheet so that it may be used in homes or small groups. First Peter powerfully challenges us to respond to suffering with Hope that is sanctified in “doing good.” This is a tremendous opportunity for churches and homes to teach Biblical stewardship as they engage the mission of God.

Daily Readings and Reflections: These daily reading sheets offer the parts of 1Peter not covered in the sermon or regular readings over the six-week series. There are some daily questions and exercises.

Puppet Show: We value supporting faith formation in the home intergenerationally. These videos are available on our website.

Hope Freed to Serve

Sermon Week 3

1 Peter 2:19-25

Introduction from Leviticus

Today we are going to begin in a most unlikely place. We begin in the Old Testament and even stranger than beginning there, we will look at Leviticus 16. Leviticus? Are you sure? Yes. There we read that God told the children of Israel when and how to celebrate the Day of Atonement. You may have heard of it as Yom Kippur. We can't go through all of it, but we will focus on one part of the celebration.

Two Goats Point Us to Jesus

Aaron, the High Priest, was to take two goats. One was the Lord's and was sacrificed as a sin offering. The other goat was brought to Aaron to lay his hands on. This signified that the sins of Israel had been laid on this goat. The goat was led out into the wilderness to die signifying that the sins of Israel had been taken away forever. These two goats point us to Jesus. On the one hand, He was sacrificed on the cross to pay for sin. On the other hand, He took away our sin forever. The interesting part is that the goat taken to die in the wilderness is called the "scapegoat."

Jesus: Our Scapegoat

We know what a scapegoat is. A scapegoat is someone who gets the blame and punishment for something they didn't do. Isn't that exactly what Peter is saying about Jesus?

"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth... He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree..."
(vv. 23-24)

Jesus was our scapegoat. He never sinned. He kept God's whole law in thought, word, and deed. Yet, He was crucified for our sins. He took our sins in His body as if He had committed them all and died on the tree of the cross. He got the blame for our sins and the punishment for our sins. He was our scapegoat. Unfair! Unjust! Yes, by all human standards. Yet, God used Him as our scapegoat to conquer our sin, our suffering, our death so we would live forever. This is our faith and hope.

Looking at Our Suffering

However, let's face it, when we suffer we don't like it one bit. Why do I have to suffer? Why do I have to stay at home? Why do I have to live through this pandemic? We as sinful human beings believe deep down in our hearts that all suffering, my suffering, is always unfair, always unjust. I just don't deserve this.

Our Hope Looks to God

Is this pandemic the wrath of God? The real facts we know are these. This is a sinful world-lots of sin. From the Fall there has been sickness and death. As sinful people, even though we are Christians, we are not immune from the sin and death of this world. This pandemic is the result of sin, and we sure are sinners. This is not the first pandemic nor the last. It touches our lives because we are sinful people living in a sinful world. The results of sin are in many ways the anger of God over sin. But we do not know the mind of God. Right now we are suffering. Right now, be assured God is working His will through this. Hard to grasp, but our faith and our hope look to God even in times like these. His promises are still true, and we can pray for strength, help, and mercy.



Hope Freed to Serve

Sermon Week 3

1 Peter 2:19-25

Jesus' Suffering Serves Us

Here is the remarkable thing. Notice how even when Jesus was suffering the agony of the cross, He was actually serving us. Now think about that. He was whipped, beaten, crucified unjustly, unfairly as our scapegoat. Yet, all the while He was serving us. He served us as our scapegoat taking our sins upon Himself to shed His blood to pay for them. He was serving us as our substitute by dying to pay for the wages of sin. He was laid in a tomb just like we will be. He rose from death for us so that we will rise from death to life eternal. See, all the while He suffered, He was actually serving us. All the time He was suffering He had His eyes focused on His Father. His perfect faith was in His Father. Even in His suffering He was free to suffer for us. He chose to do just that.

Hope in Christ Frees Us to Serve Others

Now let's face it, we don't know why we suffer at times in our lives. We know we live in a sinful world and sin and suffering touch our lives. Why one not the other? Why this time? We can't answer those questions in this life. We are simply told, "Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example so that you might follow in His steps." Our faith and hope in Christ, worked by God Himself, frees us to serve others even when we suffer in this world. Christ is our example and our strength. He gives us His strength through His promises, in our baptism and in the Lord's Supper.

The Remarkable Relationship of Suffering and Service

Let's read Peter again,

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live in righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (vv. 24-25)

Do you hear that? We were straying and God brought us back to our scapegoat, our Shepherd, our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Just as He suffered and served us at the same time. So, even in our suffering, we as the people of God filled with faith and hope in Christ can serve one another. Remarkable! Who knew there could be such a relationship between suffering and service.

Hope Focuses on God's Work

Only God can work something like this. It seems so wrong to us, but this is God's way. Just the opposite of what we think. So, today don't focus on why you have to suffer, what you have to suffer, the reason for your suffering. Focus on your God who works such marvelous things, so unbelievable, topsy-turvy things from the world's way of thinking. Take your eyes off your suffering and focus on the God who works all things for you. You saw it at the cross. Then ask the remarkable question: "Even in a time of suffering, 'God, what can I do to serve others?'" He will work His remarkable ways through you. Amen.



Hope Freed to Serve

Bible Study Week 3

1 Peter 2:19-25

Introduction

“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.” (v. 16)

This study explores hope in suffering from a counter-intuitive, yet divine, perspective. Last week we explored our hope through the identity we are given as children of God. Peter builds on this by diving into the sufferings of Jesus. His suffering appears to be a great injustice, but through suffering Jesus bears our sins, heals our wounds and brings us under His care (vv. 24-25). Peter commends us to exercise and steward our new identity with Jesus in situations where we feel treated unfairly. Suffering connected to Jesus provides hope that is freed to serve!

Checking In

1. How have you experienced an unexpected kindness this week? How did you receive it?
2. What is one frustration you experienced this week? How did you respond?

First Word: 1 Peter 2:13-17

If we were reading and studying 1 Peter sequentially this study would begin with chapter two, however, we are following an order based on the lectionary readings which use only portions of this chapter and in an inverted order. Thus, this week's sermon notes address verses 19-25. We begin, however with the paragraph before the sermon text. While omitted in the lectionary, these verses give helpful insight and grace for these difficult times.

3. How has the pandemic heightened your awareness of being “subject to... human institutions?”
4. Identify specific words and phrases which—for the Lord's sake—are commended to Christians in their response to human institutions and authorities?
5. How do these Biblical teachings challenge your thoughts and desires? How do they open opportunities to “do good” as servants of God?



Hope Freed to Serve

Bible Study Week 3

1 Peter 2:19-25

Second Word: 1 Peter 2:18-25

The Sermon Notes accompanying this study introduce us to the Festival of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) when the High Priest, sacrifices two goats. One goat is sacrificed as a “sin offering.” The other goat is abandoned in the wilderness to die as a “scapegoat.” Both goats teach us about Jesus. On the one hand, Jesus is the Father’s sacrificial offering in payment for our sins. On the other hand, Jesus is our scapegoat, the innocent One who takes our place carrying our sins away forever. In Jesus we see God’s servant who unjustly suffers to bring freedom and hope to the guilty. This helps us picture Peter’s teaching more vividly.

6. Discuss how each of these images add meaning to your hope.
 - a) Jesus’ sacrificial offering in payment for sins
 - b) Jesus’ abandoned as the guilty scapegoat for our sins.

Video

St. Paul’s Lutheran (Des Peres) H.I.S. Puppeteers have produced a video puppet show to compliment this study. Youth and adults will enjoy watching it.

Simply visit: <https://mo.lcms.org/our-hope-for-years-to-come-week-3/>
And select the "puppet show" button.

7. How are you like the boy who threw the ball? What fears do you have when it comes to your sins?
8. How does the other boy act like a “scapegoat”?

Prayer Journal

This week’s prayer journal gets personal. Jesus was abandoned as our scapegoat so that we would never be abandoned. Jesus is with us. And He has brought us together in the Church for one another—especially in times of suffering. Jesus is the only one who can carry sins away for good. Peter, however, commends hope with a new perspective on suffering. He says, “*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*” (v. 21)

9. Before you pray, complete the following exercise remembering you are child of God! Jesus is your hope! Take some time to reflect and write down answers to these questions as individuals first. Then as you are able share and pray about them.
 - a) What unresolved struggle is on your mind frequently
 - b) How does v.21 help you turn to a new focus, a higher calling, or a greater hope in this situation?
 - c) Search the verses in today’s study and/or other familiar scriptures that show you hope in Jesus.
 - d) What is one step you can take following Jesus, your hope and example.



Hope Freed to Serve

Bible Study Week 3

1 Peter 2:19-25

Household Activity

Review: Review: Last week's activity explored God's gifts and talents in you.

- a) What gift did you choose to exercise in a new way?
- b) What joy and affirmation did God show you in this experience?
- c) What challenges did you have in sharing your gift?
- d) How can encourage and rejoice with others who tried this same activity?

Blessing our Institutions: Verses 13-16 challenged the people of God to show grace in their submission to our human institutions. He calls us to a courageous stewardship that blesses "every human institution."

- a) Identify as many "institutions" as you can think of that impact your community or neighborhood (Here are some examples among many to get you started: Local governments, first responders and health care workers, grocery stores, utility services, teachers, and truckers.)
- b) Identify one specific institution and the person or persons that you can make a specific, personal connection with.
- c) Identify one way that you can support, assist, honor and bless them as a servant of God.
- d) Make a specific plan to engage the people you have identified this week—personally or with a group.

Blessing

If you haven't done so already, make use of the Daily Reading and Reflections provided with this study (see: <https://cutt.ly/molcms-hopeReflections3>) to help you listen to the Bible more. It will help you grow deeper in your hope, a hope freed to serve.

Close by taking turns using verses 20 and 21 to bless one another. An example of how you can modify it to be a blessing might go like this:

{Name} Jesus is your hope!
He is with you in suffering.
If when you do good
and suffer for it you endure,
This is a gracious thing in the sight of God!
For to this you have been called,
because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps.



Hope Freed to Serve

Household Activity

Week 3 1 Peter 2:19-25

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Hope Freed to Serve

Daily Readings & Reflections

Week 3 1 Peter 2:19-25

Note: If we were reading and studying 1 Peter sequentially, this week's reflections would begin with chapter two. However, in order to support our churches using the lectionary, this selection jumps ahead to Chapter 2:13. We will return to the first part of chapter two in week four.

Introduction

Many are reading and reflecting on these scriptures after weeks of limitations. It is hard and getting harder. People are suffering, even dying, in hospitals isolated from their families. Those grieving death are denied the compassion and support of friends at funerals. Parents are struggling to care for children doing school online and at the same time maintain their own work from home. Tensions are high. There are even protests. This is so unfair!

Peter throws us a curve ball this week. He puts Jesus, our hope, before us as the one who suffered without complaining. But it is not his lack of complaint that makes Him outstanding. What makes this all so amazing is that Jesus leads us through a new, upside-down view of suffering. He showed us that He takes upon Him every injustice, banishing it, suffering and dying for it, and finally burying it all so that we could be free.

To keep the baseball analogy going, Peter gives you an intentional walk! He offers four pitches that are pure grace. He calls us to view suffering as...

- A way to show your faith to your governing authorities.
- A way to do good in a harsh world
- A way to live lives commendable before God
- A way to know Jesus better.

You were put on base with Jesus by pure grace that makes no sense to most. But this is your calling, the grace to follow Jesus in His steps and live in hope freed to serve.

Set aside at least five minutes for these daily exercises and you will end up carrying them for hours! You can do this alone or a family group. Take the gifts you find and put them into action. With Jesus, they are a homerun!

Monday

Read: *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.* 1 Peter 2:13-17

Reflect: Take this verse into your scanning of the news media today. How does it change your perspective on the stories you read? How can you respond to at least one thing you read or see or hear that would represent living as a "servant of God?"

Hope Freed to Serve

Daily Readings & Reflections

Week 3 1 Peter 2:19-25

Tuesday

Read: *Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.* 1 Peter 2:18-19

Reflect: Whether workplace, school, marketplace, or home, think of one person you dislike being accountable to? How are you mindful of and discovering God making this a gracious relationship in your life?

Wednesday

Read: *For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* 1 Peter 2:20-21

Reflect: Recall a time you suffered for doing the right thing. What did the Lord teach you then... and now? How will you keep hope in focus and follow in His steps today?

Thursday

Read: *[Jesus] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* 1 Peter 2:22-23

Reflect: What specific sins trouble you and need release in the suffering Jesus? How will you trust Him with your confession? What do you believe you will receive?

Friday

Read: *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* 1 Peter 2:24

Reflect: What does it mean “to die to sin and live for righteousness?” How does Jesus make this possible?

Saturday

Read: *For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* 1 Peter 2:25

Reflect: This week began with commendation to submit to our authorities. The week ends with your Shepherd and Overseer. What insights have you learned about your hope in Jesus this week? How will you put them into practice as one freed to serve?

