

How many of you are happy? I mean really happy? Last Sunday in one of our mini-services, I asked, ‘How are you doing?’ Someone responded, ‘Fine’. That led to a discussion about what the next step above ‘fine’ would be – “good!” or ‘quite well, thank you!’ or ‘very good’. Have you noticed that during this time of great change – pandemic - that people are much more reserved when asked that question? We have something very much in common. This virus doesn’t show favorites – rich or poor – powerful or weak. There seems to be a great sense of uncertainty in the air for all of us. We are uncomfortable!

But isn’t this true for all of us as individuals? The uncomfortable? And not just in the small things – minor things like occasional monetary irritations or the youngster that occasionally forgets to put their books away or small conflicts with spouse. No the major threats to joy in our lives: serious disagreements with boss; the teenager that seems to evade our best efforts at discipline; or parents that are too busy or too stressed out to listen. Sometimes parents of young children who are struggling with the strong-will of the 2 year old or the 4 year old are ‘heartened’ by the words of a friend who has older children, when they say, ‘Just wait until they are teenagers, then you will know what it is all about, THE BEST IS YET TO COME.

I know that many of you who are reading this message are tired – a bit ragged – these last 3 months have been difficult and we are not sure whether things will get better or worse. People are getting restless and stress and worry can close in. But in our text, TRULY, the Lord through Peter assures us:

THEME: THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

I. NOW GOD SHELTERS US UNDER HIS MIGHTY HAND!

II. SOON HE WILL LIFT US UP TO GLORY!

When a young person enters the military it can be quite the humbling experience. Often it can mean a tight haircut, having people poke and prod in physical examines, and finding out that Uncle Sam doesn’t serve your food like mom did – all nice and shiny and separate. Peter says, “**Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.**” With these words he summarizes the thoughts of our text. It is a humbling experience to walk “**under Gods mighty hand**” – to accept the troubles and sorrows in life that he chooses to send – but he says, HOLD ON! – for at the PROPER TIME, he will lift you up to the glory of heaven! As he encourages us to humble ourselves, the Lord assures us that even now (in the midst of troubles and sorrows) HE SHELTERS US UNDER HIS MIGHTY HAND.

Perhaps you have wondered as most of us have at some time, ‘How can I know that there is a love-filled God out there who is sheltering me with his mighty hand?’ ‘Last night I woke with anxiety attack – I was worried about my son or daughter or one of my grandchildren – how will they turn out?’ Listen, the Lord says, “**Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**” Many of the Christians to whom Peter was writing were facing either death or ridicule because of their faith. Do you think we have worries? Try that on for size! These people had real troubles. Listen to his advice. He says, ‘Don’t try to carry them yourselves!’ Take these troubles – all of them – and toss them away, like a rider throws a saddle blanket on a horse. Cast you anxieties – your cares and worries on him! He can carry them for you!

At the end of a long day, an elevator operator noticed the woman who entered the elevator looking very tired, carrying two heavy bundles and asked to be taken to the 20th floor. As they began their journey upward the operator encouraged the woman to set the bundles down. ‘The elevator will carry them for you.’ She set them down and sure enough the elevator carried them up. Sometimes we are so much like that woman when it comes to the burdens we carry – the worries and cares of life. We tend to want to hold onto them, to try to carry them ourselves instead of casting them on Jesus and letting him carry them for us.

Does anyone truly love stress or like to worry? Not really. But often our problem is this – we hear Jesus gracious invitation, “**Cast all your anxiety on him**” and we aren’t so sure about the other part, “**because he cares for you!**” When face danger/trouble – we cry out in fear with the disciples who were in the storm tossed boat, “**Lord, don’t you care if we drown?**” **Mark 4:38** When we feel overworked, with Martha, we can say, “**Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?**” **Luke 10:40**

When we are driven by the cares and worries of the world, we are sinning (a lack of perfect trust in the Lord’s Promises). These cares and worries of life rob so many of their faith. Jesus warned, “**Be careful, or you hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life and that day (judgment day) will close on you like a trap.**” Don’t be caught unprepared, **worrying more about** where the next dollar is coming from, whether you have the right clothes, whether your friends will still like you, or even if “the virus” will get you. “**Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**” FOR HE REALLY DOES CARE FOR YOU! Stop and think how he

shows us *LOVE by daily supplying food, shelter and all we need for our body and life!* Be it ever so humble, Doesn't that show – HE CARES FOR US?

Stop and think about what he has done for you and me – for all people, even though we are sinners – totally unworthy of standing in the presence of our holy God. In John 10 Jesus said, **“I am the Good Shepherd, I know my sheep and my sheep know me...and I lay down my life for the sheep.”** In love, Jesus took all our sins upon himself – he suffered the pain of Hell that we deserved because of our sins. He allowed his life to be violently taken away on the cross, BECAUSE HE CARES FOR US! How many of your friends would die for you? Jesus would and did, because he cares for you!

We need that assurance. We need to know that even now in this love, he shelters us under his mighty hand. Because the devil wants us to think otherwise. He wants us to doubt that love and so destroy our faith. He attacks us violently, viciously in times of trouble – to create worries and doubts about Jesus amazing love. That's why Peter elsewhere warns, **“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”** Sometimes the devil our enemy sneaks up on us–other times boldly, up front, viciously. Like a roaring lion, he wants to swallow us with one bite. Sadly too often he succeeds – *in one bite*. A lost job (despair), a broken marriage (hopelessness), troubles with a friend (anger).

Be self-controlled and alert – knowing that these attacks come even to Christians. Remember, HE CARES FOR YOU! Don't get caught unprepared like the U.S. military on the island of Hawaii at the start of the 2nd World War. Totally unprepared for the surprise Japanese attack. Find your comfort in the Lord's promises. Stand firmly on them in God's Word. Arm yourselves with the Word and prayer!

“Resist him (the devil), standing firm in the faith.” “The faith” here is not speaking of our faith in Jesus, but objective faith, what we know and confess and believe from scripture. For the people of Peter's day it would have been easier to give up some of what they believed from the Word. To just blend with the unbelieving crowd. Perhaps, to say, there may be other ways of getting to heaven besides through faith in Jesus. It would be easier for us to just blend in with most of the visible Christian church today that ignores many of the Bibles most basic teachings. But Peter encourages, Resist the devil – stand firm in your confession.

Then he reminds us that we are not alone in our suffering in this sin-filled world. **“You know your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”** This isn't a matter of ‘miserable company’. But the fact that when we suffer other Christians are also suffering right now. Yes, others are facing sickness, death, poverty, ridicule – all for the sake of Jesus. We can stand – BECAUSE JESUS CARES FOR US and even now he protects, he shelters, he gives strength for each day.

YES, shielded by his mighty hand! And our time on this earth is so short. Only a little while! Peter writes, here, **“After you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you...”** As we suffer so often in this “little while”, he is there – yes, right beside us to protect. He has promised, **“I will never leave you or forsake you...”** **Hebrews 13:5.** Now in troubles - he cares - he shields - he shelters us under his mighty hand—but THE BEST IS YET TO COME! Soon he will lift us up to GLORY! Peter assures those to whom he is writing, **“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.”** God has called us to eternal glory!

Soon the storms and troubles God helps us to overcome are going to be gone! THE BEST IS YET TO COME! That is why the Apostle Paul in the midst of all he suffered could say, **“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”** **Romans 8:18** And again, **“For our light and monetary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all!”**

II Corinthians 4:17 What Glory! What Joy awaits us in heaven with Jesus! To this glory, Jesus has called us. This is the BEST THING THAT IS YET TO COME!

But for now there is no rush. He will lift us up in **“due time”**. At the proper time. His time! When our work is completed on this earth or when the last believer comes to faith at the dawn of judgment day, IN DUE TIME he will lift us up to the indescribable joy and glory of heaven!

In an early recording, the once popular comedian, Bill Cosby told the hilarious story called ‘Buck, Buck’. After he was finished and the audience was roaring with laughter, he said, ‘I really told you that story so I could tell you a better one – the best is yet to come! When the burdens of life get too heavy, yes, and now when the future may seem too uncertain, don't to carry these burdens yourself. Humble yourselves under his mighty hand! Turn to the Lord in his Word for comfort and strength in his sure promises. Speak to him in prayer and listen! Put the burden on him. He shelters us now. Remember THE BEST IS YET TO COME! SOON HE WILL LIFT US UP TO GLORY! Amen