

Sermon 1 Peter 2 19 25 4th Sunday of Easter 2017

Sermon: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – Mother's Day

Text: 1 Peter 2:21-25 (v. 25)

Theme: Lost and found

Goal: The Good Shepherd cares for the lost and wants them back

Dear Friends, Dear Mothers,

Introduction: The biggest suffering a mother can bear is the loss of a child; a loss not only by death, but a loss when a child goes astray by drunkenness, drugs or dissolute life. - Another kind of suffering a mother bears is when his child suffers from an illness, or has an accident, or a psychological disturbance. On the other hand, mothers are happy when they have the children around them, even as grown up children, receiving their love and kindness, especially on Mother's Day.

God compares His love for us to the love of a mother for her children. In Isaiah 49: 15-16 God says: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." God suffers when a child goes astray and rejoices when a child comes back home. Our text speaks about suffering and healing, about lost and found people. The image of the Good Shepherd is the background. Like a mother cares for her children, the Good Shepherd cares for His sheep.

I – We suffer for the sake of Christ

Suffering is not accepted by many Christians. It is seen as result of lack of faith and even some pastors of other churches give up of caring about sick and poor people, saying that they don't have enough faith to surpass the suffering. This kind of people deceives themselves, not knowing the will of God. It is just the opposite.

When we look to the life of the prophets and of the holy apostles, their lives were not easy and they suffered a lot. The first Christians suffered persecution and discrimination because of their faith. Peter addressed this letter to them, encouraging them to endure under the pain of unjust suffering for the sake of Christ.

Martin Luther placed the suffering as a mark of the Christian Church, beside Holy Baptism, Holy Communion and other signs like: the Word of God, the Office of the Keys, the Holy Ministry and Prayers. He wrote: *“They (the Christians) must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord’s Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ... This too is a holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies his people, but also blesses them.”*

God has a purpose when His people suffer. He wants to call us closer to Him in prayer and not to be self-confident. He wants to shape us according to His will, like gold is purified by fire. He wants to strengthen us as His children. Even if we in South Africa don’t suffer open persecution because we have religious freedom, but each of us knows the kind of suffering we endure due to our faith in the midst of a secular society that despises Christian principles. Worldwide, several laws are restricting Christian rights and are supporting anti-biblical behaviours, confining the church and Christian schools more and more to their four walls, and giving rights to what was shameful some time ago, and restricting the activities of the Christian Church. Endurance is necessary to face this different kind of persecution and suffering.

Mothers: Why do you discipline your children? You want to educate them to follow a good path. If you allow them to live in total

freedom, they will never learn how to face challenges and difficulties in their lives.

## II – Christ suffered for our sake

First of all we have to remember when we suffer, that Christ suffered for us. Peter pointed to the suffering of Christ for our sake as a font of power and as an example for us. “... because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps... When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” – The purpose of our suffering is not to pay for our sins; they were already paid by Jesus on the cross. Our suffering is not because we are worse than others; but it is a sign of God’s love and discipline for His children. When we endure in suffering, we are following the example of Christ, lifting our eyes to the Only One who can help us and who set before our eyes a promise of life and joy that no one can take from us.

## III – The Good Shepherd gathers His scattered sheep

God never abandons a suffering child. The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd helps us to understand His care for us and to rely on His promises in the midst of suffering. When Peter says at the end of this text about sufferings: “For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseers of your souls”, Peter pulls us to the fellowship of the flock to assure us that we are not alone, but we have the support of the other sheep and the support of the Good Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. As Good Shepherd, Jesus doesn’t want to lose any sheep but He goes to find the one who has gone astray. And as Overseer of our souls, His eyes are always open over us. He doesn’t slumber nor sleep, as Psalm 121 says. This gives us the assurance that He is always with us,

in good and in bad days, and that we shall not desperate when the sun delays to shine. It will shine!

Conclusion: Coming back to Mother's Day: The Good Shepherd loves our family. Someone said that the family was formed even before the church, when God created Adam and Eve and blessed them to bear children. The role of a mother and of a father is fundamental for the country to have a good society. Many of the problems we face in our society are the results of lack of education and discipline at home. Good families form good society. - The same can be said about the church: Good and established families form a good church. Parents who give good example of a Christian life to the children, who practice home devotions and prayers, who bring the children to the Services and to the Sunday School, are doing God's will. This is not a formula of success, because we know many who grew up in Christian homes and are walking astray now. But they know the way back and they will always be accepted by the Good Shepherd, who has concern on them and wants them back to His flock. Single people, who didn't form a family, they have their family here at the church, their Christian family.

Jesus said in the Gospel of John: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also" (John 10:16). This is a missionary vision to gather others to His flock, to His church. Do we know someone of our family or of our circle of friends that doesn't belong to the flock of the Good Shepherd? Jesus wants to bring him/her to our fellowship, maybe through our good testimony. Especially suffering people are waiting for a word of comfort and hope. Maybe this is the opportunity God is giving us to call them to the fellowship of the Good Shepherd. Pray for them, pray with them, leave a message of the Bible, and invite them to come. This is what we can do. The rest is with God. - May the Good Shepherd be with us and with our families always. Amen.