**The Longing for Beauty and Love – 2 Cor 4:17**

It Is Written – Week 5

Trinity Church – June 30, 2024

Rev. Catherine Howie

**OPENING**

**Prayer**

Peace – Luxury of no cell phones – hear that God treasures you and this time with us

God we hear you speaking to us from your word (Jer. 31:3)

*I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
    therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.*

Connection - hold hands, touch shoulders

Everyone – Stage, balcony, lobby

Participating on the stream, listening to the podcast

Pray over the struggles from last week on NSCards

Pray to the R / L

Extend your heart for us, into our remaining time together

(Keep the tender space – he is still here with our eyes open)

**It Is Written**

This is the last week of Part 1

Next week we will be in 1 John

In August, It Is Written Part 2

Keep reviewing all the memory verses we have learned so far

Download the Devo QR Code from last week

journey together this summer

**Intro myself**

Asked to serve as the Campus Pastor at the NEIndy location

Love to meet with you beyond Sundays (whether from NEI or EF)

Saturdays in July, 9-10am

at The Well Coffeehouse

Pastor Mike was planning to preach this sermon when he put together the series

Because this week is the answer to the last few weeks – I get to deliver the good news!

Today we are in 2 Corinthians – chapters 1 and 4

Bookmark them both; (using ESV because of the precise wording of this passage)

**INTRODUCTION**

If you know me even a little bit, you know I’m from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

The UP, I’m a Yooper

I see photos on social media of the UP, my heart reaches out

I want to be in the photo

Where the only sound is of the wind whooshing through the trees

The where the pine needles cover the forest floor, their scent wafting around me

And when I’m physically there, my heart aches for more

I’m not even sure what “more” it is aching for

There is a deep longing that is not quite satisfied

Have you felt this? Maybe it was when

You looked into your newborn’s eyes for the first time

You watched the sun slip into a glassy lake

You saw a photo that instantly took you back to a carefree childhood

This wistfulness is similar to the longing God put in our hearts for him

Our hearts were created to beat with God’s heart, to enjoy him forever

Since sin came into the world, we continue to long for him

The fullness of his peace and love

All the longings we have come back to Him

CS Lewis put it like this:

“We do not want merely to see beauty (though, God knows, even that is bounty enough.) We want something else which can hardly be put into words — to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.”

In this week’s memory verse

Can you hear the longing?

2 Cor 4:17 –

For this light momentary affliction

is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Before we get to the longing for glory, I have a few questions:

How can Paul say that our struggles are “light and momentary”?

And if that is how I am to view my struggles, how is that possible?

Let’s learn from Paul’s journey.

He didn’t always feel his struggles were “light & momentary.”

**Context** –

Paul was an evangelist and church planter around the Mediterranean Sea

The Gospel that he shared stirred everyone up as it disrupted current power systems

Paul made a lot of people mad and suffered much

At the beginning of this second letter to the Corinthian church Paul says:

2 Cor 1:8 *We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.*

**Paul Despaired**

Paul had faced so much persecution, he and his friends wanted to die.

Same word in both 1:8 and 4:17

**Affliction**: pressure, that is heavy, hostility, constricting (2347 *thlipsis*, verb)

Paul’s afflictions – 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; 32-33; 12:7-8, 10

PERSECUTION – not right or fair

Imprisoned for preaching

countless beatings, often near death

5x the Jews whipped him (forty lashes less one)

Whipped only 39 times b/c the said 40 was the max

They wanted to be sure they weren’t breaking the law

Cat o’ 9 tails – handle with many strips of leather attached

Each with a shard of glass, pottery, or stone at the end

Every lash ripped layers of skin and muscle away from the bone

I wonder what Paul was thinking the second time… or the fifth?

3x beaten with rods, pummeled almost to death with stones

VICTIM of crime, natural disasters causing him to be shipwrecked 3x, physical affliction (thorn in his flesh), ministry anxiety

No wonder he despaired!

Just one of these incidents would be too much for me!

Let me be clear – Paul is calling afflictions “light” (more in a minute!)

**But** he was not making light of anyone’s suffering!

**Paul Doesn’t Lose Heart**

Then, in 4:16, Paul says that he does not lose heart – what changed?

Let’s examine the language in verse 17 to look for an answer to our question

How Paul can say his troubles were “light and momentary”

2 Cor 4:17 - For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

**Contrasts**

Parallel ideas – feature of ancient lit

Greek word order is exactly parallel – no accident, this is a direct comparison

Our momentary lightness affliction

An eternal weight of glory

The Greek words that are contrasted have the same meaning in English

**Contrast of time** (momentary/eternal)

**Contrast of weight** (light/heavy – met., weighty in meaning, importance)

>>> Word play between affliction (heavy pressure)

And the weight of glory

**Repetition**

Ancient languages often use the same word to intensify meaning

Instead *more* and *most* we use in English (more excessive, most excessive)

In the Greek, Paul inserts a repeated word between the contrast of affliction/glory

(It’s at the end of 4:17, translated “Beyond all comparison”)

This sets up and describes, “eternal weight of glory”

Excessively beyond surpassing (direct translation) “beyond all comparison”

Or *huperbole eis huperbole*  (hoo-per-bo-lay, ice, hoo-per-bo-lay - #5236)

Beyond measuring, exceedingly upon exceedingly

English word – hyperbole (exaggeration for effect)

Similar in Greek, except the hyperbole is real, not exaggerated

**Language fails to have the words to describe the indescribable**

What CS Lewis said, “could hardly be put into words.”

**Can you hear the longing?**

This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. (hyperbole upon hyperbole!)

What changed Paul’s despair in 1:8 to calling his suffering in 4:17 light and momentary?

**Paul found a redeemed purpose in suffering**

**that gave him a new perspective of suffering**

**Redeemed Purpose of Suffering**

We have looked at many ways God uses our suffering to make us whole in Christ

I won’t restate them here (go on-line for past sermons)

Today, we can add one more:

In suffering, **we lean in closer to Jesus**

Not that the suffering or pain is good (*everyone* knows suffering is wrong!)

but in suffering we cling to him

we understand desperation, and become desperate for him only

this is good

This is the preparation Paul mentions in 4:17

The enemy sends suffering… to destroy us, to take us down

God, in his grace, redeems even the worst Satan can do

**There is One who suffered beyond what happened to Paul**

Jesus was misunderstood, hunted down, abandoned by his friends

He bore the full weight of all sin, of grief and of death

He was physically tortured to death on the cross

The purpose in his suffering is to redeem us

to put on display for the entire creation through all of time

he suffered because of his great love for us

Because of all Jesus went through, we also know that Jesus understands when we suffer:

Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.*

He is with us every moment in our suffering

God doesn’t cause suffering

But he redeems it as we cling to him in desperation

And he gives us a new perspective in it

**A New Perspective of Suffering** enables us to

1. **Trust in God** – he will deliver us

2 Corinthians 1:9-10 *Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*

Trust that his timing is perfect. (Ecc. 3:11)

Trust that he is with us in the suffering. (Is. 41:10)

Trust that he will use everything for our good. (Rom. 8:28)

**Suffering is an opportunity for us to deepen our trust in God.**

Even through tears.

Especially when we must endure.

Corrie & Betsie ten Boom were sisters imprisoned in a Nazi camp for saving Jews

They endured extreme abuse – mentally, physically, deprivation, beatings…

Betsie ten Boom’s last words to her sister, Corrie: “We must tell people what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been there.”

Can you hear the longing?

In extreme suffering, Betsie learned to trust God for what is unseen

**A New Perspective of Suffering** enables us to

1. **See the unseen** – there is no comparison, these are opposites

2 Corinthians 4:18

*…as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

Everyone knows the unseen things are more important than the seen

Deathbed regrets:

Is working late for a promotion at work more valuable

than tucking your child into bed at night? And so on…

See as the Father sees (1 Sam 16:7, Eph 1:18)

* *Man looks at the outward appearance, the Lord looks at the heart.*
* *Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.*

CALL UP BAND

SUMMARY -

With a redeemed purpose for suffering

And a new perspective of suffering

Let’s try to better understand what Paul means by

“*an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*”

**An Eternal Weight of Glory**

Another way to say this is we will be engulfed with love

All that we are, all we have done, all we have suffered, all we have delighted in

Timothy Keller says: *(all the sources are at the end of the notes on-line)*

“The Gospel does not accept suffering, it does not avoid suffering, it does not embrace suffering—it engulfs suffering. It all has to do with hope. What is our Christian hope? Is it just heaven? … if it is, then [heaven is] a compensation for all the things we’ve suffered, all the losses.”

“But if the future is a new heaven and a new earth, if the Christian hope is not just a compensation for what we’ve lost, but a restoration of the world and the life we’ve always wanted, that changes everything …. The Christian hope doesn’t just compensate you for suffering, it undoes it.”

This is difficult to imagine because it is outside our current reality.

But can you hear the longing?

God put that deep longing for eternity in our hearts – (Ecc 3:11)

Theologians call this the Beatific Vision – seeing God in all his beauty and glory

Far beyond what I feel about the Upper Peninsula, but similar

As we are engulfed by love -

Everything will be made right

Everything will be right… and glorious!

**How can we make this perspective shift so we trust God for the unseen?**

This glass is full of the air around us – let the air represent

all the suffering you are in

and all the good things that aren’t the best things – the seen things

How can we get the air out of the glass? (tip it in all directions)

Impossible, because air is everywhere

* We have to take it somewhere else (space) but then it is just empty
* We can fill it with something else (water) – the HOPE we have in Christ

This pushes everything else out – that is what Paul is telling us

How do we replace despair with trust?

How do we shift our focus

From what is seen to what is unseen?

From what is momentary to what is eternal?

From the pressure of affliction to the weight of glory beyond all comparison?

1. **Memorize God’s word** – his word is powerful!

That is why we are in this sermon series – continue to memorize through July

Knowing God’s truth pushes out all other influences

His word shifts our desires and motives toward him

It’s a weapon that defeats despair and cuts through the lies of the enemy

1. **Pray for one another** – he uses us in each other’s struggles!

Continuing in 2 Corinthians 1, verse11:

*You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*

Prayer is mysterious engagement in divine work.

We get to hold one another up in solidarity.

When some of us have lost **the longing for God** and heaven, we carry them

We can ask, can you hear it? And hold it for one another when we can’t

**Closing**

Give the staff team the privilege of praying with you.

Tear off a card – solidarity in the ripping of cards!

What longing of your heart are you waiting to be fully engulfed by Love,

the eternal weight of glory?

Can you hear the longing… of God for you?

**Closing** (Worship leaders/team)

Bring card with you, give it to a prayer team member

Prayer Team members will pray 2 Cor 4:17 over you today.

If you have lost hope because all you can see is your pain – let us hold you up and remind you of what is true

If you have forgotten how glorious God is – come and be reminded of truth

**Benediction**

Romans 15:13 - May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**RESOURCES**

Pastor Mike’s summer devotional, *All the Beauty We Were Made to Make*

<https://a.co/d/0h6hwlzz>

CS Lewis, “The Weight of Glory”

Print: <https://www.doxaweb.com/assets/weight_of_glory.pdf>

Audio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVzecmgFPq0>

Timothy Keller, “Christian Hope in Suffering”

<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/christian-hope-and-suffering/>

Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*

Bible Project overview of 2 Corinthians video

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/2-corinthians/>

Corinth

<https://preachingsource.com/journal/the-historical-background-of-first-corinthians/>