

Lent 5, 2009  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
Hebrews 5: 7 – 9

From the book of Hebrews, chapter 5. I paraphrase only slightly, the text that is in front of you. It says, In the days of His flesh, Jesus prayed with loud cries, and with tears, to the one who was able to save Him—and He was heard. Although He was the Son, still He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, became the source of eternal salvation.

The Word of God.

Grace mercy and truth be multiplied among you in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, AMEN.

Every Monday morning, no later than 9 o'clock, I chain myself to the computer in my office, and I start writing a sermon. Monday's the day, first thing in the morning, gotta write that sermon right away. And sometimes, sometimes when I sit down with the week's Bible lessons in front of me? I can't buy an idea. There just doesn't seem to be anything there to preach about—I start writing, and I can't stop yawning this is terrible, I'm going to sleep through my own sermon! Some weeks it seems like there's nothing there, and that's a problem. This week, the problem was just the opposite—there's *too much* there. This week there are almost too many themes and too many provocative ideas to really know where to begin. You look at this lesson from Hebrews, there are plenty of powerful things said here, more than I know what to do with, so I'm just going to list them out. And say a few things about each of them. And hopefully plant a few seeds, for you to wrestle with in the coming week.

Number 1, what it says in verse 7. “In the days of His flesh Jesus prayed with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save Him from death. And He was heard.” Start with the image of loud cries, and tears—any of us know what that's like? Any of us ever

been there, do we know what that's about? Umm, yeah, I'd say we all do. All of us, our bodies break down. People we love grow old, and die. Friends come and go, relationships fall apart, marriage and family sometimes falls apart—in life we all take a turn or two praying, with loud cries and tears. And when it is, our turn, for the loud cries and tears, boy is it ever important to remember that Jesus has been there too. Jesus had a lifetime of loud cries and tears—not just His death on the cross, which was bad enough, but all the lonely misunderstood moments leading up to the cross. All the times He was rejected, all the days friends turned around and left Him, all the days He spent homeless and unemployed which for the record was most of His life. Loud cries and tears were a daily reality for Jesus, and the prayers He prayed in the midst of those tears were heard! They were all heard by the one who was able to save Him! They may not have been answered with a Yes, I notice the text does not say that all of Jesus' prayers got the answer He was looking for. It only says the prayers were heard, by the one who was able to save Him. And we know what *that's* like too, don't we.

Life was not always easy for Jesus, nor is it always easy for us. There are loud cries and tears, there are prayers heard but not answered, at least not answered the way we think we want. But there is also hope, there is also faith, faith and hope in the One who is able to save us; and who will! God did not let Jesus go, but raised Him on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. God will not let us go. We who believe in Jesus, we who trust in Him, we who are so like Him in life—loud cries, tears, prayers waiting for an answer—we who are so like Him in life, will surely be like Him in death. And we shall rise, rescued forever, by the one who is able to save us—and who promises, He will.

Second theme second, thought provoking phrase. It's in verse 8, where we are told

Jesus “learned obedience, through what He suffered.” Hmm—now, everybody suffers once in a while, I just finished talking about that, everybody takes a turn or two in life with sadness and suffering as your lot. Fine, the question here is, *when* you suffer, *When* you suffer, you ever learn anything from it? You ever learn from it, instead of always and only saying “Dear God take this sadness away from me,” which is a prayer we all pray and I certainly know what that’s like, but instead of *just* praying that. Is there also a time to pray, “Lord? What shall I learn here? What would you have me know? What would you have me do.”

The people we are today, that doesn’t have to be the people we are tomorrow. There are life lessons to be learned, there are changes in attitudes and outlooks to be made. There are old habits to ditch and new and more godly habits to take on and in the hands of a merciful God. A God who wants only the best for you and for this world. In the hands of a merciful God suffering—can be a teacher. And a good one. If we are open to it, which I’m telling you right now is not easy and I preach a better camp than I do; nevertheless—

Jesus learned obedience through suffering. Even though He was the Son of God still He could learn, He learned obedience through suffering. What have we ever learned? Where and how have we ever grown in faith, or in discipleship? Or in obedience to the will of God. Was the suffering we’ve known in life only that and nothing more—a bad time best forgotten, and the sooner the better, or. Like Jesus. Can we be open to God and where God wants to lead us—is there greater obedience waiting for us to learn as well.

And lastly, verse 9. Where it says, “having been made perfect, Jesus became the source of eternal salvation.” First, the word perfect—wasn’t Jesus already perfect? Wasn’t He, isn’t He, the sinless Son of God? Yes. So what’s this mean, “He was *made* perfect?” Well

I'm not sure the word perfect is used here in a moral sense, I look at the word here more as a synonym of complete, or finish—Jesus having completed the task. Jesus having finished the race. Jesus' God-given mission having been perfected that is to say His God-given mission having been completed on the cross and in the empty tomb—I take perfect here as a synonym of complete, or finish. When Jesus did what He came to do. When He died to forgive us. When He rose again to open the Kingdom of Heaven to all who believe. When Jesus did what He came to do, “it is finished!” He said. He then became the source of eternal salvation.

That after all is the Good News of the Gospel for us, isn't it?. Jesus is the source of your salvation, He is the way the truth and the life for you in this world, and in the life of the world to come—this is your salvation! Good News! And this is also one more word of challenge, as you go about your life in this world as His servant—what exactly are you the source of? As we pick up and lay down tasks in life—as we perfect that is to say as we complete our time as employees, or as active duty parents raising children, or whatever, as we pick up and lay down our tasks in life—what are the source of? More bitterness and division? More pettiness, more discord? Or, following the example of Jesus, can we be the source of a blessing, that stretches beyond our brief moment?

Well, that's Hebrews 5. More thoughts that can be digested in a single sermon, maybe, but hopefully not something to (\*) yawn at either. Jesus is Lord. He died, He rose again. Life is in His hands. Rise up and follow, till His Kingdom comes at last. In the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.