

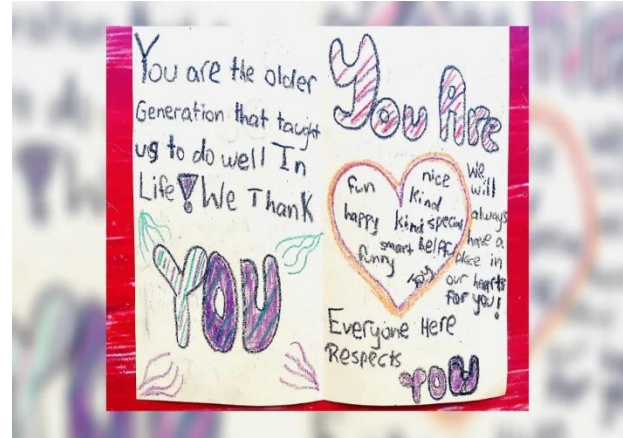
20200517 (6th Sunday of Easter)
Psalm 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-22
Live Faithfully When Life Gets Tough

INTRODUCTION

1 Cards of Encouragement Brighten the Days for Seniors Concerned about COVID-19
(CBC News · Posted: Apr 16, 2020)

Seniors around Windsor-Essex, ON are getting letters of encouragement during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic thanks to two young people who are collecting them from the public.

"I still wanted to find a way to connect and to bring some hope and encouragement to all of the seniors who are really struggling in the face of this," said Emily Truman, 16, who started the Virtual Happy Mail project.



2 Letters of Encouragement Brighten the Days for Christians



1 Peter is addressed to the Christians who were living in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, provinces in what is now Turkey.

It is apparent from the letter that Christians in Asia Minor had experienced persecution, and that more suffering was on the way.

Therefore, Peter encourages them to stay faithful to Christ with practical advice concerning their conduct when life gets difficult.

Christians are not immune to trials, troubles, and suffering. We may be courageous when troubles arise because we know help from the Lord will arrive shortly. But too often we are confused, unsure and disoriented of God's assistance in our lives and thus, our prayers seem to subside. Staying faithful to Christ can be a real challenge when life gets tough.

Theme: How can we live faithfully when life gets tough?

BODY

1 EAGER TO DO WHAT IS GOOD

1.1 Do What is Good

“Now who will harm you if you are *eager to do* what is good?” (1 Peter 3:13, NRSV)

① Eager to do (Greek: *zelotes*)

The word *zelotes* is often translated to Zealot.

The Zealots were prepared to liberate their country by every possible means.

They risked their lives for their passionate love towards their country, sacrificing ease and comfort, home and loved ones.

② What is good (Greek: *agathopoieō*)

The followers of Jesus in Asia Minor were experiencing insults, slander and harmful rumours.

Peter focused on how it was important for believers to endure unjust suffering whilst continuing to live well.

In sum, what does it look like to do good amidst a hostile world?

Christians should be zealots for what is good toward their neighbours, some of whom are hostile.

1.2 Do What is Good during COVID-19

How to do what is good during these isolated days?

- You may ask your kids to create cards for essential employees of fighting this virus, or the elderly in nursing homes.
- You may send your art through the mail or take pictures and share them digitally to cheer up friends and family members.
- You may pick up groceries for the elderly, including that grandma who may have been rude to you previously ^^.



2 WORSHIP CHRIST AS LORD OF YOUR LIFE

2.1 Worship the Lord of your life

“Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life” (1 Peter 3:15, NLT).

The heart of many Christians in the western world today is set on earthly things, possessions, and comforts.

They equate a good life with worldly rewards in the form of money, friends, status, or a successful career. However, this often leads to Christ being less prioritized in our lives.

Then, what does it mean to worship Christ as our Lord of our life?

- It means we understand that we may lose these things at any moment.
- We focus our hearts to eternal life, God’s mercy, and love.
- We set our hearts on Jesus Christ as our life’s greatest value.

2.2 We Imitate What We Worship

When my children were about three or four years old, I noticed how they imitated my wife and I.

- My son disciplined his stuffed animals just like the way my wife disciplined him.
- My daughter also preached to her dolls just like how I would preach to the congregation.
- They talked on their toy telephone with the same kind of Korean accent that my wife uses when she talks on the phone.



The principle is this: What we revere, we resemble, we worship something in creation, we become like it.

3 ALWAYS BE READY TO EXPLAIN YOUR HOPE

3.1 Always Be Ready to Explain Your Hope

Peter knew how important it was to explain our hope in Christ to everyone who asked.

In a somewhat hostile world, we will be called upon to defend the faith we hold and the hope by which we live.

Here we have certain things to say about our faith according to Peter.

- The defense must be reasonable.
- Our defense must be given with gentleness.
- Our defense must be given with reverence.
- Our defense must be easy for someone to believe in God.

3.2 North Korean Defector, Mr. Lee

Recently, I watched a Korean TV show regarding North Korean defectors from Kim Jong-un's repressive regime.

Mr. Lee's hope was to escape from North Korea to give his son better nutrition, education and freedom.

He had prepared his escape for 16 years, starting when his son was an infant.

He had practiced several times how to navigate a small wooden boat under stormy conditions.

He had carefully stored oil, fishing gear, food, and water in the boat.

On a stormy night in 2016, he and his 17-year-old son fled from North Korea on this small wooden boat.

While attempting to flee, he saw a North Korean coast guard vessel appear and demand him stop.

He was barely able to turn the boat around and escape.

Finally, Lee's family crossed the border and arrived in Ulleung Island, South Korea.

Nowadays, his family enjoys freedom in South Korea. He is able to explain how his hope allowed him to endure all the trials and tribulations he had gone through.



CONCLUSION

Peter reminds the Christians in Asia Minor that there is even a blessing for them when they suffer for righteousness' sake.

He teaches us that the presence of suffering should not make us shrink back from doing good.

Instead we should give a special place in our hearts to Christ.

We should be ready to explain our hope in God.

*10 For you, God, tested us;
you refined us like silver.*

*11 You brought us into prison
and laid burdens on our backs.*

*12 You let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water,
but you brought us to a place of abundance. (Psalm 66:10-12, NIV).*