

Second Hand Preacher

4th Sunday of Easter

May 7, 2017

1 Peter 2:20b-25

Anyone who has experienced a long-term illness has dealt with a certain amount of suffering. Sometimes it goes well and other times there is much anger and self-pity that occurs. I know when I suffered from Guillain-Barré Syndrome I was all over the map. On a good day I could suffer without complaining. Even if it hurt real badly, I would distract myself by staying positive. Sometimes when I was in pain, I didn't exactly have a poker face and people could literally see the pain. There were times when my mood caused me to be blue and some words of disgust came out of my lips. In that illness were times I felt overwhelmed with pain. Whether I was able to comprehend his love or not, Jesus was always there.

The early Christians faced a different kind of pain. They faced discrimination at the least and death at the greatest. Their lives were at times turned upside down because of their faith. The pain was probably social, economic, and at times physical. Many families were ripped apart because of family members taking steps to be baptized. St. Peter was there for them. He was a beacon of hope in sometimes conditions that were hopeless. He encouraged them by letting them know that their pain could be linked to the pain that Jesus felt in his persecution, both mentally and physically, on the way of the cross. Jesus gave all for us and Peter wanted to let the people know that their suffering was not in vain.

I believe there is such a thing as redemptive suffering. We have the ability to surrender our pain for his gain. Jesus can be there for us no matter what our suffering brings. It may be easiest to see in the physical, but pain comes in many shapes and sizes. It doesn't matter if the pain is minimal or life threatening, it is all pain. Jesus can handle it all and longs to take it from us. Pain can even lead us to greater conversion. It is often that people can have more profound faith after they have experienced significant pain. Jesus wants to work through our pain to let us see value in the experience. Pain exists in the world and God allows it to happen as an extension of free will. He doesn't deliberately give us pain, but he is there for us in the experience. Let us all join our pain to the Cross of Jesus.