

What Do We Do Now?

1 Peter 4:1-6

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 12, 2017

You can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter, and as you're doing that this morning, we are continuing a series called The Suffering Church, where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. If you're joining us for the first time today, I thought this would be a good series to start out with because everyone can relate to this topic. Everybody suffers and experiences pain.

I read the biography of a famous boxer recently whose trainer said that, "It's not the punches you land that beats you, it's the punches you miss that wear you out." And I think life is like that. It's not the opportunities you land that wear you out but the ones you miss. It's the jobs you miss, it's the people you miss, it's those sorts of things. To give another sports illustration, the NBA is in full swing right now in the United States. Does anybody watch basketball? Any basketball fan? Nobody. Oh, man. Oh, boy. Well, let me tell you a story anyway 'cause it's in my notes. Several years ago, I got to hear a player named Anthony Parker, an NBA player, who was on LeBron James's team. LeBron James is the most famous NBA player right now. He was on LeBron James' team the year James left to go to another team, and he said, "Overnight, we went from the best team in the country to literally the worst." And I think life can do that to you, too, right? There're times when you go from being at the very top of the world to the very bottom because someone gets traded or something happens, or whatever. And the question is, when that happens, how are you supposed to handle it? What are you supposed to do? I will stick with hockey illustrations in the future, by the way, just so you guys know.

That's what this series is about. It's about how to handle winning and losing at life. It's about how to handle it when you go from the top to the bottom. And that's what the book of 1 Peter is about. 1 Peter was written to a bunch of ... In a worldly sense of the term, you could say it was written to a bunch of losers, people who just couldn't land a punch, they couldn't get it right, they couldn't get a break, no matter what they did, no matter how hard they tried. And just a couple of examples of this, in chapter 1, verse 1, Peter calls them aliens. They weren't from their home, they're from somewhere else. In chapter 2, he calls them aliens and strangers, so he adds to that. He says they're scattered, which means they were blown to the wind? They were thrown to the four corners of the earth. But in spite of this, the point of the book is that these people are still winners in God's eyes. They still mean something to Him. And just as a way of seeing this for yourself, if you want to read our passage for today, we're gonna read in 1 Peter 3, verses 13 down through chapter 4. So if you want to read that with me, just to highlight this, in verse 13, it says,

13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. "And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled." 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in

Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. 1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

And we'll stop there. As you can see, in reading that passage, there's a lot in here. And you can't read all of that and not wonder what some of it means, so let me just give you some background for this and build up to it in the book of 1 Peter.

I've told you before, the word "suffering" occurs 16 times in the book of 1 Peter, 'cause that's the theme of the book. It's a book about suffering. If you break that down, that's about three times per chapter you see the word "suffering" or "suffer." It's a book about pain, which is why this series is called "The Suffering Church". These people were losing in life, losing in the government, losing in the workplace, that's what chapter 2 is about. And when you get to chapter 3, after talking about all this losing, in verse 13 Peter says what some consider to be the highlight of the letter. In 1 Peter 3:13, here's what it's all about, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?"

In other words, even if you're losing in life, even if you fail in all these areas that are mentioned in chapter 2, fail at work, fail in the government, fail in your home, fail in your marriage, if you're in Christ, you'll be okay. It's how Peter puts chapter 1 and chapter 2 together and gets to chapter 3. Chapter 1, who you are in Christ, chapter 2, all the sufferings of this life, and then chapter 3, you'll be okay because of what Christ has done for you. And then he gives two examples of what this means in chapter 3.

The first is that of Jesus, and the second is that of Noah, which we've talked about in previous weeks. But Jesus suffered for what is good. He experienced a lot of pain. Same thing goes for Noah. I told you last week, if you think our world is messed up, you need to read about the days of Noah, they were terrible. The world was so bad, God said, "Let's just destroy it and start all

over again." But Peter says God took care of these men in that horrible time, and He'll take care of you, too. That's the idea here. He watched out for them, He was faithful to them, He carried them through a bad, terrible world, and He'll carry you through this one as well. He won't let any harm come to you.

And then Peter shifts gears in chapter 4, and this is what we're gonna look at this morning, he shifts gears with the word "therefore." That points back to all he said so far in chapter 4 verse 1, "Since God has called you and chosen you," in the first chapter, "Since He's carried you through hard times," in chapters 2 and 3, "therefore, here's what you're supposed to do." And he goes on to tell you in this chapter.

And I think this is an important chapter in light of the recent events. I hear people ask me all the time, "What are we supposed to do now?" You guys ever asked that before? Ever wondered that? Am I the only one? Please tell me I'm not the only one. Does anybody else watch the news? What are we supposed to do with this messed up world? How are we supposed to handle all this evil we see around us? If you've been watching the news this past week, you'll know there was another shooting in Texas. This one at a church. I can't think of too many places in the world right now that should be safer than the church. But when the people were gathered together for worship, in the middle of a song, I believe, a gunman came in and opened fire and killed 26 people. And when you see that happen, you ask the question, "What do we do now?" How do you come back from that as a society? By the way, the Scripture reading for that morning was taken from Proverbs chapter 3, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." That was the Scripture read in that service before the shooting happened, which is very fitting. But you still have to wonder, what do we do now? A good friend of mine serves at a large church in Los Angeles, and he said that they started doing shooter training with their children's ministry to prepare for stuff like that. And he asked me the same question. "Why do we have to do this? These are kids, right?" I remember the time in Indiana when we put a security system into the church, and I thought the same thing. That's what Peter is addressing in this passage.

By the way, you have to be careful asking those sorts of things, 'cause it can paralyze you, it can drive you nuts, asking, "What do we do now?" I told you, last week, I was looking this up, but according to some websites and news sources, Canada is a stressed-out nation. I think it's 'cause we drink a lot of coffee and it rains so much. We just got all this energy and we're pent up inside and we want to use it. And the hockey rink doesn't open till 9:00, so the whole day you're just ready to ... Okay, maybe not. I used another hockey illustration, there you go. But according to The Globe and Mail website it says, anxiety has been around since we've been around, passed on through generations. But what isn't normal is the dramatic spike in people suffering from it. It says the numbers are staggering, 41% of Canadians are at high risk for anxiety attacks, according to a recent poll, and 36% felt so stressed out that it affected their daily lives. It said, to add to that, young people are really suffering from this. Anxiety is one of the most common problems with the young generation, to the point that they've been called the anxious generation. And they'll be entering the workforce when pressures are higher than ever before. But as the article goes on to point out, it's not just young people who suffer from anxiety. Older people do as well. I know elderly people who won't leave their homes 'cause they're scared to go outside. And I know middle-aged people who won't talk to strangers for the same reason, they're afraid, they're

frightened. And Peter says here that it shouldn't be that way for a believer. He says here that the evil world around you should not paralyze you with fear, there's something you can do about it. There's a way to respond to this in a God-honouring way.

To tell it with a story, in 1653, when the Puritan armies took over England, Oliver Cromwell sent Bulstrode Whitelocke to Sweden to smooth over relations between the two countries. And the ambassador was anxious about it, he was really nervous. As you can imagine, that's a big deal. And he stayed up all night pacing his room, walking back and forth, to the point that it woke up his servant, who came into his room and said this, he said, "Sir, can I ask you a question?" And Whitelocke said, "Certainly." He said, "Do you think God governed the world before you came into it?" He said, "Yes, I do." He said, "Do you think God will govern the world when you're gone?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Then, sir, do you not think God will govern the world while you're in it? Everything is gonna be fine, you can go to sleep." Friends, I want to tell you the same thing today, everything is gonna be fine. God is still governing the world. He governed the world before you got here. He'll govern the world when you're gone. You can go to sleep at night, He's bigger than all of this. And you can trust Him in it.

It's been said that those who know their way to God can find it in the dark, and those who trust Him can trust Him in the dark. And you can do that this morning. Just like Jesus and Noah, you can trust God in the dark. And that brings us to our passage. In 1 Peter 4, verses 1 through 6, Peter answers the question, "What do we do now?" If you're asking that question, when you watch the news in Texas and the news all over and all the evil, terrible things you see around, here's the answer to the question. Peter gives us several answers to the question, "What do we do now?" And the first one is this, it may come as a surprise a little bit to you: we arm ourselves. I don't mean that we're gonna go get in a bunker and collect canned goods and stockpile munitions, that's not what he means. But he says, "We arm ourselves, not for violence but for holiness." The Christian life is a fight. I don't know if you ever thought of this. Warren Wiersbe said, "The Christian life is not a playground, it's a battleground." And with this in mind, if you look in chapter 4, verse 1, Peter says, he says, "Therefore, since Christ also suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose."

That phrase "in the flesh" is actually repeated three times in this chapter to show you where the battle takes place. It says taking place in the flesh, in the real world, that's where Christ suffered, that's where you will suffer.

And to prepare for that, Peter goes on to say, "Arm yourselves." That phrase described a soldier putting on armour for war. It was a military term. With the same care that a soldier puts on armour for combat, you need to trust God in your suffering. With the same care that he puts on his sword and his shield and his helmet, you need to put on the mind of Christ, which is what this passage goes on to say, "Arm yourselves also with the same purpose."

Some of your translations say, "with the same mind." In other words, it's a mental battle. It's a battle in your head. You don't fight with your fists, you don't fight with tanks and guns, you fight with your heart and your mind.

To say this another way, there's a great temptation for Christians today to respond like the world in our suffering. And what I mean is we see people shoot up a church and we want to go shoot back. You guys know what I'm talking about? People talk like that. Or we watch them kill babies in an abortion clinic and we want to go blow the clinic up. Some professing (I use the word "professing") Christians have done that. They want an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Peter says, "You can't do that, because that's not the mind of Christ." That's not how Christ suffered. Christ armed Himself with love. He prepared Himself to forgive His enemies. He said, "Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. Bless your enemies. Bless, and do not curse." And it all starts in the mind.

I told you last week that there's nothing more common than frightened Christians, Christians who are scared of everything. There may be nothing more common than unthinking Christians, Christians who want to shut their mind off when they come to church. They want to unscrew their head at the neck and put it under their seat and pick it up on the way out the door. Peter says you can't do that here in your suffering. You don't prepare for an evil world that way. I want to tell you something, the more evil the world gets, the more you're gonna have to think when you walk out the door. Does that make sense? Maybe another way to say that is, when people start shooting up churches, you're past being able to shut your mind off. It wakes you up, doesn't it? You might wake up this week, you see all the crazy stuff happening, and you go, "Wait a minute, this is for real now." You're past being able to unscrew your head at the neck. When they attack us, and threaten us, and slander us verbally and physically, you're past all that stuff.

I told the men's Bible study several weeks ago that I grew up in a church that taught that doctrine or thinking was bad or at least they minimized it, because it was all about feelings. It was all about emotions and how you felt. But the problem with that is, when you suffer, it feels bad. It wreaks havoc on your emotions, and then what do you do? It's all you have to go on.

Some of you grew up in churches that taught you that thinking was not your job, it was the job of the leaders or the job of whoever. And they thought for you. Listen, we're past that now. You can't be that way anymore. The way to process pain is with your thinking and with your mind, and Peter says, "That's what you have to arm and prepare for battle." It starts in your thought life. A. W. Tozer said, "What comes into our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

And the decline of the mind has brought on all sorts of troubles in the Christian life, because you can't live as a Christian without your mind. You can't please God in your life if you don't please Him first in your head. I've talked with people who've gotten into sin and they've said, "I didn't mean to do that." Yes, you did, because you did it. You thought about it first, you planned it out. It's been said, "You don't fall into sin, you plan it." They said, "I can't believe I did that." Well, yes, you can, because it started first in here. And that's what you've got to fix. That's what you have to work on. That's what you have to repent of. The battle is won in your mind. You can't make it as a Christian in this crazy, messed up world without thinking. It's been said, "When you suffer, you need to ask yourself three questions: what do I feel? What do I think? What do I know? What do I feel? Well, I feel like giving up, 'cause this world is bad and it's getting worse. What do I think? I don't think I should give up. I think God is faithful. What do I know? I know He's faithful. It's an established fact, and you need to live with what you know, but that can't

happen if you're not saturating your mind with the Word of God. So this is the first answer to the question, "What do we do now?" We arm ourselves. Again, not for combat with the sword but for combat with the sword of the Spirit. A soldier once saw his general reading a Bible right before a war, and he asked him, "Does that help you before or after the battle?" And the general said, "It helps me during the battle." You need the Word of God to help you during the battle. You need to arm yourself in the mind.

And that leads to another way to answer the question, "What do we do now?" You need to cease from sin. This one just flows out of the previous one, but if you're arming yourself with the Word of God, it only makes sense you will cease from sin. You can't read the Bible without repenting. You can't study the Word of God without feeling convicted. To say it another way, you can't fight the world without fighting sin, it all starts here. And if you read on in verse 1, it says, "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." That phrase, "ceased from sin," doesn't mean Jesus stops sinning, because He never sinned in the first place. He didn't need to stop. It means He died for our sin. When Jesus died on the cross, he ceased His relationship with sin, and you need to cease yours, too, is the idea here. It's been said that you shouldn't enjoy the sins that your Saviour died for on the cross. Any time you're tempted to whatever the sin is, you need to think about what Christ went through because you're putting Him through it again, in a sense. Verse 2 goes on to say, "So as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lust of men, but for the will of God." It's a little bit harder to read, but you could translate this, "So as for you to live the rest of your time in the flesh, no longer for the lust of men but for the will of God." Again, Jesus ceased from sin, you should too.

And then he goes on to give a list of specific sins that these people struggled with in verse 3. It's a pretty nasty list. It said some terrible sins in here. It says, "For the time already it's sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries." I won't go into all of those sins, other than to say this is a pretty grotesque list. The Gentiles (non-Jews) were a pretty revolting people at the time. The Jews had some terrible things to say about them, but they said terrible things about them 'cause, in many ways, they were some pretty, pretty bad people.

Just one of these words in here, "sensuality," refers to behaviour that shocked public decency. Adulterous behaviour that shocked public decency, it was too terrible to mention. The same goes for carousing. The same goes for abominable idolatries. A lot of the pagan rituals back then would involve all kinds of horrible sins, things like that. That's what this is referring to. But Peter says, "Christ died for all these sins and you need to die to them, too." And as I looked at this list, I was thinking, I don't know if too many of us would be guilty of the things in here, it's not very common for us today, but I would say there are other sins we are just as guilty of, like anxiety.

Is that fair to say? Just talk about that one? We're afraid and anxious like nobody's business. We worry, and worry, and worry all the time. We fret, and we fret, and we fret, especially when we suffer, especially when we see that horrible stuff on the news about the shootings and things. In 2007, Jerry Bridges published a book called "Respectable Sins" in which he went through a list of sins that we consider respectable or okay to commit. And anxiety was number two on the list. I think he listed about ten sins. Anxiety was at the top. And here's what he said about it. He said,

Some years ago, I surveyed the entire New Testament looking for instances where various Christian character traits were taught by precept or by example, and I found 27 of them, 27 virtues of the Christian life. And it may not surprise you that love was at the top of the list, with humility a close second. But what really surprised me is that trusting in God was third. When someone says to you, "don't be anxious," or "don't be afraid," they're simply trying to encourage you, normally. But when God says it, it's a command. Not to trust God is a sin. To be anxious is to sin.

And here's why. Because God is on the throne, amen? Like the story of that ambassador to Sweden. God is governing things, and to refuse to acknowledge that is evil. It's a slap in God's face. If you said to your children, "I love you," and they said, "No, you don't," you would hate that, wouldn't you? That would be awful. If you said to your children, "Don't be afraid, I will protect you. I'll take care of you." And they said, "No, you won't. You're a liar." That'd be awful. To be anxious is to say that to God. To worry and worry and worry is to say to God, "No, you won't. You're a liar. You don't have things under control," and God hates it. Friends, this is a serious business. Anxiety is a serious business. It's a terrible sin in the eyes of God. A son doesn't ask his father, "Will you catch me?" Of course, he'll catch you, he is your father. That's what fathers do. It's part of their job description. And a son doesn't ask his dad if he'll pick him up when he falls. Of course, he'll do that. And God is no different, He will catch you, He will pick you up when you fall. You don't have to be anxious. You don't have to be afraid. You need to cease from sin. We could even, if we want to, in a certain way, put that in a list of these sins. It's an abominable adultery, to be anxious. It's a holy affront to the eyes of God.

And that leads to another question here, "What do we do now?" And that is, you need to have the right expectations. You need to arm yourselves, cease from sin and have the right expectations. Sometimes, we suffer because we have the wrong expectations. We think life is going to be easy. We think it's going to be a playground instead of a battleground. And the Scripture doesn't promise us that. One author said, "The shocking thing about our suffering is how shocked we are when we suffer." Anybody relate to that? You live in a fallen world, why are you surprised when your body falls apart? Or why are you surprised when the economy falls apart or whatever? It's a part of life. One Eastern Christian was talking to a Western Christian, and he said, "You Westerners are so shocked when you suffer, but for us, it's a part of life. We just come to expect it." We should all expect it. They say you're either going into a trial, or you're in the middle of a trial, or you're coming out of one.

And Peter alludes to that here in an interesting way in verse 4. When he goes on, he says, "In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you." That phrase, "in all this," means in all this sin, in all this sin and evil behaviour that they do in verse 3, "They're surprised you don't run with them into it." In other words, this is the first real insight we get into these people's suffering. Peter has been talking about suffering. But this is the first time in the book where we're shown what that means. They're being slandered. They're being maligned because they're not sinning with their neighbours anymore. They're not running with them into the same excesses of dissipation, which refers to all that mess in verse 3. They're not getting into that anymore with them. And as a result, their neighbours are coming after them.

I remember when I first got saved. I had a friend in high school who hated it, absolutely hated it. He couldn't stand what had happened to me. He would ask me, "Why don't you hang out with us anymore? You think you're better than us? You think you're too good for us?" That's what these people are experiencing here. They get saved, and they come home, and their family members say, "Hey, do you want to go carouse with us and get involved in some abominable adulteries like we always do?" And you say, "No". And then they're called a goody two-shoes or whatever. I remember the time a famous celebrity played golf with a famous pastor, and afterwards he was asked, "How did it go?" And he said, "I hated it because I felt guilty the whole time." And the other person said, "What did he say?" And the celebrity said, "He didn't say anything. I just felt bad." That's why people attack us, because we make them feel guilty. You guys know what this is like. You're at work, and everybody is telling some filthy joke or cussing up a storm, and they can tell you're just not part of this conversation. And what do they do? All the eyes go to you and say, "What is wrong with you?" A friend of mine was an elementary teacher in Indiana, and he was telling me, he said, "I can't even go into the break room to have lunch with everybody because the gossip is so bitter, and I just eat by myself." It's the kind of thing these people are struggling with. You see it today. It's nothing new.

Christians do so much good for society. If you study history, Christians were some of the first ones to start hospitals. We're some of the first ones to start orphanages. We're some of the first ones to start education. As a matter of fact, you could argue that the Reformation ... We just celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and, in some ways, the Reformation brought education to the Dark Ages. It's a big, big factor in it anyway. The printing press had just been invented, and the Reformers took that printing press and just went hog wild. And they taught the people German, they taught them French, so they could read their Bibles. They turned the whole world around.

Christians do things like that. And the moment one of our leaders messes up, it's all over Facebook and the news. And they say, "You're all a bunch of hypocrites." Or the moment somebody says something wacky in the name of Christ, the lost people say, "You're all wacky, you're all messed up like that." But Peter's point here is that you can't be a Christian and have the world like you. That's an unreasonable expectation. You can't be saved and not be slandered. It just won't happen, not if you're truly born again, not if you're truly converted. James chapter 4, verse 4 says, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?" In other words, the world and God are at war, and you're in the middle of it. You're not in the middle of it, you're on God's side. 1 John 2, verse 15 says, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." That word, "world," means the worldly way of thinking, the worldly way of doing things. All this stuff in verse 3 that we just looked at, that's the idea here. You can't be friends with the devil.

I think one reason we get so scared when we see bad things happening in the news is because we do love the world. And we're very comfortable here. And when that comfort starts getting taken away from us, we get really, really frightened. According to the World Atlas, the US and Canada are some of the richest countries in the world. Poor for us is you don't have two cars to drive. Or poor for us is you don't live in a four-bedroom house. We're very comfortable. We like the world. Peter says you can't have those expectations. It's not gonna go well for you. Eusebius, the church historian, had a run-in with the Roman emperor, Valens, who threatened to confiscate all

his goods. And Eusebius replied, "I don't have any goods." He says, "I don't have anything to confiscate." I think some of us suffer so much because we have so much to confiscate. And it's not wrong to have things, but it's wrong to tie your values and treasures in those things. Peter says, "Remember why you're being slandered, you're not of the world. Remember why they malign you, it's because you don't run with them into the same excesses of sin." That word, "run," is the idea of just going headlong into evil.

And at least one more answer to the question, "What do we do now?" We arm ourselves. We cease from sin. We have right expectations and understand that the world will be at odds with us as believers. Here's one more, and we'll tie it off with this one. We remember who we're accountable to. Ultimately, we do all these things because we remember who we're accountable to. We're not accountable to men. We're accountable to God. We're not accountable to the world, to this world, this earthly power. We're accountable to a higher power. So when the world doesn't like us, that's okay. They didn't like Jesus either. When the world slanders us and maligns us, and does all these terrible things, that's okay. We're not trying to please them anyway. We're trying to please God. Verses 4 through 6, just to read all of this, it says,

4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

Verse 6 is an interesting verse, when he says, "The gospel has been preached to those who are dead." But apparently, as part of the slander in verse 4, the unbelievers, the Gentiles, were saying to these believers, says, "You Christians die like we do, you suffer just like we do, so why should we listen to you? Why should we care what you have to say?" And Peter says, "The gospel was preached even to those who are dead, to those Christians who are dead, so that even though they're judged in the flesh, they'll live in the spirit according to the will of God." But the point is, we will all give an account to God. Unbelievers give an account, in verse 5, "to Him who's ready to judge the living and the dead." Believers give an account, in verse 6, "And they live in the spirit according to the will of God." But all of us will give an account. And so the principle here is you need to be careful how you respond to your suffering. Be careful how you respond to things like the shooting in Texas, and all the other evil things we see going on. Friends, this world is not getting any better. I don't have to tell you that. You see it every day. But you get through it by remembering who you're accountable to.

According to one source, this is a frightening statistic, but two of the deadliest shootings in US history happened in the last 40 days. And from January 1st to November 5th, there have been like 300 shootings in the US, where four or more people have been injured or died. And while all that happens across the border, the fear and anxiety make their way here, don't they? Because the news is everywhere. You can't turn it off. You get up in the morning, it's on your cell phone. You turn on the TV, it's there. This makes us an anxious nation. People are concerned here, but you don't have to be, because you know there's a higher power involved in all this. You know there is One who will judge the living and the dead and take care of all this mess one day.

You could say it this way, you have hope. I just keep telling you that and telling you that, because we have to remember that you have hope. In your trials, you don't have to be afraid. You don't have to be anxious. You have someone who is here to help you. December 17th, 1927, the USS S-4 submarine was running manoeuvres off the coast of Massachusetts when it was hit by a Coast Guard destroyer putting a 2-foot gash in the hull. It couldn't be plugged. And so the submarine sank to the bottom of the ocean, where it sat for three days waiting to be rescued. And while it was there, it sent messages to other submarines in the area, and one of those messages contained four words, "Is there any hope?" The world wants to know that today. Even as bad and wicked as this world is, they want to know if there's any hope. You have an answer to that question. There is hope. It's found in Jesus Christ. You know how to survive the shipwreck of this world, you trust in Christ. He is the one who suffered in the flesh, the just for the unjust to bring us to God. 1 Peter 2 says He left you an example to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, and by His wounds you were healed. Will you trust in Him today? You don't have to be afraid. You have a Saviour. You have someone to rescue you from this world. And let's pray and ask Him to bless this time of the Lord's Supper while we remember that together. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You, Lord, for Your Son who does give us hope. And we thank you that You do give us an answer to this difficult question of, "What do we do now?" We trust in the one who defeated death. We trust in the one who defeated the world. We trust in the one who rose victorious over it and came back to say, "There is a better life to come, and I'm the first one going there. Come with Me." Father, we thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ. None of us have any hope apart from Him. And none of us have eternal life apart from Him. Lord, we thank you for what Christ has done.

We do pray, as we come into this time of communion, He would be glorified in it. Father, we don't come to the Lord's table with any kind of arrogance or any kind of "We're better than the world." We come to the Lord's table as starving men and women to bread. Thank you for what Your Son has done. I thank you for the fact that He died for sinners like us. And may You be honoured as we partake together of this. We pray it in Christ's name, amen.