

YEAR END GIVING SLIDE

As we come to the last 2 months of 2023, let's talk about year-end giving.

- Fathom is about \$40,000 behind budget.
 - This is due to 3 factors:
 - 1 extra rent payment - \$9,316
 - Giving behind \$22,156
 - Spending up \$8,566

Now, let me tell you why this is both concerning, and not:

- We've lost a few solid families due to moving out of state.
- But almost 25% of you are new to Fathom since January 1.
 - And we know it takes time for new people...
 - to establish giving to a new church.
- Also 80% of those new folks are Gen-Z or Millennials.
 - These are the two **least churched** generations in the US.
 - I don't know if you've noticed...
 - But we're getting younger as a church...
 - And that's a great thing!
- We've done 10 baptisms this year...
 - 6 of those brand new believers...
 - For a church our size, that is awesome!

So, that's hugely exciting stuff.

- God is bringing people who, statistically, don't go to church!
- AND God is saving people at Fathom Church.

And listen, that's gonna cost more money.

A growing church needs to have a growing budget.

So, we want to make up that \$40k to end 2023 well, and launch into 2024.

Three thoughts:

- **First:** if Fathom is your church home, please prayerfully consider what God might want you to give.
 - Maybe you haven't given anything! Give something.
 - Maybe you're a faithful giver...
 - God might want you to be generous this season.
- **Second:** if you're new to Fathom this year, and you're leaning into this place...gosh, would you consider giving?
 - We love you. We're glad you're here.
 - Get in on this!
- **Third:** you can give online at fathomchurch.org/give or in the boxes...

This is another chance to get in on what God is doing.

- But he does that through us...
- through people being generous.

So, let's do this. Let's give generously.

- We'll keep you up to date...
- And if you have any questions...
 - Let me or Eric Shelly, our treasurer, know.

INTRODUCE **SLIDE 1** PETER

Alright, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to 1 Peter chapter 4.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to 1 Peter 4,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find 1 Peter 4 on page **1015**.

INTRODUCTION: COOL

So, through the years the words we use continue to change.
And it's funny how things that you said in your teens have kinda aged out.

Take the concept of something being "cool."

- If you were raised in the 1950s,
 - you might have said *keen* or *neato*.
- In the 60s things were *far-out* or *groovy*.
- In the 70s things got *gnarly*.
- The 80s were *tubular* or *rad*.
- We were *phat* (with a ph) and *tight* in the 90s.
- And the 2000s brought around words like *krunk* and *beast*.

And listen, all of them sound stupid when you say them today!

But they weren't then!

Well, one of the most common words for cool these days is this:

SLIDE 🔥

- of course we now use an emoji...
- instead of the actual word.

But if something is cool...it's FIRE.

MAIN POINT

Well, in our passage today, we find the idea of something being FIRE...

- but it doesn't mean COOL.

Today we're going to see that: **SLIDE** SUFFERING IS 🔥

Once again, our text is about suffering...

- which is actually a primary theme...
- underlying the entire book of 1 Peter.

EXPLAIN: THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING

And the reason why we have to talk about suffering...

- again and again and again in church...
- is because, as one theologian I read this week said,
 - *“one of the greatest defects in American Christians*
 - *is that we have an inadequate view of suffering.”*

You see, many people I meet with...

- have been taught EXPLICITLY...
 - that if you really love and follow Christ you won't suffer.
- OR they have IMPLICITLY believed the same thing...
 - because they didn't have a robust theology of suffering.
 - You ever find yourself going:
 - *“God, this shouldn't be happening to me!”*
 - Well, the question is:
 - *“Who told you that?”*
 - *Who told you that shouldn't be happening?*
 - *Cause it certainly wasn't God's Word!”*
- If we want to survive in the day of trial,
- we must have a good theology of suffering!

We need to train ourselves:

- **to believe in the darkness...**
- **what we know to be true in the light.**

TRANSITION

So, today we're going to see that SUFFERING IS 🔥.

- Let's turn to our text.
- 1 Peter 4 starting in verse 12:

1 PETER 4:12-13

[12] Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. [13] But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

POINT 1: REFINES

So, there we go...

- the trials that come upon you.
 - What are they?
- They're fire!
- SUFFERING IS 🔥.

That's literally what the Greek means.

- **Fiery trial.**
- The Greek word is *pyrōsis* (poo'-row-sis)
 - which is where we get the English word *purify*,
 - AND our word *pyro*.

Suffering is a fire that purifies.

So, let me make my first point here about the fire of suffering.

SLIDE SUFFERING REFINES

- SUFFERING REFINES you.
- it's a refiner's fire.

ILLUSTRATION: SILVER-SMITH

I've heard this illustration a number of times,

- most recently from Tim Keller,
- and I don't really know if it's true or not.

But when a silver-smith was asked...

- how he knows...
- when he's put the silver...
- through the fire enough...
- to refine it to purity.

Well, the silver-smith responded,

- *"I know it's been through enough..."*
- *when I can look at the molten silver...*
- *and I can see my own face reflected in it...*
 - *that's when I know it's been purified by fire."*

APPLICATION

And that's what Jesus does to us.

- He puts us through fire...trials...sufferings.
 - Over and over again,
- until he can see himself in us...
 - until we look like Jesus.

SUFFERING REFINES.

ILLUSTRATION: IRON ORE

I mean, think about that illustration of a metal-smith...

When an iron-smith throws iron ore into a fire,

- that ore contains both the pure and the impure.
- The worthy and the worthless.
- The metal...
 - and what's known as the dross.

But when the smith puts them in the fire...

- the fire creates a separation.
 - The pure can handle the fire,
 - but the impure cannot.
 - The true can handle the fire
 - but the false cannot.

And so, the fire separates, and burns off the dross.

- It purifies.
- It refines.
- It is changed.

TRANSITION

And that's what suffering does to us...it REFINES us.

- It burns away impurities...
- until only the good remains.

SLIDE SUFFERING IS 🔥

Now, Peter continues on this same train of thought,

- but takes it a little deeper.
- Look at verse 14:

1 PETER 4:14-16

[14] If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. [15] But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. [16] Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

EXPLAIN: TYPES OF SUFFERING

So, what Peter is doing in these verses...

- is showing that there are actually...
- different kinds of sufferings.

Sometimes you'll suffer because you're a Christian...

- for your faith.

Other times you'll suffer because you're sinning...

- we call those types of sufferings...consequences.

And sometimes suffering just happens to you...

- and you don't see a reason why it's happening.

BUT...Peter's encouragement is this:

- God is with you in this...
- AND God is up to something in this...
- SO, glorify him in your suffering.

POINT 2: REVEALS

So, it's here I'll make my second point.

SLIDE SUFFERING REVEALS

- It REFINES the impurities inside of us...
- But suffering is also a diagnostic tool...
 - that actually shows...
 - what's going on inside of us.

Back in verse 12 Peter called the fires of suffering a **test**.

- The word translated "test" in that verse
- is actually from a root word which means *to poke* or *to pierce*.

ILLUSTRATION: MEAT THERMOMETER

So, one of the things I'm into is smoking meats.

I've got a Traeger smoker,

- and so I love smoking ribs,
- and pork shoulders,
- and chicken,
- and beef...
- I even smoked a turkey a couple of Thanksgivings ago.

So, yeah...I'm kinda a big deal.

But there is a tool that is essential for any good smoker.

- And that tool is a meat thermometer.

Any good smoker knows...

- that it can look one way on the outside...
- but if you don't know what's happening inside the meat...
- it can be detrimental.

An over-cooked piece of meat can be rendered inedible.

An under-cooked piece of meat can actually make people very sick.

- So, you pierce the meat with the thermometer...
- to figure out what's going on inside.

ILLUSTRATION: ORE

Suffering REVEALS your inner temperature.

- It shows you what's going on inside.

So, back to our iron ore illustration...

Under normal temperatures...

- a piece of iron ore has those two things...
 - metal and dross...

- But they are inextricably linked.
 - You can't tell where one starts or the other stops.

Under normal temperatures...

under normal conditions...

- You don't even know how much...
 - silver or iron or gold is in the rock...
- and how much other worthless stuff...
 - is intermingled in there.

You have to put it in the fire to find out.

- And sometimes the whole thing is incinerated...
 - it is revealed that there wasn't much of value in there.
 - It was all dross.
- But other times it will come through with very little change,
 - because it was mainly pure metal.

APPLICATION: TRUST

Spiritually, the trial of fire REVEALS what you really trust.

- It shows you what you're made of.

See, our hearts are an amalgam of allegiances...of trusts.

We all have divided hearts.

- Some of the stuff we trust in are good things,
 - some of them less so...
- AND your trust of God is thrown in there, too.

And we all start out our Christian life with this mentality that goes,

- *"Of course I love God.*
- *I live for God.*
- *God is the most important thing in my life."*

But the reality is...there are a number of other things...

- alongside God...
- that you trust in as well.

And you'll never know how much you trust in them...

- until they're threatened...
- until the heat gets turned up.

You cannot reveal what's in your heart...without suffering.

- You can trust in your health...
 - but what happens when you get that diagnosis?
- You can trust in your parenting...
 - but what happens when your kids take a different path?
- You can trust in your career...
 - but what happens when you are fired...or you retire?
- You can trust in your intellect...
 - but what happens as your faculties start to turn on you?
- You can trust in your community...
 - but what happens when they move,
 - or they betray you,
 - or they just drift out of your life?
- You can trust in your marriage...
 - but what happens when it breaks down...
 - or when you lose them?

ALL OF THOSE THINGS CAN BE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU!

- How will they hold up over time,
- and old age,
- and even death?

They cannot.

And the fire will often show you...

- that although they aren't bad things in-and-of-themselves...
- they cannot be ultimate things in your life.

TRANSITION

That's what the fire of **SLIDE SUFFERING** reveals.

And finally, let's finish this chapter. Verse 17:

1 PETER 4:17-19

[17] For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? [18] And

"If the righteous is scarcely saved,

what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

[19] Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

POINT 3: RENEWS

If the fiery trials of suffering are hitting you,

- you can know its purpose...
 - is to REFINE something in you...
 - it's to REVEAL something in you...

But finally, we are to **entrust our souls to God** in the midst of suffering.

So, I'd say, **SLIDE SUFFERING RENEWS**

- SUFFERING RENEWS
 - our DESIRE FOR...
 - and our TRUST IN God.

You see,

- as the REFINING takes place,
- and the REVEALING takes place,
- you find out...
 - whether or not you got into this religion for GOD...
 - or if you got into this religion for YOU.
- You find out...
 - if you're in it for you to serve GOD,
 - or to get God to serve YOU.
- You find out...
 - If your faith-life is the means to get GOD,
 - or if God is the means to get the life YOU want.

And Christian, the call to you is to...

- suffer according to God's will
- and to entrust your soul to him who is faithful.

Now, this can be unbelievably hard and scary,

- but the RENEWAL that comes from the fire of suffering...
- actually goes to bring you life to the full.

ILLUSTRATION: PRUNING

Another metaphor used for suffering in the Bible is of pruning a tree.

That is: for a plant to flourish it has to be pruned.

So, we had our four huge trees in our yard pruned a couple months ago.

- We have to do this every five-or-so years,
 - and we paid...
 - a lot of money...
- to a professional tree-trimmer.

And if you've seen this, to the untrained eye, pruning seems awful.

- If you ever see a tree after it's been pruned...
 - it looks like a disaster!
 - You've got all these leaves and branches...
 - lying all over the ground...
 - And they sometimes even look good...
 - like, healthy...
 - like they should be still connected to the tree.
 - And you don't even know why those things were cut off.

Pruning looks a lot like violence to the tree.

- But pruning is the process...
- by which the tree-trimmer...
- brings out the best life that tree can have.

The wise tree-trimmer has not removed anything...

- that was not a loss to keep...
- or a gain to lose.

SLIDE SUFFERING IS 🔥

ILLUSTRATION: 2019

So, I talked pretty openly last Sunday about 5-years-ago...

- when I was disciplined for plagiarizing portions...
- of some sermons I preached.

And that whole experience was like fire in my life...

- I experienced all three things:
 - REFINING...
 - REVEALING...
 - and RENEWING.

And I told you it took me months...

- to really unwind the reasons
- of how I had gotten there.

But I came to the place...

- where one of the big realizations I gained...
- was how much of...
 - my identity IN Christ...
- was wrapped up in...
 - what I did FOR Christ in ministry.

It wasn't that I DIDN'T trust in God...

- I just also really trusted a lot...
 - in what I COULD DO for God in ministry.

And I didn't know it!

- I couldn't see it!
- I had to be put in the place...
 - where all of this ministry stuff...
 - was being taken away from me...
- I needed to be thrust into the fire...
 - and it was the flame that REFINED...
 - and it was that flame that REVEALED...
 - and it was the flame that ultimately RENEWED...
 - my relationship with Christ.

The fire burnt away a lot of that mess...

This is what SUFFERING does!

And it wasn't just that instance...

- I could've talked about my wife's chronic illness...
- Or our miscarriage...
- Or my parent's divorce...
- Or my mom's cancer...

They've all played a part as fire in my life.

It's why one of my favorite quotes from C.S. Lewis is this:

SLIDE

"We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

CONCLUSION: NORMAL

Now, I want to circle back to verse 12 and 13 as we come to a close.

- Before all this **SLIDE SUFFERING IS** 🔥 stuff,
- Peter first says, **"don't be surprised."**
 - He says: **Don't be surprised...**
 - **As if something strange were happening to you...**

You know what that means:

SUFFERING IS NORMATIVE.

Why do we talk about suffering ALL THE TIME here at Fathom?

- It's because this book is grimy...
 - it's messy.
- It's full of trials and tribulations!

It's almost as if the God of the Bible...

- wants us to know that...
- in this life suffering is going to be NORMAL!

- That disappointment...
 - and confusion...
 - and disorientation...
- around the realities of living in a fallen world...
 - is to be expected!

And gosh,

- the reason why I think that's so difficult...
- for us to get our heads around...
- is because in our cultural moment...
- it's EXPECTED...that everyone's reality...
 - should be full of delight,
 - and pleasure,
 - and ever-increasing happiness,
 - with very little confusion
 - or disappointment
 - or suffering
 - or pain.

But the Bible never paints that picture for us...

- and listen...that's a reason to trust it!
 - Because it lines up with reality.
 - It tells it like it is.
- Suffering is **NORMATIVE**.

It's **NORMAL** for God to bring fiery trials into our lives...

- it's the only way he can **REFINE** you...
- it's the only way he can **REVEAL** what's going on inside...
- it's meant to lead you to a **RENEWAL** of trust in him alone!

And so, he brings things into your lives that turn up the heat...

- and those things will seem irrational to you...
- and those things will make no sense to you in the moment.

But it's the NORMAL way of things!

TRANSITION

And we know this when we think about children.

- Listen, there is no way to turn a child...
 - into a mature adult...
- without them constantly accusing you of cruelty.

Parents know this...

- but even if you don't have kids...you know.
 - Children are constantly asking,
 - *"Why are you doing this?"*
 - *Why can't I do that?*
 - *Why do you get to make that decision for me?*
 - *You're not the boss of me!"*
 - *Oh, yes I am!*

ILLUSTRATION: SHOTS

So, this is the illustration I use.

When Harper was three, we took her to the pediatrician for her check-up.

And her pediatrician, Dr. Kelly, came in.

And at that age Harper loved Dr. Kelly...she wasn't afraid of the doctor.

- So, she does the check-up on Harper,
 - and everything's looking good.
 - And it's all going smooth.

Until the very end of the appointment...

- when Dr. Kelly says,
 - *“Well, that’s it...except for two shots.”*

And thanks to Doc McStuffins, Harper knew what shots were...

- and she freaked out!

She started crying and saying,

- *“Daddy, no shots.*
- *Daddy, no shots.*
- *Daddy, no shots.”*

And then, like, an unholy strength came over her...

- like the strength of 1,000 suns...
 - and she began to fight
 - and wriggle
 - and try to avoid getting the shots.

And Dr. Kelly looks at me like, “Are you gonna help?”

So, here’s what I had to do:

- I sat my little girl on my lap...
 - and she’s fighting me...
- but, I have to grab ahold of her arms.
- And grab ahold of her legs.
- And I have to overpower her with my strength.
 - All the while Dr. Kevorkian...I mean Dr. Kelly...
 - gives her the shots.

And I’ll never forget Harper looking at me with tears in her eyes...

- to the one who’s supposed to protect her...
- to the one who she’s supposed to trust...
- saying, *“Daddy, no shots!”*

And listen, I tried to explain it to her...

- I showed her that poster...
- of all the sick and dying kids on the wall...
- to try to convince her that a shot is better than lock-jaw...
 - which is a real creepy poster
 - in a pediatrician's office!

But her fear and pain was overshadowing any reasonable explanation.

You see, the truth is...

- she needs the shots....

BUT...

- the truth is also that she has a father who loves her...
 - and can sympathize with her in this...
 - cause I remember being afraid of the shots.

ENDING SLIDE W/PADS

And this is where I want us to end.

- I want you to remember one of the most important differences
- in Christianity from all the other world religions.

We have a God who knows what it's like to suffer.

- Jesus Christ suffered socially...
- he suffered physically...
- he suffered spiritually.

Our God is the only God...

- who when we go to him in our suffering,
 - in our fires,
- he can say,
 - *"Oh my child...I know..."*

- *I know what you mean...*
- *I know what that feels like.”*

We have a God who knows what it's like to be us...

- and because of that we can,
 - as Peter said in verse 19:
- **we can entrust ourselves to him.**

And what are we entrusting him with?

- We're trusting that God is at work in the mess.
 - It's not that there isn't a mess...
 - or a promise of no more messes this side of eternity.

NO!

- But we have a God who knows our mess...
 - who knows what our mess feels like...
 - who is with us in our mess...
 - and who is up to something in the mess.

SUFFERING REFINES.

SUFFERING REVEALS.

SUFFERING RENEWS.

SUFFERING IS 🔥

And he's with us in the fire.

Let's pray.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

- Chandler, Matt. *God and Suffering*.
- Jobes, Karen H.. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. 1 Peter.
- Keller, Tim. *How to Handle Suffering*.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. The New American Commentary. 1, 2 Peter, Jude.