**I Like the Christian Life**

Based on [1 Peter 4](https://biblia.com/books/esv/1Pe4)

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Lenten Midweek 4

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St. Peter wrote his first epistle to the “elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” From the beginning, the one true catholic and apostolic church has been dispersed…*scattered* throughout the world as exiles. But the church is still a whole,--one in mind, one in spirit, one in baptism, one in faith, one in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Just as the soldiers divided Jesus’ outer garments, but his inner tunic remained seamless, so too the church may be scattered outwardly, but is inwardly united by the seamless doctrine and faith delivered once for all to the saints.**

This seamless doctrine spreads across both time and space. The doctrine is not only the same from one side of the world to the other, it is the same today as it was 2000 years ago in the time of Christ and the Apostles. The doctrine is given in Holy Scripture, including for our meditation today The First Epistle of the Apostle Peter.

Chapter 4 is largely an exhortation to embrace Christ with your whole being. That means embracing not only the doctrine of Christ, but also his life and works; his detestation of sin, and suffering evil for love’s sake.

It is one thing to profess a doctrine of suffering, but do you suffer willingly for the doctrine of Christ? It is one thing to say that faith in Christ makes a difference, but do you still imitate the faithless as though they are wise? Peter tells of the difference between the children of light and children of the world. The “Gentiles’ as it were, seek after pleasure and avoid suffering at all costs. That is not the way of Christ. Because we have Christ, and our inheritance is laid up for us in heaven, we are called to an acceptance of suffering, even rejoicing in it as it is a sharing in Christ. We are also called to renounce, even despise the pleasure-seeking life.

Peter says, “**live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. 3For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; 5but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”**

There’s an old country music song called “the Christian life” It has a line in the chorus that is very succinct. “**Others find pleasure in things I despise…I like the Christian Life”**. The Christian is plagued by evil desires, but when he learns what they are and where they come from, he despises them for the evil they are. He seeks to subdue the flesh. He desires to make every word, thought and deed captive to Christ, and therefore free from sin.

But this is not a simple task. I wish it were. Wouldn’t it be nice if you simply needed to give your life to Christ, and then you have the sense and natural ability to shun evil and do what is good. But Martin Luther once said, “**The world is like a drunken peasant. If you lift him into the saddle on one side, he will fall off on the other side. One can’t help him, no matter how one tries. He wants to be the devil’s.**”

In seeking the Christian Life, the way is narrow. But the path that leads to destruction is broad. The ditch is ready for you to fall off of either side of the saddle. In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees and the Saducees well represented the extremes of religious life apart from Christ.

First, there was a Phariseeism in Jesus’ day and a sort of Puritanism or Pietism in our own day…that can misidentify the Christian life. They turn to their own rules for righteousness…usually outward cleanness, tidyness, discipline, …oftentimes a Spartan work ethic and financial success. They use these rules to prop their drunken selves atop the horse, thinking these things are marks of Godliness. It’s just a different kind of idolatry.

But there is a backlash. There are neo-Sadducess who, in the name of Christ, embrace lawlessness. They teach Christians not only to live among pagans, but live like them. They teach that, since Christ paid for sin, we can treat it lightly. We can sin boldly, so that grace may abound. And so, in pursuit of the Christian life, the peasant staggers and falls off of the other side of the horse.

The common denominator in this is this: trying to live the Christian life without Christ…and by that I mean without suffering with him and for him. The Lawless avoid suffering by shunning rules for the sake of humility and love. The Pharisee, he avoids suffering by embracing rules without humility and love. It is easy to love without rules. It is easy to follow rules without love. Both seek the Christian life without Christ.

All this to say, the Christian life is a fine line, and it is impossible to walk it without Christ, without suffering for his doctrine, without despising sin, without loving those whom he died for, which is all people; and without daily repentance for when you are led astray by the flesh and fail in these things.

All of us have evil desires, but that country song sums up how our attitude ought to be towards them. “**Others find pleasure in things I despise…But I like the Christian life**” I find joy in suffering with Christ.