**Sunday, May 20, 2012**

**Welcome** – Greg Snow

**Keeping Our Eyes On Jesus –**-*Hebrews 12:1-2*

Hear the word of the Lord…

Since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.Because of the joyawaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.

Lets sing out together as we encourage each other to run the race and fight the battle that God has set before us!

**Song of Praise** – *O Church Arise*

**Prayer of Confession** - *Psalm 119:116-117, John 14:1*

Lets join together in this time and prayer of Confession. Please read the text in red print.

Lord God ruler of all,  
 We have heard so many times that you are our rock and refuge.  
 But we confess that our hearts are haunted with doubt.  
 If we could only hear and believe our Savior when he says,  
 “Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God”.  
 We ask for a faith that truly relies and trusts you even in the darkest situations. Help us to fully understand that if you are for us, that nothing can be against us.  
  
 Sustain us according to your word. Let not our hope be put to shame.   
 Hold us safely in Jesus Christ that we may live according to your promise.

Take a moment to confess silently before the Lord, knowing that He is ready to forgive our doubts and lack of faith.

**Song of Worship** – *Here Is Love*

**Assurance of God’s Word** – *Romans 8:28-30*

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who lovehim, whohave been called according to his purpose.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

**Songs of Worship** – *Oh the Deep, Deep Love/The Potter’s Hand*

**Offering**

**The Call To Suffer *–****John Piper; 1 Peter 2:18-25*

If you are a Christian this morning, God has called you to endure unjust suffering without bitterness or revenge or the desire to hurt back. Itis very common for Christians to question why we are called to suffer but in reality scripture teaches that if you do right, you will suffer and be criticized. I encourage you to leave behind the yoke of self-pity and the yoke of bitterness. God is there in every relationship. Remember him. Be conscious of him. Hand it over to him. Trust him. Listen to the words of 1 Peter 2:18-25.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

**Songs of Worship –** *Before the Throne of God Above/ Jesus Paid It All*

**Message** – *“Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”*   
 *Scripture Reference: Matthew 5:10-11*

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

1. **Point is Persecution**
   * The result of a righteous life is persecution. Assurance of our salvation is not found in a past decision. A decision that is of God will result in a righteous life followed by suffering and persecution.
   * The reason we don’t suffer as believers is because we have watered down God’s standards and truth!
   * A righteous citizen of the kingdom will be reviled, persecuted, and spoken evil of because we reflect His new nature in us.

2. **Pathway to Persecution**

* Recognize your own unrighteousness and sin (Matthew 5:3-4)
* Seek, desire, and reflect His righteousness (Matthew 5:5-9)
* The result will be persecution (Matthew 5:10-12)

3. **Pilot in Persecution - Knowledge**

* It is the knowledge of His word, not emotions, feelings or human reasoning that guides the saint in troubling times and seasons of suffering.
* Knowledge of His word will help us to know  
   1. Identification with Christ will lead to persecution  
   2. Persecution and suffering are God’s tools to sanctify us.  
   3. Persecution is an opportunity for the supernatural radiance of our Christ like life to show forth.

4. **Promise of Persecution**

* **Helpful** to our Christian growth (James 1:2-4).
  + **Heritage** – we stand in a long line of great saints.
  + **Home** – heaven is our final destination.

**Takeaways**

* Are you suffering – do you receive trouble because of your holy life?
* Is your trouble because of unfaithfulness? Are you serving two masters? Maybe you are suffering because of sin.
* Encouragement – right living in accordance with His word will result in persecution in all kinds of ways. (You can’t laugh at their humor; you can’t go where they go (casino, parties, movies, clubs, etc); you delight in God’s word and His people – His glory.)

**Time of Prayer**