

**A Living Hope: Casting your cares**  
**A meditation on 1 Peter 4:12-14 & 5:6-11**

*Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)*

To God be the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Dear sisters and brothers,

it is a joy and a challenge to preach. And today is no exception. When I read the passage for today, my heart sank. Because I am a worrier. I find very easy to worry. And in this passage, it says, “cast all your anxieties on him”. I am not so good at letting go of whatever I may be worrying about. I don’t think it is so easy to just ‘let go’ of anxieties. And I know that many of us in this congregation have lots of challenges in our lives that cause us a great deal of worry. Is the Bible really telling us to simply ‘throw away’ our worries? Is this even possible?

But on closer reading of the passage, I did find some comfort and reassurance. Firstly, worries are real! Secondly, God cares for us. And thirdly, suffering can lead us into deep communion with God.

Let’s look at those three in more detail.

**Firstly, worries are real!**

Psychologists say that worrying is a normal human experience, because we as humans are able to imagine the future. As much as we would like to live in the here-and-now all the time, it is natural for our minds to think about what might happen tomorrow, what the next few months may hold, or what consequences could occur if we were to take a certain action. But when our lives get totally controlled by worries, we can lose the joy of living.

The original audience to Peter’s letter were Christians who were really struggling. They had plenty to worry about. They lived under Roman rule among people who called them names for following Christ. These Christians were ridiculed and taunted and excluded. It affected their businesses, their friendships, their opportunities. At the time there was no state persecution of Christians, but some may have always felt a looming sense of threat. It was easy for their back-of-the-mind worries and anxieties to spiral into big worries and constant anxiety.

**But what really encourages me is that God cares for us.**

Peter says, “Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you”. It is easy to be overcome by worries and negative thoughts. But have you noticed how many wonderful reminders of God’s blessings are in this passage too? Maybe this is Peter’s way of helping the hearers of his letter to re-balance their worried state of mind and get some perspective.

Listen to these blessings which are collected from just these two small extracts of Peter’s letter:

- You are blessed.
- The Spirit of God's glory rests on you.
- You will be exalted.
- God cares for you.
- God calls you to his eternal glory.
- Christ himself will restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Peter reminds us that when life is tough, God's blessings are real too. And when I find it difficult to live with the uncertainty of the future, I can remember that my eternal future is secure.

**And finally, suffering can lead us into deep communion with God.**

Being a Christian doesn't mean we are immune to difficulties, suffering, pain or persecution. In fact, we shouldn't be surprised to experience these things. It is part of the Christian life. You could say, it is the pattern of Christ. Christ lived a humble life, he suffered, died and was buried ... and then he rose again. This is the pattern: from suffering to glory; from humility to exaltation; from death to life; from last to first; from least to greatest. This pattern which Jesus taught and demonstrated is the pattern of our life as Christians. As we share in Christ's sufferings we can rejoice because suffering is not the end.

Peter's letter was not meant to be an unbearable burden of moral instruction. Actually, Peter had first-hand experience of failing at these very instructions. When he says, 'Resist the devil and stand firm in your faith', he wrote those words with the memory of his own failure to do so. Remember, it was Peter who three times denied Jesus. In the days of Jesus' arrest and trial, Peter had been identified as a follower of Jesus, and yet he claimed not to know Jesus, he *swore* he didn't know him – three times. Peter didn't have a perfect track-record of standing firm in the faith. But through his failure, Peter experienced the deep love and grace of God. Because when Jesus had risen from the dead, he came to Peter and restored him.

Peter witnessed Christ's humble life, his brutal death and his glorious resurrection. And Peter experienced the pain of failure and the grace of restoration. That is why Peter can say with such confidence and conviction that after you have been tested, even if you failed or couldn't resist, Christ will restore you, Christ will confirm you, Christ will strengthen you and Christ will establish you.

So, dear sisters and brothers, when you are overcome by worry, anxiety, burdens and trouble, know that you are not alone. God knows what you are going through. He sees you. And he cares for you. God is with you when you face the hardest trials, and even when we fail and fall, he promises to restore us, to confirm us as his beloved children, to strengthen us and establish us in his everlasting kingdom. He is powerful, and he will do it. Amen