He is risen.

He is risen indeed. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. You may be seated. Christ is the world's redeemer, the lover of the pure. We have this in Jesus' priestly prayer, it's called the High Priestly Prayer, as He is preparing the disciples for what is coming next. Now, last week on Thursday, we had Christ ascending into the heavens. So He disappeared from this world, He left this world, but already here in the High Priestly Prayer, which was spoken before He suffered and died, He has the same idea or same concept that He is proclaiming to the people, to his disciples, "I am no longer in the world, but my disciples are in the world." That is really what He is trying to prepare us for. We are in this world, but we are not called to be of this world. So being in the world but not of the world means that we are going to act and look different than the rest of the world, and different in the rest of the world's eyes is very often bad.

At least even for that much, we will not be necessarily respected or honored or even remembered. Quite frankly, we may even have to suffer for the sake of Christ. That's part of what Christ is trying to prepare us for is to remind us that He is the glory of God and He has done the glory of God here on earth, and He is going to be with God so that He might send his helper to us that we might reflect the glory of God in all that we do. So his priestly prayer is to remind the disciples that everything that Christ has spoken is from God, the Father, and the Father is in Christ and Christ is in the Father, and Christ is in us and we are in Christ, and so therefore we are in the Father and the Father is in us and He sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. So we have God with us.

God is with us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us so that while we are in the world but not of the world, we might have the strength and the ability to stand firm because there is in this world suffering. Now, there is suffering in general in all the world just because we live in a broken and fallen world. Ever since Adam and Eve ate the fruit, we've had suffering, and that suffering comes from just our life and our bodies breaking down. We suffer from disease and illness, but we also suffer from strife and animosity between each other and struggle, but we also particularly suffer because of sin. Sin came into the world, the wages of sin is death, and so we ought not to be surprised that when sin happens, there is also suffering.

But that is not the suffering that God is talking about here. Although because we know that God is glorified, the Father is glorified in Christ and Christ is glorified in us and that we have the Holy Spirit, we know all of these things to be true, so that when we suffer as a result of our sin or just as a result of the brokenness of the world, we suffer knowing that there is a hope and a promise that comes after that.

We know that even though the wages of sin is death, we haven't died. So therefore we know there is hope and promise in the word of God, that when we look to God's word, we can stand firm against the trials and tribulations of this world. As scripture says here, "The devil is a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." He's looking to trip us up, to cause us to sin, to cause us to walk away from the comfort and peace that comes from knowing God. So even when we suffer because of sin and because of the fallenness of this world, there's still hope because God is there, and we know there's a purpose to it. If nothing else, it strengthens us. It teaches us humility. It teaches us to trust in God, not in our own strength and in our own mind, and if we are disciplined for the sin that we do, hopefully we learn from it and grow from it.

There's a purpose to the suffering in this world when we are in Christ. But when we are not in Christ, people just suffer, and they don't know why and they have no answers to the questions of why is there evil, why is there suffering in this world? We do, but the suffering specifically that Jesus and Peter are talking about is the suffering that we have as a result of the mere fact that we are Christians. We ought not to be surprised is what Peter is saying. When, not if, when the fiery trials come, don't be surprised as if this is something strange or unusual. After all, they killed Christ. He suffered for us because of his message.

If we are living in Christ and obeying Him, then we ought not to be surprised when we, too, suffer, when people mock us, when they say that we are simpletons or when they say that we don't believe in the science or that we're just being mean or nasty because we declare sin to be sin. We are going to be reviled, we're going to face trials, and yet we are called to rejoice and be glad in those trials.

Now how does that happen? How do we rejoice in the midst of suffering? The key to all of this is understanding this. We have been saved not by our own efforts, not by our own strength, not by our own abilities. Let's face it. If we're honest with ourselves, we've sinned against God in thought, word and deed. There's no question. Absolutely no question there. What do they say? That the judgment of the world begins with us, with the believers, and we are barely saved. Even if we are barely saved. Think about this. We are not saved because we're good. We're not saved because we're right. We're not saved because we're getting better. We're saved purely and utterly because God loves us and He has chosen to forgive us for the sake of his son. That's it. No merit or worthiness within us, but the grace of God. So if we are barely saved by God's grace, how much worse is it going to be for the people out there who don't know?

Now, don't get me wrong. We are saved and we don't need to be afraid that we're on the cusp of not being saved. Don't worry about that. You have been claimed by God in your baptism. You have been given the Holy Spirit and you have been

called into the family of God and you are secure in that, and you are called then as a result of that to be ready in season and out, as we said, to give hope.

Why do you have the hope? Suffering happens in this world. That's a given. But when we suffer and can rejoice in our suffering, that throws people off. When they see you dealing with this chaos of this world, the suffering of this world, they may laugh at you for your simple belief that God loves you, but then when you suffer and you can still have peace, they take notice, because they don't have answers, they don't have ideas, they don't have comfort, they don't have hope. We do, because for them, suffering is everything. They're born and they die and in between they're suffering. Not everybody has an easy life. Very few people do, but they don't have an answer to that. We do.

We also know that the suffering that we face in this world is temporary. It says, "For a short time." How much of the short time of suffering compared to the eternity of peace with God, how much is that worth? How much is your salvation worth to you? We are called to receive the grace of God and receive our suffering with humility and with grace because we know at the proper time God will exalt us and bring us to His heavenly home. So isn't that worth the time that we have in this world and the suffering that we may face? I think about the martyrs that have gone before us. I think about these disciples that were listed in the very first reading. How many of them suffered and died for their faith? Every single one.

Now John lived a natural life to his very end. He still suffered while He was alive, but every other one of them, not only did they suffer in this world, they were martyred. They were killed. I think of the time in Nero when we read about the Christians being thrown to the lions, the literal lions, to be ripped apart. Why did they stop doing that? Because even the Romans could see that the Christians were not bad people. Because when they were attacked by the lions, they were singing hymns and psalms and praises to God, and that threw them off. How can you rejoice when you're being ripped apart by a lion? You can do that because you know this is temporary, and when you fall asleep, you will wake up and you will be with God. So even death, even a horrible death like that is nothing to be afraid of because you know the surpassing glory of knowing Christ as your savior, and literal lions or the roaring lion of Satan himself, nothing separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Nothing.

You may never get the accolades and the praises of this world, very few people may remember your name after you die, you may have a life that is filled with sorrow and heartache, but all of that is temporary, and all of that is nothing compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing our Savior Jesus Christ. So He prays for us. Even today, He asks that God might be glorified in us as He was glorified in Him, because Christ has our host surrounded with clouds of martyrs

bright. "The clouds of martyrs bright," that's what we sang in 5:39, "who wave their palms in triumph." The martyrs are waving their palms in triumph. Why? Because their king is ever present before them and fire us for the fight. They encourage us and nurture us so that we might be ready in season and out.

"Then Christ the cross ascended to save a world undone and suffering for the sinful, our full redemption won." Our full redemption is paid for and won through Christ Jesus, and we have nothing else to do but to thank and praise, serve and obey Him even if we suffer in the moment, because we know He is risen.

He is risen indeed. Hallelujah.

He is risen indeed. Hallelujah. Amen. Let us confess the faith that God has given to us in the words of the apostles...