



***Theme: Power Made Perfect in Weakness – The Life of Paul
“Life and Death”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, November 22-23, 2025, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verses:

¹⁰ Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. – 2 Corinthians 4:10

VIDEO Sermon Starter

SLIDE “Life and Death”

Today we're going to wrap up this series on the apostle Paul, and I wish I had two more months because there is so much in his 13 letters that makes up the majority of our New Testament. We're going to look as we finish this up at how Paul faced adversity, suffering, opposition, criticism, and death. I hope we can learn from Paul so that we might be able to face these moments in our lives differently. Paul had a deep sense of hope and an ability to persevere that I believe is a gift we get from our faith when we follow Jesus.

We have learned in this series that Paul was originally Saul who was training to be a rabbi in Judaism. When he was in his early 20s, he took over as leader of a movement which tried to eradicate Followers of the

Way, or the earliest Christians. He arrested them and had some of them put to death until he had a vision of Christ and he met Jesus on the road and his life was transformed. He eventually spends time in Egypt and modern-day Jordan before heading home and living with his parents for close to 14 years. It was finally when he was 39 years old, he began a public ministry of taking the gospel into the Greco Roman world.

GRAPHIC Countries that Border the Mediterranean

GRAPHIC Paul's First Missionary Journey Map

We have learned that Paul took 3 missionary journeys and then a fourth journey to Rome just before his death which covered more than 10,000 miles. This first map gives you some information about the Mediterranean Sea and the different countries and continents surrounding it. Remember that Africa and Asia and Europe all bordered the Mediterranean which made it ideal for the gospel going to different parts of the world as Paul begins his journeys. We then see Paul's first missionary journey on this map where he goes primarily to a small island in the Mediterranean and then to modern day Turkey which was called Galatia during the 1st century and the time of Paul's. He ends up near his home in the city of Antioch and writes letters back to Galatia and we have learned that the letter to the Galatians is the first document that was written in your New Testament.

GRAPHIC Paul's Second Missionary Journey Map

Paul then takes his second missionary journey which takes him through the churches that he had already started and then over into what was called Macedonia or modern-day Greece. He shares the gospel in Europe and baptizes the first person, Lydia and her two children, in the city of Philippi.

GRAPHIC Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Paul is going to start here in Antioch on the far upper right of your screen and head up to Tarsus, which is his hometown. He passes through

the Cilician gates in the Taurus mountains and then heads to Derby, Iconium, Lystra, and on to Pisidian Antioch. This is his fourth time visiting these churches and it's known as the area of Galatia. He arrives here in Ephesus where he is going to spend three years. He had been there briefly on his second missionary journey and now he would spend the most time ever in one place in the fourth largest city of the Roman Empire. He spends three months preaching and teaching in the synagogue and then he's kicked out. He rents a lecture hall in the agora which was the shopping center and city center of Ephesus. He finally needs to escape from town, or he would be put to death. All of Acts 19 is dedicated to Paul's time in Ephesus and I wish we had time to go deeper on his time here. You will read about this week in our meditation moment so I hope you will get those to help you go deeper on this important time in the life of Paul.

GRAPHIC Paul's Third Missionary Journey

GRAPHIC Ephesus 1

I want you to notice that Ephesus is just a few miles from the Adriatic Sea on this map. As we look at Ephesus from Google Earth you can see this large area on the left and that is where the port of Ephesus was located because the sea came all the way up to the edge of the city. Boats would come into this area and drop off their cargo and people who were visiting or traveling to other parts of the Roman world. The harbor in blue was fed by the Caster River which is now filled with silt. You can see Harbor Street is the red line.

GRAPHIC Ephesus 2

When you enter Ephesus today you come down from the top following this white line which will take you to the Library of Celsius at the bottom. You also find the triple arches of emperor Augustus that Paul would have passed through and finally end at the theater which is at the end of Harbor St.

GRAPHIC Ephesus 3

As we zoom in, you see Harbor Street again at the top and the great theater at the end of it. The white line again takes you down Curate Street with magnificent villas on the left. The Library of Celsus was built a few decades after Paul lived in Ephesus, but the agora was on the left of marble St. which led you down to the theatre.

GRAPHIC Ephesus 4

We think Paul rented a lecture hall where the X is marked on this map. Paul would eventually leave the theater and out of town being chased and running for his life.

VIDEO Ephesus with no Sound

GRAPHIC Ephesus Theater

One of the most amazing sets of ancient ruins is in Ephesus so I'd like to take you there with some video footage from our time on our last trip. Curate Street Takes you down the hill and the marvelous villas would be on the left with the Library of Celsus being the large, beautiful structure at the end. These marble streets are ones that Paul would have walked. The Library of Celsus is probably the most famous structure and then the Triple Arches of Emperor Augustus are on the right. You can see the agora which would have been the marketplace where Paul rented a place to teach and preach from. The great theater is where Paul confronted the silversmith Demetrius in Acts 19, and you can see the remains of the harbor in the distance from the top of the theater. More recently, this theater has hosted musicians such as Elton John, Ray Charles, Joan Baez, Sting, and Luciano Pavarotti.

We talked earlier in this series about how Paul probably never LED a Church of more than 150 people, but the exception could be Ephesus. He certainly impacted thousands of lives in this community even if the church wasn't very large.

GRAPHIC Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Paul leaves Ephesus and then heads up the Aegean Sea to Troas

and then Philippi, followed by Thessaloniki and Berea. He then will head down to Athens and Corinth and then return to communities around the Aegean Sea until he heads back to Jerusalem. He's receiving an offering in these churches in Greece and Galatia because he has heard of the famine in Jerusalem and the need for resources with the Jewish believers. He asked the gentiles to give an offering for their Jewish brothers and sisters back home that they never would meet.

Every church that he visits on this journey back to Jerusalem tells him they worry he is going to face persecution if he goes back. The leaders in Ephesus weep because they believe it's the last time they are going to see Paul. In Acts 20 he says this to the elders in Ephesus.

BIBLE

²² “And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what awaits me, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. ²⁴ But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

GRAPHIC Paul’s Final Trip to Rome

In the end, Paul will be arrested and spend four years in prison in Jerusalem. He will be taken to Rome under prison guard, and he will be shipwrecked on the island of Malta until finally spending the last four years of his life in prison in Rome where he will be beheaded for his faith at the age of 56. I wanted us to understand this third missionary journey and his final trip to Rome so that we might ask a question. I want to ask this question because I think it will help us in our lives today.

SLIDE How does Paul carry on in the face of struggles?

The truth is that life is sometimes hard. Every part of life has its challenges. We can struggle in our relationships and in our careers. We struggle in our marriages and with our health. We struggle with our faith

because we deal with loss and grief as part of being human. This last week I've spent time with people who have dealt with sexual abuse and rape, suicide, cancer, job struggles, marriage struggles, and difficulty with kids both young and old. We have seasons and times in our lives which are difficult, and Paul teaches us several things that are helpful as we go through these moments in our lives.

SLIDE Perseverance

The first key is perseverance. It is tenacity and an unwillingness to quit. It's about not giving up and holding on even with our fingernails through challenges and pain. The truth is that we will never accomplish anything meaningful in life without perseverance. If we want to be good or great at anything, we need perseverance. If we want to have a great marriage over the long haul, we will need perseverance. I have interviewed many couples who have been married more than 50 years and every single one of them says one of the main keys to surviving and thriving in marriage is perseverance. Marriage is beautiful and wonderful and also hard. It's frustrating and sometimes we fall out of love. We hang in there and we keep working at it because nothing good in life comes unless we must work at it.

I want to be clear that if there is abuse or neglect then marriages should not survive unless those things are eradicated. Marriage is not meant to be a lifelong prison sentence of emotional or physical or spiritual abuse. It is about two people sacrificing for each other like Christ sacrificed for the church. It is about choosing to do the loving thing even when it's hard because the feelings will return. Tami and I have been married 34 years and there are seasons which have just been hard. Marriage is not what it looks like on Facebook. We might see the highlights there, but nobody puts the challenges in between. I'm so grateful that my wife has persevered with me and put up with me all these years because it gets better and more beautiful.

I meet regularly with a group of pastors on zoom who are part of

my clergy circuit. Every week at least one of us talks about how this season of ministry is hard. One of them shared this last week that they were burned out by dealing with conflict and challenges in the church they serve. These are all great and gifted pastors and we focus quite a bit on how we can get better and not be bitter, but we also recognize that ministry is hard with polarization in our country and trying to rebuild after COVID and dealing with people who leave our church because we don't say something, or people who send us nasty emails because we do.

It doesn't matter if we are progressive or conservative or centrists, every leader will deal with challenges and difficult times. This is true for teachers and medical professionals and any of us trying to get by from day-to-day in our work lives. I talk with leaders in our community regularly who are lonely and isolated because most people have no idea what we go through from day-to-day. There are times when we are criticized and we feel like giving up and that's part of life. At least once a month I get an e-mail or a phone call from someone who tells me they are going through the darkest time in their life, and they don't know how they're going to make it.

I'm guessing there are many of you listening today who could say that right now or sometime during the past few months it has felt like the darkest time. Jesus says these powerful words to his disciples on the last night of his life in John 16.

BIBLE

³² “But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. ³³ I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

We're going to have moments in our life where we will feel scattered and, in those moments, we are called to hold on tight to our

faith and have perseverance. We are meant to find peace in our Lord and savior Jesus Christ who came to be our friend and to suffer so that we would know we don't suffer alone. We are meant to take heart because Christ has overcome the world and, in the end, the worst thing will not be the last thing. This is the key to our faith and how we get through these difficult and challenging moments that inevitably will come in life. When we persevere, we find that the darkness begins to dissipate. We find life and joy in our life again once more.

And the truth is, for all of us, physically there will come a time when we won't recover. What we believe is death is swallowed up by life and as Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, as he quotes the prophet Isaiah these words.

BIBLE

⁵⁴ Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: “Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

BIBLE

⁵⁷ But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul could write these words because of all he experienced over the course of his journeys. Leaders of different religious communities tried to kill him on more than one occasion. It happens at the very first church that he served, and I think if that had happened to me at my first church, I wouldn't be doing this anymore. He is thrown out of multiple towns physically. Three times people tried to stone him to death. Once he was stoned to the edge of death and they dragged his body out of town and thought he was dead, but he wasn't. Paul is beaten and put into prison several times. He is brought up on false charges in the courts. Crowds tried to kill him in Jerusalem, and he was saved by Roman soldiers. He was shipwrecked at sea on his way to prison in Rome and

wasn't sure he would survive the journey. He eventually is beheaded for his faith. He describes his life in 2 Corinthians 11.

BIBLE

^{23b} I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. ²⁴ Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. ²⁶ I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. ²⁷ I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

I don't know about you, but I think I would have quit if I had gone through all these things like Paul. What about you? It would be easy to wonder where God was and why God wasn't helping more. It would be easy to do something else and not put up with this hardship. Instead, he persevered, and because of that the Christian faith moves across an entire world. It's become the faith of 1/3 of the world's population. Because of that we have the 13 letters from the apostle Paul in our New Testament which continue to shape our lives today. His refusal to give up reminds me of the Energizer buddy that keeps going and going, or the Timex watch when I was a kid that took a licking and kept on ticking.

GRAPHIC Energizer Bunny

GRAPHIC Takes a Licking and Keeps on Ticking

While it's easy to say that Paul had perseverance, it's more important to ask how it is that he did keep on going. I think there are

several places that give us an idea of why it is Paul was able to persevere that I hope we will take with us today. The 1st is found when Paul is on his second missionary journey and he's in Philippi. He had been arrested and beaten with an instrument called fasces.

GRAPHIC Fasces

These series of rods were bound together with leather straps and on the end was a handle. Many of them had an axe blade of some sort at the end that could be used in battle. These were used like a baseball bat to beat people over the back. Three times Paul says he was beaten with these sorts of instruments. The name of this instrument means that you had authority over someone's life, and this is where the term fascism comes from that we use in today's world. After he was beaten, he was placed in a prison and when you go to Philippi you can walk up to the site where tradition says Paul was held in the city. Paul and Silas were placed in this prison.

VIDEO Prison in Phillipi

GRAPHIC Paul's Prison in Phillipi

He was beaten almost to death, bloodied and bruised, waiting in this prison. If it was me, I would have been lamenting and weeping and maybe even passed out. I might have been yelling at God and telling God I wasn't going to do this anymore. But Paul and Silas didn't blame God for these things. They knew it was people in the darkness of their hearts which had done these terrible things. But we read what happens at midnight in Acts 16.

BIBLE (Use Phillipi prison cell as background)

²⁵ Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.

They didn't turn away from God during their adversity and pain, but instead they turned towards what they believed to be a place of power and strength. I know many times it's tempting to push God away and to

say we don't believe in God when bad things happen, but then what do we have left? We sometimes assume that God makes things happen or God doesn't care, but the truth is we live in a world where bad things happen to good people. Jesus captures this powerful truth because he is God in the flesh and has done nothing wrong and yet is tortured and suffers greatly before his death on the cross. The Christian faith does not teach that bad things will not happen to good people. How could it when the center of our faith is a man who went to a cross?

The Christian faith and following Jesus tell us that the bad thing and the evil things that happen in this world will never have the final say. God can redeem all suffering, and, in the end, justice belongs to God, even if we don't see it in this life. I was visiting recently with someone whose daughter was sexually assaulted while she's away at school and we talked about how justice may not happen in this world the way we want it and so we believe that God is the one who will ultimately hold justice and bring justice, even if we don't get to see it. Amid our pain and hurt God longs to come alongside of us and walk with us and let us know we are not alone. Paul and Silas singing songs and hymns of faith remind them of this truth.

SLIDE Turn towards God, not away, for comfort and purpose.

As they are singing, an earthquake comes and the prison doors fly open, and the shackles are released. Instead of leaving because they know the Philippian jailer will be the one to pay the price, they stay, and eventually God uses that moment to bring that soldier and his entire family to Christ. Turning towards Christ not only can bring us comfort in those moments but can help us find purpose. We believe that God can use any pain we might experience and bring about something beautiful. Often remind people not to waste the pain but to allow God to use it.

Paul retreats from Philippi and goes to Thessalonica, and he eventually is run out of town there. The church in Thessalonica is experiencing persecution and the leader of their church was imprisoned

once Paul left. Paul writes this to each of them in 1 Thessalonians 5.

BIBLE

¹⁶ Always be joyful. ¹⁷ Never stop praying. ¹⁸ Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

The key to Paul's persistence was finding joy even in the small moments where there has been difficulty and challenge. He did that by praying and being thankful, not that bad things will happen, but because God will be with us through every moment in Jesus Christ. It doesn't mean we are happy, but we turn to God so we might feel God's presence where the prison doors fly open and we no longer are held captive by our hurt or pain.

The first church I served as a youth pastor outside of Denver Colorado had the pastor removed for misconduct while I was there and I took over the church. It was one of the most painful experiences of my life and I wanted to quit ministry. A clergy couple came to serve the church and take the place of the lead pastor, a role I had been doing for several months which was not smart when I look back. Mac and Marti taught me much about serving in a time of difficulty, but I learned even more a few years ago from Marti when she continued to serve her church in Utah through the final stages of cancer up until the day before she died. She would preach from a chair and each week tell her congregation that she continued to be joyful and never stopped praying and be thankful even in these horrible circumstances because she knew she wasn't alone. She continued to praise God and lead her church to the very end.

We don't believe that God brings cancer or pain but we do believe that God can fling open the prison doors of cancer because it will never have the final word. Paul didn't see suffering as God's doing but Paul did believe that God could take anything and everything and bring about redemption. God has the power and the desire to force good from the

pain and suffering in our lives. God doesn't want to waste any of that suffering in our lives and one of the things we learned from Paul is this truth. That is the message of the cross and it is something that can help carry us through times of adversity.

SLIDE Pain, adversity and suffering can be redeemed by God.

It is meant to be a profound thing that is symbol of pain and torture and execution in the 1st century is now something that we wear as a necklace or earrings or have ink images tattooed on our bodies. One of the favorite things I have in my office is this rock cross which is made of a rock from each of the cities where Paul started a church and to which he wrote a letter. It was handmade by Ida Kolb who was one of our Saints and whose funeral I did many years ago. She collected each of these rocks and then she made them into a cross using wire and it reminds me daily of how God used the pain and the suffering in Paul's life to bring about the gospel and the good news to others, including us today.

God transforms the pain and the suffering into something beautiful. When Paul is imprisoned in Rome, he writes his letter to the Philippians which we call the letter of joy. It's rather ironic considering that he was waiting to be executed and beheaded when he wrote these words in Philippians 1.

BIBLE

¹² And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. ¹³ For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. ¹⁴ And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear.

Paul is excited for his free all-expense paid trip to Rome and he can't wait to put it to good use by sharing the gospel. First, he is under house arrest and then he is in prison, and he basically is writing and telling them how excited he is that he finally gets to come to Rome, which

is something he's always wanted to do, and he gets to share the gospel to the Roman soldiers. He was excited for his opportunity to preach and for them to see him die for something bigger than himself, his faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and savior. He rejoices and gives God thanks for this moment of hardship.

The letter to the Philippians is only four chapters long and you can read it in about 5 minutes, and Paul uses the word “rejoice” or be joyful 8 different times in this short letter. Romans 8 contains a verse that every one of us should memorize as he writes these words also from prison. I want to read verse 26 before we read verse 28.

BIBLE

²⁶ And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

I love this idea that God comes to us in our weakness, like we talked about last week, but also, we sometimes don't know what to pray for and part of coming to God in those difficult moments is realizing that we sometimes can't even express in words what we need. This is a random reminder that sometimes when things are difficult and challenging, we don't need words, and I often implore you if you don't know what to say to someone in pain then just don't see anything at all but simply be with them. The words in verse 28 are often misquoted because Paul is not saying that God causes everything, but something radically different.

BIBLE

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Earlier in Romans 5 he gave us these powerful words about the role of suffering and adversity in our lives in the Common English Bible.

BIBLE

³ But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, ⁴ endurance produces character, and character produces hope. (CEB)

What I've learned is that in our lives suffering forms and shapes us. We sometimes say that time heals all wounds but that's not true. Time can take a wound to a scab and then a scab to a scar. But we still have that scar and we can either absorb it and help us make us more compassionate and more loving, or we can get better and angry. We can either find character and hope, or we can allow ourselves to be destroyed. We get to choose how we allow adversity to change us and shape us and it starts with faith and holding on to God even when we feel like letting go.

I have walked with hundreds of people through painful and difficult circumstances and watch them be transformed and changed and seen God do beautiful things through that suffering. Marilyn Van Derber Adler was connected to the congregation I served in Colorado Springs and preached every year, sharing her story of being a victim of child sexual abuse. She was Miss America in 1958 and now is in the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame for her advocacy work around sexual abuse and assault survivors.

GRAPHIC Marilyn Van Derber Miss America

GRAPHIC Marilyn Van Derber Adler

We ended up forming multiple support groups for survivors of sexual abuse and assault in the church I served including one for youth and young people. We are hoping to start one here at summit in the coming weeks because it's such an important place of healing for many who have been victims of abuse. Because of her work and willingness to preach and speak in our church, we had six young people during my time in that setting that we're able to be removed from abusive homes because kids in our youth group were not willing to be silent. I don't believe that God caused Maryland to be abused as a child, but I do know

that she is clear God is using her to bring about healing and restoration during unspeakable pain for many young people and women and men in abusive relationships. She lived out Paul's words in Romans 12.

BIBLE

¹⁸ If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people. ¹⁹ Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, *Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord.* ²⁰ Instead, *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head.* ²¹ Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.

I think of people in our church who have come alongside others going through tragedies they themselves have experienced and how God is using them to help people walk through divorce, domestic violence, addiction, surviving suicide, and the loss of a loved one. Many of those in our caring ministry have been through these experiences and now are allowing God to use them to walk with you through those moments. God forces good from evil by using people who have been through painful and difficult circumstances when we absorb our grief, and it makes us more compassionate and willing to serve others. Paul understood that God specializes in redeeming suffering.

As Paul finishes his third missionary journey and he's heading back to Jerusalem, he realizes he will be arrested and maybe even killed in that city. We read this about that moment in Acts 20.

BIBLE

⁴ Several men were traveling with him. They were Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe; Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.

By the way, a little tip for those of you concerned about being an

advent reader and being unsure about saying a name. Just make it up and act like it's right because no one else knows what it's supposed to sound like either! While we might struggle with how to pronounce these names, their presence is what's most important. I think of the four people that carried the paralytic man to Jesus when he needed to be healed. The question I often ask is this. Who will carry you to Jesus when you can't get there on your own? We all need companions who will walk with us and sometimes carry us when we can't make it through life on our own.

SLIDE We all need companions and stretcher bearers.

Our Steven ministers and our caring ministers are trained to walk beside you and with you through moments of difficulty. We have hospital visitors who will come and pray with you and anoint you with oil because we all need companions and sometimes stretcher bearers. I was visiting with someone recently who has been going through our divorce care ministry and talking about how powerful it is to have others meet with them and walk with them through this painful time. The leaders of that ministry have been through divorce themselves because sometimes it's important for us to be the companions and the stretcher bearers for others. We have regular grief groups that we run because we need other people around us to walk with us when we are going through excruciating loss. We are not meant to go through life on our own.

We will be having a blue Christmas service here on Sunday December 14 for those who have lost loved ones and the purpose is not just to have a place for those for whom Christmas is a difficult season, but also for us to gather together with those going through loss. I hope you will invite others to come and join us that night because that's often an introduction to faith for many who find something to hold on to through those difficult moments. This last month and each year I have gathered with survivors of suicide to talk about the faith implications and for them to minister to each other in the midst of a grief that feels unbearable.

Sometimes we send notes and sometimes we take food, but we do all those things because God works through those moments to bring comfort and care and healing. When we are willing to do that for others, we find that comes back to us when we need companions and stretcher bearers. This is why the church plays such an important role in our lives, so that we have others as the body of Christ to come alongside of us and encourage us, just like the apostle Paul had as he headed back to Jerusalem.

SLIDE Koinonia = community = “mutual care for each other”

This is why it's important if you are worshipping with us online to connect with some people or with us in a way where we can walk together through difficult moments in your life. In the early church and today it is called Koinonia which also means community or mutual care for each other. Befriending each other and caring for one another is why we do retreats and why we do small groups. We are most likely to have it when we have been willing to give it.

What I have often witnessed is that when we are going through suffering or pain we sometimes pull back and build a cocoon. While that might be OK for a short season, what we really need is other people who are not saying stupid things but instead are simply being with us when we don't have words. It's hard to realize that and it's hard to reach out, but it's the reason why we have our prayer requests on the website and why we have our caring ministries and why we have our caring ministries director Kristen.

We need each other and this is especially true when we are grieving the loss of a loved one. This is where I want to end because it's critical for us to understand this as people of faith who are mortal, frail, fragile human beings which means none of us will cheat death.

SLIDE Death will not have the final word.

Paul believed, and lived, in a way that death would not have the final word. The ultimate reason which Paul understood and enabled him

to deal with adversity and to persevere was that that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. It's why every year at Easter we end with the words from Frederick Buechner who said the Worst thing is never the last thing. I also remind you that not only do I believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, but I'm counting on it, and so can you.

Paul not only was counting on this because he was someone who persecuted and killed Christians until he met Jesus Christ who had risen from the grave. He had this tremendous vision, and he heard Jesus' voice, so he experienced the truth of the resurrection. The resurrection was God's message to us that pain and suffering won't have the final word. Evil will be conquered and there is always hope. In the end, life will conquer death, and love will conquer hate. This is how he was able to persevere amid being arrested and beaten. This is why Paul could say these words in Romans 8 that I love and capture how Paul could persevere.

BIBLE

³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

BIBLE

³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How would we live our lives if we understood that in our death there is a victory? I want to invite us to close our time together with this prayer that comes from the United Methodist service of death and resurrection that we do in many of our funerals and at the graveside or in our columbarium. Let's pray together if you're willing.

SLIDES

**Help us to live as those who are prepared to die.
And when our days here are accomplished,
enable us to die as those who go forth to live,
so that living or dying, our life may be in you,
and that nothing in life or in death will be able to separate us
from your great love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

SLIDE Prayer

Gracious God, help us to persevere when difficult moments come our way. May we be people who turn towards you when we experience suffering. May we remember that you will take our pain and bring about something beautiful because you can force evil to do good. May we be companions and may we carry each other through moments of pain. Give us the courage to believe and count on the fact that in you Jesus Christ, death has been swallowed up in victory. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

November 22-23 Order

1. Maddie welcomes people.
2. Song: "Goodness of God"
3. Song: "A Thousand Hallelujahs"
4. Jeff welcomes people:
 - a. QR Code and Connect Card
 - b. Invite people to greet each other, however comfortable and be seated.
5. Sermon
6. **OFFERING GRAPHICS - Bayfield Kid to Kid Backpack Program –**
"The Bayfield Kids for Kids backpack program has been serving the Bayfield (and now Ignacio) area since 2013. Over the years we've been able to increase the number of children we're able to serve through generous donations such as those recently given to us by Summit. The teens you see in the attached photo are students of the Wolverine Academy in Bayfield, who faithfully join us (and a few additional adults) every week to pack 225+ bags. The bags are delivered to three schools in Bayfield, and two schools in Ignacio. We can't thank you enough for helping us to continue our program, which we feel not only supplies children in need with food for the weekends, but also a sense of being seen and cared for. Summit Church, over the past twelve years I've seen amazing things happen when our congregation works together to actively support those in need. Summit has blessed me personally, and I'm incredibly proud of the work we do through Christ."
7. Med Moments
8. Song: "Build My Life"
9. Prayer and Lord's Prayer
10. Care Ministers and Connect with Us
11. New Members
12. Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes
13. Closing Prayer