

# Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church

## Sermon

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Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church  
1225 Piper Boulevard, Naples, FL 34110

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### **Protest, Trust and Obey**

Hebrews 5:5-10

An old Spiritual goes like this:

“Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen.  
Nobody knows but Jesus.  
Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen.  
Glory...” Alle...

I’ve got to stop there.

It’s Lent and we packed that word away until Easter.

Interesting, isn’t it, how songs that arise

From the depths of pain and suffering  
Seem to endure?

More than just endure,  
Songs born in the humiliation and pain of slavery

Have power!

Power to comfort and to sustain  
And to heal

Even those who never endured slavery.

Spirituals catch the heart of today’s Scripture

They write it in our hearts.

“Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen,”  
Nobody that is,

But Jesus.

We all know people who

Because of life experience  
Can honestly say,

We know how you feel  
We’ve been there  
Done that.

Those people, by their credibility  
Can accomplish more ministry in less time  
Than anyone else.

You see it in the hospital

When a patient’s trying  
To get used to the idea  
of living with a colostomy

Or a prosthesis  
Or a severe burn

Nurses, doctors

Ministers, friends  
All try to help.

Then, one day,

A total stranger walks into the room.

Looking uncomfortably out of place

the stranger introduces herself,  
The visitor then reveals something else.  
He or she has a colostomy  
Or a prosthesis  
Or suffered from a severe burn.  
And the visitor just wanted the patient to know  
Someone else had been there  
Someone else had done that  
And come through OK.  
The impact of visits like that is quite remarkable  
A patient has fresh hope.  
Hope because one who really has been there  
Took a few minutes of time  
Just to stop by and say, "Hello!"  
It feels good to know you're not alone.

The surprise is  
That someone who's been there  
Someone who's done that  
Will take time to go  
Time to visit  
Time to share

The surprise is that a person  
With a colostomy  
Or a prosthesis  
Or a severe burn  
Will return to the hospital  
To visit another, a stranger,  
Who is now  
Where he once was

The good news is  
That in an age when "Been there,  
Done that!" is too often a slogan  
Of indifference  
Some who have been there  
Some who have done that  
Care enough to get involved.

That's what Christ did  
Cared enough to get involved  
To become human  
To be there  
To do that  
Though it meant suffering  
Crying out in pain  
With loud cries and tears,  
The Scripture says.  
And death.

Although he was the Son of God  
Who of all people  
Didn't have to get involved

Although he was the Son of God  
Who of all people  
Didn't have to suffer and die  
Nevertheless,  
Christ obeyed, learned obedience  
Through suffering.  
Learned obedience  
By being there.  
By doing that.

In the days of his flesh  
He offered up prayers and supplications  
The same prayers and supplications  
You and I pray  
In times of great distress  
Why, Lord?  
Why me?  
Why my sister? Or my brother?  
Or my friend?

In the days of his flesh  
Jesus called out to God  
who was able to save him  
To deliver him from his suffering

Just as we do.  
God heard him because of his reverent submission.  
God hears us too.

You'll note that being heard is all we're promised.  
In the Garden  
Jesus cried out for deliverance from death.  
Then he died.

Jesus protested the path he had to walk,  
asked that the cup might pass him by.  
Then he drank the cup  
In all its bitterness.

Just as we sometimes have to drink  
The bitter cup.  
Though, God knows,  
We have asked not to.  
The bitter cup does not pass us by  
Simply because we have faith  
Simply because we pray.  
Jesus protested! Then trusting God, he obeyed.  
As disciples of Christ, we're called to do the same.

A few years ago  
A tornado hit a church  
On Sunday morning, during worship.  
The minister's daughter was killed.  
Afterward a news reporter asked the minister  
To talk about her faith

In light of the tragedy.  
The young woman replied with tear stained face:  
“Ministers aren’t exempt from pain and suffering.”  
She spoke the truth, simply.  
God’s own son wasn’t exempt  
from pain and suffering.

God heard Jesus when he cried out.  
We know that.  
God hears us too.  
And to be heard,  
To be really heard  
Is what we most need  
In the time of crisis.  
To be heard, really heard  
Means we’re not alone.

Nobody chooses to suffer.  
Anybody who does is not credible  
Not dealing with reality.  
Suffering is too heavy a burden to choose.  
It demands too much of us  
As it demanded too much of Jesus.  
The position of priest  
Comes by appointment only.  
By appointment,  
Or there is no credibility.  
Being made perfect through suffering,  
Truly being there  
Most certainly doing that  
Made Christ perfect in his role as high priest  
Made him the perfect Wonderful Counselor  
Dare we say  
Perfected him even as Mighty God?  
Perfected him as prince of peace.

Mysteriously, Christ learned obedience  
Through suffering.  
For it is truly mysterious  
If anything good comes of suffering.  
Being perfected in suffering,  
Christ Jesus became the source of hope  
The source of eternal life  
The well of eternal salvation  
For all who obey him.

He didn’t have to be there  
He didn’t have to do that.  
Yet there he was there  
Weeping with those who weep  
Mourning with those who mourn  
Praying with those who pray  
Sitting with those who sit

Hoping with those who hope.

Nobody knows the trouble we've seen  
Nobody knows, but Jesus.

And all who obey him.

You who obey...

You who live as he lived

All who learn obedience through their own suffering

All who then turn their suffering

Into a way of hope for others

They become priests as Christ was

Priests as Christ is.

If you have been there

If you have done that

For Christ's sake

Let your suffering become the well-spring

Of salvation and hope for another.

Having been perfected for service, as Christ was

"Be there!" in Christ

And "Do that!" for others.