

Second Sunday in Lent – February 25, 2018

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

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**Romans 5:1-11**

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2) through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3) Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4) perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5) And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. 6) You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7) Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9) Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10) For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11) Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Fellow Christians who have been justified through faith in Christ Jesus:

The season of Lent is often seen as a time to focus on the sufferings and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's a time for us to confess that it was our sins that nailed Christ to the cross. But there's more to Lent. It's also a time to nail our sins to the cross. Lent can be a time of confident rejoicing in what God has done for us through his Son. Our Epistle lesson for today reminds us that

**Theme:** The Blessings of Lent are Amazing

1. Because they are so abundant (vss. 1-5)
2. Because they are so undeserved (vss. 6-8)
3. Because they are guaranteed (vss. 9-11)

The blessings God gives us through faith in Christ Jesus are all blessings of grace. We have been justified by grace. We have peace with God. We have access to God's grace. We confidently look ahead to glories of heaven with rejoicing. In fact, we can even rejoice in suffering because we know that the Lord will use it to bless us.

These are among the abundant blessings that are ours because of what Christ Jesus has done for us. The teaching that we are justified by faith is one of the key teachings of Scripture. **Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2) through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.**

Paul reminds us that our justification is not something that we did – rather God provided it for us – we have been justified by God. He has declared that he no longer regards us as sinful. We now enjoy peace in the presence of God. That's a blessing because by nature we are not at peace with God. Think of how the nation of Israel trembled in fear when God made his presence known to them as they camped at the foot of Mount Sinai. Or, think of Adam and Eve's reaction when God came looking for them after they fell into sin. They ran and hid because they were afraid of him. Although God spoke to Moses, he would not allow him to see his face. God told Moses: (Exodus 33:20) **"You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."**

Jesus changed all of that for us when he died on the cross for our sins. His death has become our death. The curse of sin has been removed by Christ. Through faith in him, we have become sons of God and heirs of eternal life. We no longer fear God – we have peace with him and call him Father.

We have been washed clean of our sins by the blood of the lamb and now we are clothed in his righteousness. We now have direct access to God and his grace. We now enjoy a friendly relationship with God in which we have the assurance that we are accepted by him and that he will regard us favorably. We are currently standing in grace as our text reminds us. Right now, we have peace with God as well as the many other blessings of grace mentioned in this text.

Often we regard Lent as a season of sorrowful reflection on our sins. However, when we stop to consider the blessings of Lent we realize that it is also appropriate for us to rejoice in what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. **We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3) Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings.**

Because we have been declared innocent and have been set free from our sins, we can boast in the hope of enjoying God's glory in heaven. As long as we live in this world which is there are always going to be reminders of sin. But, there's no need for us to get down in the dumps as when we experience the difficulties of this life. The key to rejoicing in all things including rejoicing in suffering lies in the placing all things into the hands of our loving heavenly Father who assures that all things will work out for our good. As we focus on the eternal glories which await us we realize that **our light and momentary troubles [will bring about] for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all**, as Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 4:17.

When Paul talks about rejoicing in suffering he has in mind the pressures of life – anything that presses us down including, hardships, persecutions, and anything else that might trouble us or cause us to suffer. The reason for this rejoicing and boosting is that we are convinced that suffering will draw us to rely more fully and more completely on the Lord. As we wait patiently for the Lord, our suffering will produce perseverance; the ability to cope and endure. As our text reminds us **we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4) perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5) And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**

The blessings of Lent are amazing because they are so abundant. They are also amazing because they are so undeserved. We are reminded of our unworthiness in verses 6-8 of our text. **6) You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7) Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

We were powerless, ungodly, unrighteous, corrupt sinners. Yet, Christ died for us. He died in our place. There was nothing about us that compelled him to do that. The Scriptures describe us as being naturally opposed to God and his intentions for us. Yet for those who hated God and who fought against him, Jesus stepped in and allowed their punishment to be placed on himself. Christ's dying for sinners is the most complete demonstration of God's love that we could ever hope to see. As we look at the cross during Lent and are reminded that our sins drove Christ to that cross – we can also see the width, the length, the height and the depth of God's love for us.

The blessings of Lent are amazing because they are undeserved. They are also amazing because they are guaranteed. The closing verses of our text assure us of the absolute certainty of our eternal salvation. **9) Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!**

Paul uses some simple logic – reasoning from the greater to the lesser. Here’s an example of that kind of logic. If I’m willing to risk my life to rescue you from a burning building, you would know that you could also count on me to do whatever I could to make sure that you had clothing and shelter after the fire.

Now let’s use that same kind of logic and apply it to what God has done for us by sacrificing his Son for us. “Look at this,” Paul is saying in our text. “If the judge has declared you not guilty -- then certainly you will also be spared from punishment.” Since we have been justified by Jesus’ blood – and that’s an accomplished fact – surely we can be absolutely sure that there is nothing for us to fear on the great Day of Judgment.

The debts that we owed to God have all been paid by Christ Jesus. He paid for our sins by dying in our place. He brought us into a peaceful relationship with God. We have been restored to our position as God’s dearly love children. Our status was changed by Christ’s death. Paul speaks of that as our reconciliation in our text. And, he assures us that once we have been reconciled to God that we can be confident that now that we are his friends and that we will be saved since Christ has been raised from the dead. The fact that Jesus lives forever assures us that we will live forever. **10) For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11) Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

We don’t usually regard the season of lent as a time of rejoicing. But twice our text for today has reminded us that we have good reason to rejoice. In fact, this text closes with a call to rejoice. **11) Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

Because the Blessings of Lent are so amazingly abundant, so amazingly undeserved and so amazingly guaranteed we surely have every reason to rejoice and to boast about what God has accomplished for us in Christ Jesus. Praise to God for the amazing blessings of Lent. Amen.