

St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Holy Trinity May 30, 2010 Romans 5:1-5



Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 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. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. 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.

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are!
Amen!*

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

It was literally a couple of years ago – I used to watch Peter Jennings – ABC Nightly News. I like to know what’s going on in the world. It was a couple of years ago – that they told the story of a painter named David. David paints in a studio on the top floor of an old commercial laundry. David painted with an almost photographic precision – very slowly. He would finish maybe two paintings in a year! And then he didn’t sell many – or even show them to many people. He just likes to hang them in his studio! David always held the paint brush in his right hand – when about 5 years ago – he noticed “a brief, almost undetectable tremor” in his right hand. He did what I fear I would do – *ignore it – and it will go away* – but it didn’t. It only got worse. When he saw a neurologist – he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease – which slowly but surely kills brain cells that help control movement. They say Parkinson’s is quite common. 1 in every 1,000 people get it. 1 in every 100 people over 60 get it. In later stages it can alternate between rigid stiffness and shaking tremors. David is just 52 years old. Now you might expect that a person who painted with such precision his pictures looked like a photograph – would become so bitterly frustrated he would smash his equipment and quit. But you would be painfully wrong. I have been convinced for a long time – that much of creativity and artistic ability has much more to do with your brain and your eyes and your imagination that it has to do with your fingers and your hands. You need to see – to understand – to imagine – first. And from there – your fingers and your hands understand what to do with that information that is first in your heart! If David’s right hand won’t do what his mind tells it to do – then David will now paint with his left hand! Did I mention there are all sorts of ways around hands that tremble? If you cannot paint lines with rigid precision – what’s to say you can’t paint with dabs of paint – like Van Gogh and Monet and other great impressionist painters? David is in fact a wondrous metaphor in a physical sense – for the spiritual truth the Apostle Paul is talking about this Holy Trinity Sunday. From familiar words of Roman’s Chapter 5 God’s Word reminds us:

Never Give Up! Never Surrender!

- 1. Jesus makes you strong enough**
- 2. The Holy Spirit fills your heart**

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on today is part of the Apostle Paul’s letter to the believers in the city of Rome. Paul had been called by the Lord most directly to be a missionary. Remember Saul on the road to Damascus? It was the Lord Jesus himself who instructed Paul – again in a most direct and miraculous way – some 3 years in the wilderness. It was the Lord who directed Paul’s mission work. Sending Paul especially to the Gentiles – planting Churches in places like Asia Minor – present day Turkey – in cities like Ephesus – on to Macedonia – to the City of Philippi – to Greece – to the city of Corinth. It would seem, then, near the end of his 3rd missionary journey – on his way back to Jerusalem – to deliver the thank offerings for the relief effort to the poor and suffering in Jerusalem – that Paul stopped in Corinth – in the winter or the

early spring of A.D. 57 that Paul wrote to the Romans – to prepare their hearts – for his coming to preach Christ crucified to them in person.

In the first 4 chapters of Romans Paul talks about God’s amazing grace. You know Romans 1:16. **I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a rightness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written:** (then comes the powerful quote from the prophet *Habakkuk*) **The righteous** (the just – those declared forgiven) **will live by faith!** How great is God’s love for you – out of the 6 billion people in this world – you know that Jesus died to take away all your sins? There are in our world today 1.5 billion followers of Islam. There are more than a billion people – if you asked them would say there is no God – or if there is a God – I don’t know him and I don’t believe in him – I don’t love him and I don’t worship him. There are almost a billion people who are Hindu. There was one on the Food Network this last Tuesday. He cooked pork chops for the three judges – but had never ever tasted pork – because he was a practicing Hindu. There was a very nice lady chef. She pan seared pork chops, too, although she had never ever tasted pork either. She was one of nearly 14 million people who practice the faith – the traditions of Judaism. There are nearly 7 million people who practice the religion of Baha’i. They think faith is very much like a restaurant salad bar. You go through and choose what you enjoy from all the world’s great religions. You appreciate what is the best of the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, the sayings of Confucius – the insights of all the great religious thinkers down through the ages! There are literally millions of people who live a religion of fear and superstition – that there are literally spirits everywhere – in the trees, in the cool night breeze, in the wild animals that come and snatch little people in the night. They believe in curses and spells – in shaman – witch doctors – potions and black and white magic. There is the religion of *humanism*! Go to graduation ceremonies of places of higher learning – and you will hear again and again that people are the answer to all our troubles. If we just become clever enough and creative enough and dedicated enough – there is no problem we can’t solve. The answer – we are told again and again – is within the human heart and spirit. There are quotes from Mark Twain and Gandhi and the Dali Lama. If we would just treat each other with gentle patience and profound respect and rededicate ourselves to peace and understanding – we can make heaven on earth! We can stop war and terrorism and bloodshed. We can clean up the oil spills and end racial hatred and poverty and greed – we can end sickness and disease – and live to be 125 in clean air with lots of trees and wild flowers! The answer is not inside our sin spoiled hearts. The answer is found in Jesus and him alone! Jesus is the only answer to sin – and all the hurt and pain it causes!

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. Access. You hear about access all the time. There is a princess or is she a duchess of the royal family of England that was caught in a newspaper sting. The deal was something like – you give me £500,000 and I can get you access to my ex-husband – who has the connections that can make you rich! Access! With it – comes privilege – the rules won’t apply to you. Without it – you will never get off the ground! That’s how this world operates! The access Paul is talking about is far more precious than any earthly power or privilege! We have access into the grace – the amazing grace and mercy and forgiveness of the LORD God! We have an inheritance stored up in heaven. We are children of God by adoption for Jesus’ sake! That means whatever happens in this life we have a place stored up in Heaven!

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. Sufferings come in all kinds of sizes and shapes. There are physical hurt, psychological hurts – mental and emotional pain that can be even harder to bear. Hurt so deep inside our heart that you cannot put a Band Aid on it! When we first suffer the hurt and pain it’s almost impossible to see how this can be anything but bad. It is only by the grace of God – and usually over time – that you can see the ultimate good. The first example that came to my mind is the Canadian born actor Michael J. Fox. Michael J. Fox also has Parkinson’s Disease. His disease has made it almost impossible for him to be an actor. So Michael J. Fox became an author. He wrote three books so far. The first one is entitled “**Lucky Man**” – not unlucky – not unfortunate – but Lucky Man. Then he wrote **Always Looking Up – the Adventures of an incurable optimist**. Then he wrote, “**A funny thing happened on the way to the future – twists and**

turns and lessons learned!” Michael J. Fox has said again and again – if he could do it all over. If he could go back in time to the moment he found out he was sick – and have a miraculous wish – and decide for himself – to be sick or not to be sick. Knowing then what he knows now – he would actually choose to be sick! You see – he understands – he knows from the most painful experience – that he is in fact a better person because he has Parkinson’s disease! He is a better person, a better husband, a better father, because he understands what is most important is not being successful, rich and famous in all the worldly ways. We can know that *suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character and character hope and hope will not disappoint us eternally* because God’s Word says so. And God’s **Word is truth!**

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. We have peace with God for Jesus’ sake – sins forgiven by grace alone! There is a lady named Shirley – who did that skydiving thing the other day. You start out early in the morning – instruction and practice – what to do – when to do it – how to do it. Before the day is over – you go up in a small plane – up to around 13,000 feet. Securely fastened to your teacher named David – you jump out of the plane. After free falling for a while – you pull the rip cord – and begin to descend slowly toward the ground. It was when the shoot opened that it became immediately obvious that something was seriously wrong. Instead of going down – feet first – just like in the movies – they were swinging around and around and around and around. That’s when – according to the lessons – you pull a lever that lets the first shoot go – so you can open the second shoot. The only problem was – they were spinning so fast – you couldn’t get a hold of the lever to let the first shoot go. By now the ground was exceedingly close. What did David do? With all the control he could muster – in a situation very much out of control – he made sure that his body absorbed the force of the fall. He made sure it was his bones that were broken – his arms and legs and back that would be broken – not Shirley’s. He suffered the permanent hurt and harm – to keep her as safe as he could! He suffered the paralysis – not her. He risked his life and sacrificed his body – to save a person he probably never met before that fateful day. Jesus knew all our sins and weaknesses – our painful and hurtful sins, flaws and failures – and still he suffered for me. How great is his forgiving love! How great is his compassion and mercy and love!

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. Never give up! Never surrender! Remember David – the painter with Parkinson’s? Did I mention the fact that David is also color blind? I know a little bit about being color blind. My earthly dad is color blind and so I am too. David the painter can see red – but he has great difficulty telling brown from green from purple from dark blue. I do too. If something is dark – and a little ways away – I don’t know what color it is. I was a Kwik-trip. They asked my which vehicle was mine. I said – the black Envoy. The guy behind me said--, “Ahem. It’s green!” Oh, yeah, I said – it’s green! Duh! Well – I’m not a painter. I just have trouble picking out the right necktie! David the painter isn’t discouraged by being color blind. Do you know what he does? He paint with two tubes of paint – one black and the other white. He has found there are endless shades of gray! There are a thousand shades between dark and light. Never give up! Never surrender! It all has to do with attitude – with the hope and faith – the trust and confidence that the Holy Spirit works in our heart through the means of grace – the Gospel in Word and Sacrament! All our sins are forgiven. Heaven is our home. Everything is going to be wonderful. Amen!

To God alone all glory! God bless America!



Rev. Anthony E. Schuttz