

## Trinity Sunday – Romans 5:1-5; June 15, 2025

**Romans 5:1-5: Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.**

Dear fellow children of God;

Agree/Disagree: All of the Bible is God's true Word. . *2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is God-breathed.*

Agree/Disagree: All of the God's Word is useful. *2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

Agree/Disagree: All of God's Word makes logical sense. *Isaiah 55: My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts and my ways than your ways.*"

Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday. The concept of the Trinity is one of those Biblical teachings that is impossible for the human mind to grasp. Three persons; one God. Some years ago I had a conversation with an international student from Korea, a very gifted, brilliant student who came to our country with very little knowledge of Christianity. He said, "Pastor Wenzel, why do Christians believe in 3 gods?" I said, "We believe in one God, but 3 persons." The student replied, "Father, Son, Spirit. Three Gods." I said, "No, 3 persons, but one God." The very frustrated young man said, "Father, Son, Spirit. 1, 2, 3. Three Gods." Nothing I said that day cleared up his confusion.

So why spend a Sunday focusing on a teaching that is impossible to fully comprehend? Perhaps too often we are content to say to ourselves, "Three persons, one God. Impossible to understand, so why spend any time thinking about it?" Here's why: While we might never completely understand the concept of the Trinity this side of heaven, we can continue to grow in our appreciation of a God whose depth is far beyond the limits of our finite human reason. Our theme today is

### **Glory in the grandeur of the grace of our Triune God**

- 1. Grace through God the Son's sacrifice**
- 2. Grace through God the Father's love**
- 3. Grace through God the Holy Spirit's gift of faith**

**1. Grace through God the Son's sacrifice.** The first word in our text is "therefore." "Therefore" is used over 1000 times in the Bible and 77 times by the apostle Paul. "Therefore" means "for that reason" or "consequently." So in verse one of chapter 5, it's fair to ask, "For what reason?" And the simple answer is this: For everything that the apostle Paul has laid out in the first 4 chapters of one of the most beautiful gospel-focused books of the Bible. Martin Luther said that if all Bibles were destroyed and only a single copy of the gospel of John and the book of Romans remained, there would be so many clear gospel promises in those two books that all of Christianity would be saved.

In the first four chapters of Romans Paul lays out the need for our salvation, the hopelessness of achieving that salvation through any effort of our own, God's plan of salvation and the fulfillment of the plan in Jesus. And in verse one of our text Paul summarizes those first four chapters by saying "...**since we have been justified by faith.**" *Justified by faith.* Such a familiar phrase for many Christians and certainly for Lutherans. What does it mean? That God has declared us innocent because of what Jesus has done for us.

And since because of his Son's sacrifice God the Father now looks at me just as if I'd never sinned, Paul says, **"therefore," for this reason we have peace with God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Since many of us have no recollection of living with God as our enemy, it is easy to forget that this "peace with God" is not a natural peace. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush he warned him: **"You cannot see my face, for no man shall see me and live."** This wasn't God's plan. After creation God had walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. And then sin destroyed that peace and in our natural state we became bitter enemies of God. No amount of negotiating with God could change that, nothing we could do to achieve peace. And then the Son of God changed everything. He agreed with his Father's plan to lay all of our sins on his shoulders. He took upon himself the punishment that brought us peace. To put it a little more bluntly, the Son of God willingly gave up the peace that he had enjoyed with God the Father from eternity. God made his only Son who had no sin to become our sin, and Jesus became the enemy of God and on his deathbed was forsaken by his Father. What does Paul say in Corinthians? **"God reconciled the world to himself in Christ."**

This is the peace that in the upper room on Maundy Thursday Jesus promised to deliver to his disciples. It's not a temporary cease-fire, it's not just a long-lasting peace—it's a peace that will last for eternity. As a child of God, you have no enemy that can destroy that peace. All because of Jesus' willingness to step into the breach between us and God the Father. Might it be fair to say that the concept of the Trinity is really no more inconceivable than this: the very Son of God submitting to a punishment of hell itself so that you and I might have the guarantee of heaven? No wonder we are able to **Glory in the grandeur of our Triune God's grace.**

**2. We glory in the grace that is ours through Jesus' sacrifice, and we also glory in the grace of the Father's love.** Without Jesus' sacrifice we would still be enemies of God. But it's good to also remember God the Father's sacrifice. How much does God the Father love us? Not only does he love us enough to *send* his only Son, but he loved us enough to *condemn* that Son to the agonizing death we deserve and then turn his back on that Son as he hung on his deathbed.

What does that mean for us? Paul says **"We boast in the hope of the glory of God."** The word "boast" often has a negative connotation...it implies a lack of humility or someone taking too much pride in their own accomplishments. But in this context Paul says we can boast—also translated "rejoice" or "take pride in" in the hope of the glory of God. What's the glory of God? The glory that awaits us in heaven. And hope doesn't mean a wistful wishing, but rather a guaranteed certainty, an eager expectation of what God has promised us. Why is it ours? Because of God's love for us, our future is guaranteed.

But a fair question is "that's the future, what about today?" Paul addresses that question, but perhaps not with the answer we might desire. Paul says, **"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings."** This might catch us off guard. Not the fact we suffer. At least it shouldn't. A Christian doesn't invite suffering into his life, but a Christian understands that suffering this side of heaven is inevitable. Our own sins bring us heartache and complicate our lives. Think of Adam and Eve banned from the only true paradise there has ever been on earth, Cain living out his life as a marked murderer, Jacob fleeing for his life from his brother. And then there's the suffering we face because we live in a sinful world. Think of Job losing his health, his wealth and his family. Joseph ends up in prison for saying no to temptation. The apostles facing harassment for sharing their faith. The same night that Jesus told his disciples that he would give them a peace unlike the world's peace, he also promised them that **in this life they would have trouble.** No, it's not Paul's announcement that we will suffer that might be unexpected. Rather it's that Paul says "we will also glory, we will rejoice in our sufferings."

How can Paul say that? Perhaps a better question...how can he say it and mean it? It's because Paul recognized that this suffering was further evidence of the grandeur of God the Father's love. How so? Paul says, **"We glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."** Suffering, perseverance, character, hope. That's quite a progression. But let's recognize that there **is** a progression. And it's in these four stages where we find evidence of the grandeur of God's love. Paul is describing what we know as the "theology of the cross." Theology of the cross is the understanding it is only through the cross of Jesus that we find salvation, and that as Jesus taught, we will also have to take up our own crosses here on earth, the challenges that we face that try our souls and test our faith, the crises that lead us to question God's love. Where is the splendor of God in that? The grandeur is that God is able to use our crosses to drive us back to the cross of our dear Savior and to cling to all of God's promises that are guaranteed because of the cross of his Son.

Paul doesn't say "We rejoice in our sufferings because we are supposed to enjoy suffering." But for a child of God, what is the result of suffering? When Jacob worked for Laban he was cheated and treated deceitfully, but eventually returned home a wealthy and spiritually strong man. Joseph was sold into slavery but thrived working for Potiphar, he then languished in prison but ends up as the second most powerful man in Egypt, a man who had the opportunity to be vindictive but instead forgave and protected his brothers. In both cases you see children of God who faced adversity, persevered through numerous challenges, and became stronger for it.

Yet how often I've sat in a pew and thought "but I'm not Jacob or Joseph. I can see the good that came from their problems, but all I seem to be left with is doubts and misgivings and unanswered questions." Have you ever felt that way? If you have, realize that God can use those very doubts to drive you right back to all of his promises.

**3. Glory in the grandeur of the grace of our Triune God—the grace of the Holy Spirit's gift.** All of the love of God the Father and his unique ability to use adversity for our good and all of the sacrificial love of God the Son would be meaningless if we didn't have the ability to begin to appreciate the depth of that love and grasp its significance. The depth of the love of a triune God? Who can get their head around that? Fortunately, this is not an intellectual exercise but rather a spiritual exercise that takes faith, the very faith the Holy Spirit gave us on the day of our baptisms. Paul says, **"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."**

It is the Holy Spirit who takes the wishful hope of something good and turns it into the guaranteed certainty of something eternally glorious. And it is this same Holy Spirit who didn't just pour out God's love into our hearts on the day of our baptism, but poured out that love in the word of absolution, in the promises of Jesus in our gospel lesson, in the comfort God offers us in this text from Romans, in the very body and blood of our Savior in the Lord's Supper. He pours out his love so generously every time we open our Bibles or a Bible app, or watch a Time of Grace video or hum a favorite hymn days after singing it. The Holy Spirit doesn't just dip his finger in a tepid cup of God's living water and put one small drop on our tongues, but he is so very generous in showering us with God's nurturing grace.

It reminds me of my first year as a parish pastor in Minnesota. I arrived in the middle of a drought, and for a congregation who had many members' lives tied to farming, a drought was a very serious threat. It was the first and only time in my ministry where I included a prayer for rain in the prayer of the church. And when God decided in his own time that he would again send rain, it wasn't just a mist, but a steady

soaker that was recognized as blessing from heaven itself. The following Sunday I greeted one of our members—a crop farmer—before church. “Well Bill, it sure was a good week!” His smile lit up the narthex of the church. “Pastor, my wife thought I was crazy, but I stood out in that rain and thanked God until I was soaked to the skin.”

I’m not a farmer, nor are most if any of you. But tonight when I lay my head on my pillow our Triune God will have showered me with his grace, just as he does over and over and over again through his precious gospel. And that young man from Korea who couldn’t comprehend the concept of 3 persons yet God? He never did get his head around it. But he did get his heart around it through the grand gift of faith from the Holy Spirit. After graduation he told me, “I’m a child of God, of one God.” Glory in the grandeur of our Triune God’s grace. God’s grace never disappoints. Amen.

Pastor David Wenzel