

Rev. Jerry Ewings, Guest Preacher
Peace, Sun Prairie
February 25, 2024
Lent 2
Romans 5:1-11

More Than a Street in Jerusalem

- 1) The Via Dolorosa – the way of His suffering
- 2) The Via Dolorosa of all who follow Him

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace ^{a)} with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through Him we also have obtained access by faith ^{b)} into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory ^{c)} of God. ^{a)} Some witnesses to the text read *let us have peace.* ^{b)} Some witnesses to the text omit *by faith.* ^{c)} Or *approval*

3 Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, **4** and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. **5** And hope will not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.

6 For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. **8** But God shows His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Therefore, since we have now been justified by His blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through Him. **10** For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by His life. **11** And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.

More Than a Street in Jerusalem

- 1) The Via Dolorosa – the way of His suffering
- 2) The Via Dolorosa of all who follow Him

Intro: It's the other texts today that make us choose our theme. Romans 5 is full of peace and joy both at the beginning and at the end of our text, but in the middle of this sandwich is a text of our suffering and the purpose of suffering in our lives. So, we'll be doing some Rethinking of Suffering Under the Cross in this sermon, but let's start with a physical road – the path Jesus walked.

It's called the Via Dolorosa, the way of suffering or the way of sorrows. It is the path from the fortress where Jesus was condemned to death by Pilate to Golgotha, where He was crucified. But the Via Dolorosa is More Than a Street in Jerusalem. It's

- 1) the way of His suffering and it's

2) the way of all who follow Him

Today you don't need to suffer through this sermon (I hope) but we want to look at Jesus and see His way, His work, His triumph and His passion for your souls. But watch this: His path to triumph is a *via dolorosa* – a path of suffering. In our Gospel lesson, He called out to you and to me: if you want to follow Me, pick up your cross and follow. Lose your life for Me and for the gospel. Then you are ready to follow Me.

The way of Jesus is a *via dolorosa* – for Him personally. Our text shows the glorious gifts we receive because He walked the way of suffering:

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through Him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.

6 For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. **8** But God shows His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Therefore, since we have now been justified by His blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through Him. **10** For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by His life. **11** And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.

Because He suffered, we are justified by faith – we are right with God, everything's good between us and God, not because we made ourselves right, but because He made Himself wrong. He suffered the damnation of sin because it was His only way of saving us. He couldn't make us obey because the fatal flaw is so deep in us. We are without true fear of God and His holy commands. That's why He obeyed in our place and then suffered the penalty for our disobedience.

Other gifts? Because we are justified by faith, we have peace with God. An honest confession of sins shows the trouble we're in. As we spoke our confession of sin, it's uncomfortable to admit what we have done. There's no peace in confessing our sins. But always, always, always listen carefully to the words of the absolution and receive God's peace. "I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Pastor didn't make that up – on the night of the resurrection, the Lord Jesus commanded him to say that. "If you forgive anyone their sins, they are forgiven."

We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

We rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.

We will be saved from God's wrath, because while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and this is all the more certain because today He lives and He lives to lead us in life and death.

Sure confidence from end to end for us, because Jesus walked the *via dolorosa*. His suffering results in our justification, peace, access to God.

Transition: we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But God takes us to a place weren't expecting until we rethink suffering under the cross. There is a *via dolorosa*, a way of suffering for all who follow Christ Jesus.

³Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our *sufferings*, because we know that suffering produces *patient endurance*, ⁴and patient endurance produces *tested character*, and tested character produces *hope*. ⁵And hope will not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.

This is the middle of the sandwich. Surrounded by the peace, joy and confidence that come from the work of Christ for us, the middle turns to our suffering. It's not "O woe is me – I'm suffering for Christ." No, this is said explicitly: we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings.

Wait! What? We rejoice in suffering? Not in American society. We rejoice in triumph. Triumph over pain and disease, mental illness, a bad economy. Take something if you have eczema, or sleepless nights or cancer. Get the right leaders in government and fix all our ills. Cure it – don't suffer.

But remember our bulletin: Rethinking Suffering Under the Cross

- Suffering – troubles for being a Christian. The world hated Him, it will hate His followers as well
- Suffering produces patient endurance – a noble word. It is brave patience, courageous endurance, without weakening or discouragement.
- Patient endurance produces tested character – like a tried soldier. One who has faced the battle before and continues to stand. Like gold refined by the fire of the kiln so that impurities are burned off.
 - When we persevere in tribulation, we reach this tried and tested condition of our faith. It is a glorious condition, and it cannot be reached in any other way than through suffering, endurance, and now real strength of character.
- Tested character produces hope – the sure conviction and confidence that remains firm in all affliction. God will keep His promise to us and this is our hope.

- Hope will not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.
 - All other hopes fade. Money, fame, family all belong to this world and pass away – none of them matter when the end of life or the end of the world comes. But our sure hope in Christ will reach a glorious fulfillment either when He takes you out of this world or brings the world to an end.

Conclusion: almost all our growth happens because of suffering, not because of triumph.