

“The Birth of Hope”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

Trinity Sunday

May 22, 2016

Today’s epistle lesson is taken from the book of Romans, chapter 5, verses 1 through 5. I’ll be reading from the *Common English Bible*. Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand through him, and we boast in the hope of God’s glory.

But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. This hope doesn’t put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. Holy God, three in one, who lives eternally and in perfect harmony with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Give us ears to hear and hearts to receive. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! Last Sunday we discussed John 14 and how it gives reference to The Trinity. This Sunday is Trinity Sunday. The epistle and gospel lesson from Romans and John teach us about Trinitarian theology. In five verses the apostle Paul makes reference to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, but Romans 5 is more than just a lesson on the Trinity.

Verse one declares the peace we have with God because of the faithfulness of Christ. So no matter what we’ve done, no matter what we presently feel trapped

in or what kind of trouble we're suffering through, ". . . the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit . . ." Despite our past, present, and future sin, and with all the brokenness it causes—we continue to work through it—and God's work of salvation continues to birth hope in us.

Dr. Brene Brown, a research professor at the Univ. of Houston has studied hope for many years and calls it a cognitive process; she says it's not an emotion. Her book "*Daring Greatly*" says that children and adults have a high level of hopefulness when they've experienced adversity, conflict, disappointment, and have the opportunity to fail. So when we experience trouble, our access to God as we turn to him works good things in us like endurance, character, and hope. In so many words, God knows how to bring the maturation process to completion.

The Roman Christians were troubled with exorbitant taxes, repressive control by the military, and pressure to worship the Emperor Claudius. The emperor also expelled the Jews from Rome, and when they returned, Jew and non-Jewish Christians had trouble getting along. They experienced adversity, conflict, and disappointment. They probably began to wonder if the Christian life was worth it if this is what happens! But God helped them persevere through the trouble. God knew it would strengthen them, give them character that endures, and ultimately give them hope.

We come to salvation by grace through the faith of Christ and what he accomplished. We fall short, we still sin, and sin continues to exercise its influence on us. But we have peace with God because we're connected to the One who's given us eternal life, and there's great hope and assurance in knowing that!

Rarely our circumstances are what we'd like them to be. We get one problem resolved, and then right behind it another comes in through the back door.

The sequence is this. “Trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

Our trouble is used by God to make us the people of God that endure. Our character becomes more godly, and hope continues to birth in us. Despite how we feel and regardless of our situation, we have hope because we have God’s love. We endure whatever is laid before us, and little by little, hope continues to birth in us.

The church is a community of hope that shares. Trouble and suffering is shared as we brace up each other in prayer. Listen how the plural is brought out in the passage. “**We** have been made righteous through his faithfulness, **we** have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **We** have access by faith into this grace in which **we** stand through him, and **we** boast in the hope of God’s glory.

But not only that! **We** even take pride in **our** problems, because **we** know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. This hope doesn’t put **us** to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in **our** hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to **us**.” The words just read shout and proclaim community, and family, and sharing!

On Mother’s Day we celebrated and mourned, all at the same time, a special couple. Jane and Jim Bell. All three of their adult children are with the Lord. We’re their family. We feel their pain, and we began to think how we might love them more, and how to continue to reach out and include them in our family.

Hope doesn’t disappoint or put us to shame “Because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit . . .” Let’s be truthful, suffering and trouble will never cause us to rejoice. But as the message last week reinforced, troubled hearts will continue to trust no matter what. And, we will always rejoice in the joy of our salvation even when we’re right smack dab in the middle of trouble.

At the end of the day, I want to claim what Matt Redman does. Bless the Lord O my soul. The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning, it's time to sing Your song again. Whatever may pass, and whatever lies before me. Let me be singing when the evening comes. You're rich in love, and You're slow to anger. Your name is great, and Your heart is kind. For all Your goodness I will keep on singing. Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find. And on that day when my strength is failing. The end draws near and my time has come. Still my soul will sing Your praise unending. Ten thousand years and then forevermore.

Holy relational God who lives in perfect harmony with the Son and Holy Spirit. You've are a perfect model of a community that shares mutual love within yourself for us to emulate. Mature us spiritually as we continually reach out to our brothers and sisters. Birth hope in us as we receive your love that produces the endurance we need and causes us to stand. Amen.