

“Pouring Unmeasured Love”

Message by DD Adams
Providence United Methodist Church
First Sunday After Pentecost
May 31, 2015

The epistle lesson for today is taken from the book of Romans, chapter 5, verses 1 through 5. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God. God bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of your word today. Amen.

Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday on the Church calendar. The Easter season goes for 50 days. Last Sunday we celebrated the Day of Pentecost that closed the Great 50 days. Pentecost Sunday marks the birth of the New Testament Church. We’re now a corporate body of believers with Christ being the head of the body. When we think about Trinity Sunday we remember the fullness of God’s being and all God’s work; it leads into Ordinary Time and makes a transition for us. I want to say just a few things about the Trinity of God before we dive into Romans 5.

The word Trinity isn’t used in the Bible, but it’s a biblical teaching. Here’s an analogy one might use for a handle. There’s one federal government and three

branches—Executive, Legislative, and Judicial—all 3 are at the same level. They're interrelated but different. The Federal government doesn't exist apart from the three branches. All three represent the Federal Government. There are checks and balances. So we have three co-equal branches that embody one.

The Doctrine of the Trinity says something similar about God. There's one God and only one God, but the God exists as three persons who are distinct but interrelated. We call them Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's a mystery. We never get to the bottom of it. The Doctrine of the Trinity isn't an attempt to explain or define God. It's an attempt to identify God in the way God has revealed God's self. It helps our understanding and explains how we have access to God.

Now looking at the text for today—the Trinity of God is represented. We can see glimpses of the ways in which God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit interact with one another and act on our behalf. Verse 1 says we have peace with God—peace that says our salvation is sure because we've expressed faith in the work of Christ. We believe by faith that the work of Christ is all sufficient for our salvation. The result is that God continually pours unmeasured love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

I think one of the greatest benefits we have as Christians is that we have access to God. What does that mean? Listen to this illustration. A little boy once stood outside the gate of Buckingham Palace in London. He wanted to talk to the king, but was sternly turned away by the guards at the gate. As he stood there crying, a well-dressed man approached him and asked the boy why he was so upset. The boy told the man his story. When the man heard the reason behind the boy's tears, he smiled and said, "Here, hold my hand, sonny. I'll get you in. Just you never mind those soldiers!"

The little boy took the stranger's hand and together they approached the gate. When the soldiers saw them coming, they all snapped to attention and opened wide the gate for the stranger and the little boy to enter. He was led through the gate, across the courtyard, down carpeted hallways and through open doors, until finally, he was brought into the very presence of the king himself. What got him there? He was holding the right hand! You see, the stranger who was kind was none other than the Prince of Wales, the king's own son. This is the kind of standing and access we have with God when we trust in Jesus Christ.

The difficulty lies in the middle verses of this lectionary text. Let me read verses 3 through 5 again. "We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." Okay, I get that suffering produces endurance, and endurance character, and character hope, but *boasting in our sufferings*? I'm just not there yet friends. Don't get me wrong, I love what suffering produces, but in the middle of the suffering I cry out to God, and I want to be delivered—and delivered now!!

Our *standing* with God is perfect because Jesus Christ already did that for us, but our *state* of going on to perfection in love is a work in progress. It's all about becoming spiritually mature and being conformed to the image of Christ. It's about becoming who we were always meant to be in Christ. The things that produce spiritual maturity are endurance, character, and hope—and these qualities are worth attaining with God's help.

So despite our failures, regardless of our circumstances, irrespective of the conditions of our life—we *refuse to not trust in Christ*. God continues to pour unconditional love, without measuring, into our hearts. God will not give in or give

up on us. God is determined to get us where we need to be, he who began a good work in us *will* bring it to completion.

God doesn't look at us the same way we look at each other. *God* looks at us through eyes of faith and sees us for who we will become—not what we are now. God constantly, relentlessly, persistently, determinedly, unwaveringly, without measure, with unbridled and random pleasure pours love down on his children.

Over the last few weeks there have been many tragedies. The May 13th train crash near Philly, the riots and violence in Baltimore and other parts of the country, and the earthquakes in Nepal and many others. We can ask questions, doubt our faith, and wonder where God in all of this is. Atheists will say that if God cared it wouldn't have happened in the first place. We can doubt and ask questions, but as a person of faith we will continue to trust and proclaim the goodness of God.

The existence of evil and Mother Nature throwing curve balls at Mother Earth doesn't disprove the existence of a loving God. Those who know Christ will always ask questions, but in the end, they will continue to profess that God is love. And God continues to pour love into hearts and communities that send food, pray, help clean up and rebuild, and share the struggles of others

Do you need more faith to believe that God is with you and blessing your life and your loved ones? Do you need to put down negative thoughts about whether God is working in your life to bless you? Do you question God's faithfulness and the Comforter who walks alongside you to help? If you need more trust in God for a situation in your life come forward during the singing of this last hymn, "*We Walk By Faith.*" Let's never forget, God rewards those who diligently seek him. Amen.