

June 3, 07 Communion Romans 5:1-5

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Last week we celebrated Pentecost Sunday the day when the church began. As I said it was an exciting time for the Apostles and the others who had gathered in the Upper Room waiting for God to breathe new life into them. It was a remarkable day as over 3,000 people began to be followers of Jesus and found hope and peace that they never knew or had before. Then they gathered daily with the disciples for prayer, fellowship, sharing in the breaking of bread, as the disciples taught them about the love of Jesus. And we understand from that day on “God added daily to their numbers those who were being saved.”

This morning we gather in fellowship, in prayer, in the teachings of Jesus and soon the sharing in the breaking of bread. We are like the early church coming together in the name of Jesus.

Also today in the church calendar we celebrate the Trinity...God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We celebrate God the Father who is in control of all things and brought all things into being. We celebrate God the Son, who came to this earth to die for our sins and bring us eternal life through his death and resurrection. We celebrate God the Holy Spirit who lives in us today and who walks with us as though we had Jesus in us. Therefore, in all reality, the Trinity lives in us. It was this Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity that fell afresh on

the Disciples and changed their lives forever and gave them boldness to witness to their faith in Jesus. And today, this same Holy Spirit lives in us and we have received Spiritual Blessings through him.

Through Paul's writing to the Romans we understand about these Spiritual Blessings. You see Paul's joy was this trusting faith in Jesus Christ. His joy was the accepting of God at his word knowing that through Christ he had found forgiveness and peace. Let's look at how Paul explains this joy he found. Turn to Romans 5:1-5.

In the book of Romans Paul gives us many of the doctrines of our church. This morning I want to talk about the blessings we receive through being justified through faith in Jesus.

First of all we must understand the word justified. Here is a simple definition for you to remember. Justification means just-as-if-I-never-sinned. Say that with me. (Repeat) Isn't that an easy definition for you to remember? Certainly it is. You see when we are justified it's having a brand new start, all the past sins are gone. It's like that magic slate toy that when you write something on it and raise the first page, what was written on it magically disappears. It's like writing your sins on the blackboard and then you erase them and the blackboard is left clean. It's like the church I read about in Springfield where the preacher wrote sin words on the sidewalk in chalk as his sermon illustration on sinning and forgiveness and then

pressure washed them away. That's what being justified means. Those sins are gone. There is no record of them. God has put them out of his mind and his heart.

Folks, for Paul that was pure joy. What freedom he had. He didn't have to make sacrifices anymore. He didn't have to be careful of breaking any of the commandments, or the laws that were attached to them that made it difficult to follow. No! He had this freedom. It was as if a great weight was lifted from him. It was like the character Christian on his journey in *Pilgrims Progress* when he finally made it to the cross with a sack of sins on his back and once he laid them down he left a free man full of joy for his burdens were gone. A hymn tells us, "At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

Well this joy, as Paul states, lists a few things for us to be joyous about.

First there is joy in knowing you now have **inner peace**. You know when you receive forgiveness for your sins there is peace in your heart. That big burden has been lifted. In your inner being sometimes we hold on to that sin or those sins thinking God will never forgive you. The funny thing is, there is no sin God will not forgive, except of course, the sin of not believing in Him.

There once was a boy who received a BB gun for his birthday with the stipulation that he never use it without his dad's permission, and that he would

never shoot at anything but a target. Well one day he was in the barn all alone and he took his BB gun with him and he faked shooting it. Well a bird flew into the barn and he faked shooting at it, but that was not much fun, so he just happened to have some BB's in his pocket, and so he loaded the gun and took a few shoots at the bird. Fortunately, he missed the bird. However, he heard the crash of glass, so he went to check it out. In horror he found one of the BBs had gone through a pane of glass of a storm window his dad had taken down for the winter. Knowing he was in trouble, he didn't know what to do. As he checked out the windows he found only the first window had a broken pane. So, he decided to rearrange the windows and put the one with the broken pane at the bottom of the 20 windows. No one would notice, he was sure, until next fall. He then put the gun away. Well, as each day would go by the boy didn't feel too good living with this secret, but he didn't tell anyone, especially his father for fear of punishment he would receive. From time to time his dad asked about taking some target practice but the boy felt guilty and had lost his desire to shoot the BB gun, so he made up excuses why he didn't have the time to do that. Well, months went by and it was getting close to putting on the storm windows. He dreaded as each day of fall approached. He knew what he did was wrong, but was afraid to tell his dad. Finally, the day came when they went to the barn to get the windows and the boy was pretty much upset knowing the day of judgment had arrived. As they

approached the windows, he could not take it anymore, and with tears streaming down his face he blurted out to his dad, “Dad, I need to tell you something. I took my BB gun without permission and I saw a bird in the barn and I shot at it. I missed it, but I hit a storm window and broke a glass pane and I hid it behind all the rest. I’m sorry dad, I’m sorry.” His dad looked at him as he reached for the first window, and he stopped and said to his son, “I know you broke that window. I’ve already fixed it. I’m glad you finally told me. I’ve known about this from the very first day. I wish you had told me so that you would not have had to carry this burden so long. I’m glad you finally confessed. I forgive you.” The boy began to cry more as he hugged his father, and as the father hugged him. All these months of unrest ended when he confessed what he did. He now had peace because his father had forgiven him.

Sound familiar? That story is about many of us who hold our sins from God who already knows we have sinned. When you finally come to God in confession, you do find that peace for that sin is gone, it is forgotten, even by God.

Next through being justified, we have the joy knowing we have **access to the grace of God**. Grace is something we don’t deserve, but Grace is something God does for us. It’s that amazing love of God that we can’t always understand. If someone did something against us we would not always forgive them. I know people who went to the grave refusing to forgive someone. What a shame. God

forgives us, and I think we do much more against God, than someone does against us. And, besides that, God tells us to come to him and receive his grace. It's that wonderful, matchless Grace of Jesus that gives us joy knowing that when we have messed up again, if we ask for his forgiveness, he will do it.

The next thing we find is that there is joy in our **hope**. Sometimes when we use that word "hope" we don't have the assurance of what we hope for will happen. When forecasters tell us it's going to rain we hope they are wrong because we have planned a picnic, or planned to play golf. But like a week ago Saturday, the rain happens anyway, and you cancel your golf game. But in the Christian faith that is not true. That 'hope' we have through Jesus has that built-in assurance that not only are our sins forgiven, but there is a new life awaiting those who continue to follow the right road to heaven. As Paul would tell us, those who run the race and stay the course will receive their crown of glory from the one who opened every door to eternal life.

Finally, there is **joy in our suffering**. My friends we don't have time to develop this thought this morning fully. But let me remind you what Paul says about this suffering through his words found in today's scripture lesson.

"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.”

There are those words again, *“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

My friends, this communion morning I hope when you come to this altar to receive the elements of communion that you will come with the joy of knowing what Jesus did for you on the cross and how he has set you free and to give you peace. I hope that the power of the Holy Spirit will continue to guide you and will continue to fill you with the power and the joy that you need from day to day, from moment to moment. For you see, you have been justified, you have been made righteous. Through the cross of Jesus you have been made just-as-if-you-never-sinned. And folks, that’s pure joy in the Lord.

Praise the Lord for that wonderful matchless Grace of Jesus knowing that our changed status from sinner to saint saved by the Grace of God brings joy to our hearts and lives, amen!