

Sermon and Service of the Word for 26th July 2020

SONG: "AS WE GATHER"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96wFybfqspM>

Opening Words

L: The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

All: Let us rejoice and shout for joy, giving God the glory.

L: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

All: as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. Teach us to seek you and to rely on you in all our needs, so that our deepest desires may be satisfied, and we may finally see you face to face. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Song: "On Eagle's Wings"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IY iTQf0GM>

Confession

God of mercy, we acknowledge that we are all sinners. We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done, and are mindful of all that we have failed to do. For the sake of Jesus, who died for us, forgive us for all that is past, and help us to live each day in the light of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Here is some wonderful news! While we were worrying and fretting, God has been at work in our lives offering healing and peace. Receive these gifts in the name and love of the Lord our God. AMEN.

Readings

1 Kings 3:5–12

Psalms 119:129–136

Romans 8:26–39

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52

Song “There is none like You”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0A-zcVgeso&list=RDi0A-zcVgeso&start_radio=1&t=7



Sermon – “More Than Conquerors”

We live in a broken world that has become hostile to the things of the Creator. There are two ways to respond to this situation. We can live life controlled by our flesh or we can live life controlled by the Spirit. Those who live according to the Spirit will share in Christ’s suffering as well as Salvation through him. Just as the cross preceded the crown for Jesus; the same applies for us.

In the midst of this expected suffering St Paul reminds the believer of three important things.

- 1. Through our baptism we have been made God’s children.**

2. We are “in Christ” and as such heirs to all that is Christ’s.
3. We are people of hope; confident that a glorious future with God is our inheritance despite what may be going on around us.

That’s where Romans 8:26-39 comes in. Our starting point might be in the question, “If I am to suffer for being a Christian does God let me go through it unaided?” The answer Paul gives is a resounding NO! Listen to what Paul says in verses 26-28 of our text.

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

God promises to help us in our sufferings and weaknesses. The Greek text indicates the image of someone helping another who is under a heavy load. So, here we see that God promises to come to our aid like a friend helping us carry a heavy load. We also notice in the text that the Holy Spirit becomes our personal prayer partner in the midst of our struggles. Because he knows us intimately he can pray the best prayers on our behalf. That is a wonderful comfort because sometimes we pray for things that God knows are not good for us or in accord with his purposes for us.

The Spirit literally modifies our prayers so that they become attuned with God’s purposes for us. Perhaps we could consider it in this way.

Think of yourself as a small child. You ask me for a glass of red cordial. Immediately I turn to your mother and confirm the rightness of your request. She may say, “Yes that is fine.” Or “Just half a glass.” Or maybe “No that will spoil your dinner or hype you up before bed time.”

You see the Spirit acts like a check on our prayers so that we only get what will ultimately be good for us and God’s kingdom. In fact when we pray the Lord’s Prayer we are asking God to do just that in our lives - “Your Kingdom come and your will be done”.

Paul continues - not only will God help us carry the heavy load and be our perfect pray partner – He will make sure that everything that happens to us be it good or bad, will somehow contribute to our long term blessing and the unfolding of God’s good plan for our lives. To put it another way, he takes the manure in our lives and turns it into fertilizer as a catalyst for our growth as Christians.

We only need to consider Joseph and his experiences in Egypt to see how true this is. Better yet consider how persecution scattered the Jerusalem Christian so that they went everywhere with the gospel.

That’s what we Lutherans call a theology of the cross. God’s best work is achieved through what seems on the surface to be his biggest defeats. No matter what Satan, the world and the sinful flesh may serve up to you, God will slam a perfect volley straight back and ace the enemies in your life.

There is however an important thing to note about verse 28. The promise only applies to baptised, believing followers of Jesus. Actually in the Greek text the words, “those who are called according to God’s purpose” come first in the verse not last as in some English translations. Paul did that to make the emphasis quite plain to the reader.

When life gets painful we who are God’s children may be tempted to think that God has forgotten us. Then we run the danger of giving into despair. We stop looking to God for help and hope. In answer to this despair God makes a glorious promise. You will find it in verses 29-30.

“29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

Friend you were in God’s mind even before you existed. His plan even then was to call you to himself through Jesus so that you would become one of his children. He made that possible when through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection he made you right with himself. Having made you right with himself he gave you an eternal inheritance; life with him forever.

He has chosen you and called you and given you right standing with him, and the gift of eternal life. It is all his work from start to finish. It is all God's gift, freely given apart from anything we could try to do.

My neighbour in Adelaide was a devout Roman Catholic man. He was baptised and believed in the Triune God and went to mass every Sunday. Unfortunately he mistakenly based the assurance of his salvation on the outward circumstances of his life. He wondered if he was holy enough to be saved and go to heaven. He even believed that I would have no problem at the "pearly gates" because I was studying to be a pastor.

He died a few years ago with cancer. Safe now in the loving arms of the Saviour he understands what I tried to tell him. I told him that he didn't have to "be good enough" for heaven. Like all of us he never could have been anyway. The salvation that was his in Christ was a free gift.

Friend, God loves you so much that he sends the Spirit to pray on your behalf when you don't know what to pray. God loves you so much that he had you in mind before you were born and decided that by his grace through your faith in Jesus you would become his precious child. Friend, in him, through him and because of him we are more than conquerors.

May the God of all grace and love and mercy be with each of you until we stand before him in glory. I am looking forward to seeing you all next week in church. Till then may God bless you.

Song: Steven Curtis Chapman – "More Than Conquerors"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9gg-ntqRzQ>

Prayers

Heavenly Father, we pray for the church, the body of Christ. May we be yeast in this world, bringing the gospel of your love and grace to the lost and broken.

O God, hear our prayer.

We pray for all who seek the kingdom of God. Work your Holy Spirit within them and lead them to the light of your salvation. Make us ready to give an answer for the hope we have in Christ Jesus, so that we can encourage and support the seekers and new believers, to your glory.

O God, hear our prayer.

Lord, we ask your blessing and guidance for our political leaders. We pray for our state, its premier and the leader of the opposition. Have mercy on them, and help them lead our people with justice, compassion and wisdom.

O God, hear our prayer.

Jesus, saviour of the world, comfort and protect those who experience hardship, distress, persecution, famine, lack of clothing, danger, or warfare. In the midst of our personal concerns, remind us of the huge needs of others less fortunate than ourselves.

O God, hear our prayer.

God of justice, we are all slaves to sin until we have been set free by your grace. We thank you for your great mercy to us. We pray for criminals, prisoners, and all those who look after them.

O God, hear our prayer.

God, your people cry out in their need. You alone have the power to save them. Please be with the sick and the dying, including [insert names]. Comfort the grieving, especially [insert names].

We ask your blessing on our brothers and sister in Christ, [insert names].

O God, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, because of your great love, you work for our good in all things. In mercy, listen to our prayers, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Benediction

God the Father, who has given to his Son the name above every name, strengthen you to proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord.

God the Son, who is our great high priest passed into the heavens, plead for you at the right hand of the Father. God the Holy Spirit, who pours out his abundant gifts upon the Church, make you faithful servants of Christ our King.

Amen.

Song: Chris Tomlin – “Is He Worthy?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c6pl6CaiD0&list=FLhH3K7BX0MtSgANwiHYjNoQ&index=3&t=0s>