

Trinity
A Sermon by Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday, June 12, 2022
Trinity Sunday

Romans 5:1-8 (The Message)

5 ¹⁻² *By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us—set us right with him, make us fit for him—we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus. And that’s not all: We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that he has already thrown open his door to us. We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide open spaces of God’s grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.*

³⁻⁵ *There’s more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we’re hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we’re never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can’t round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!*

One of the things I hear in the world and sometimes in the church is that all gods are the same – that the major religions of the world believe basically the same things. And I want to make clear this morning that simply is not true.

And this Sunday – Trinity Sunday sets Christians apart from other faiths. No other faith believes in a Triune God, nor would ever speak of God as three. Only Christians do, and Trinity is essential to our understanding of the very nature of God.

Paul is rejoicing, we are rejoicing in this new life and new standing that we have been given before God that we have through faith in Jesus the Messiah. Fully God, and fully human, Jesus becomes our representative, standing in our place, the righteous one, who is One with the Father. In Jesus, because of our relationship with Him, we find ourselves set free, forgiven, adopted as children, in a wide open space surrounded by God’s grace and glory.

And into the midst of this joy and good news Paul continues:

There's more to come:

Now I don't know what you expect to hear, but Paul has just told us we are in this wonderful place of God's favour and love, and so I expect when he says, "there's more to come" that it will be about peace, or prosperity, or the kingdom, or something wonderful. I am not expecting what he does say:

We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles,

Paul knew all about troubles. He knew about hardship and persecutions, he knew about sickness, and financial troubles. He knew about loved ones getting sick, he knew about pain, he knew about times when everything goes wrong.

But he proclaims that *we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!*

Most of us who have lived a few years recognize that our troubles can make us better people. My prayer life is better when I am facing trials and problems. I cling to God in crisis. I find many gracious, caring people around me, and I appreciate them and give thanks for them also when I am struggling.

The people I trust most, the people who have depth of character, and are usually the most generous and caring, are those who have suffered, or those who have walked closely alongside of those who have suffered.

They let their own suffering or the suffering of others change them – drive them deep into the mystery of pain, and live those days fully and well before God.

All of us also know the other kind of people who are angry, resentful and bitter because of suffering, either their own suffering or the suffering of others.

A Grace Disguised, written by Gerry Sittser, tells the story of great loss. Gerry and his family were in a car accident. A car came across the median and hit him and his family as they were driving home from a worship evening. His daughter, wife and mother were killed. He was left to raise his other three children alone. Throughout the book Gerry speaks of the great pain, the trauma, and the problems he faced, and the great questions that plagued him. But also he speaks of the deep love of God.

He found the incarnation of Jesus of great comfort. He writes;

"The Sovereign God came in Jesus Christ to suffer with us and to suffer for us. He descended deeper into the pit than we will ever know. His sovereignty did not protect him from loss.

The God I know has experienced pain and therefore understands my pain. In Jesus I have felt God's tears, trembled before his death on the cross, and witnessed the redemptive power of his suffering. I have grieved long and hard and intensely. But I have found comfort knowing that the sovereign God, who is in control of everything, is the same God who has experienced the pain I live with every day. No matter how deep the pit into which I descend, I keep finding God there. He is not aloof from my suffering but draws near to me when I suffer."

Throughout Gerry's story he tells how he and those who entered his suffering with him are changed.

Gerry writes;

"As long as I remain alive, I want to live as joyfully, serenely, and productively as I can.

The supreme challenge to anyone facing catastrophic loss involves facing the darkness of the loss on the one hand, and learning to live with renewed vitality and gratitude on the other. The challenge is met when we learn to take the loss into ourselves and to be enlarged by it, so that our capacity to live life well and to God intimately increases. Loss can diminish us, but it can

also expand us. It depends, once again, on the choices we make and the grace we receive. Loss can function as a catalyst to transform us. It can lead us to God, the only One who has the desire and power to give us life.”

I know some of you have suffered loss, some of you are suffering different losses right now. Suffering comes to all of us. We all will experience loss. But the Bible tells us that in our losses, our sorrows, our sufferings we are never alone. God is with us. God walks with us, and knows our pain. And God can bless us, and enlarge us, and teach us to live life well as we walk the path.

Our suffering given to God:

suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ 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 Trinity Sunday, and the wondrous news is that the God we worship God is Yahweh, Creator of heaven and earth, the beginning and end of all things, but God is also Jesus the incarnate Son, who lived this life as we do, who knows our pains and hurts, and sufferings, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and God is also the Holy Spirit, the comforter who comes to us, teaches us, expands us, strengthens us and guides our steps.

The Holy Spirit, says Paul, pours out one gift after another to bless and give us strength.

All glory and praise be to God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Let us pray: Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship you, we thank you for you are God the Creator, the beginning and end of all things, you are Jesus who has lived this life as we do, and you are Holy Spirit who strengthens us and fills our lives. We give you ourselves, we give you our joys and our pains, our struggles and sorrows, for you are the Triune God who brings life out death, joy and dancing from mourning and tears. You restore us to yourself, we find ourselves in the wide open spaces of your grace. We lift up our hearts in praise. Amen