



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 4, 2012

2nd Sunday in Lent

Sermon Text: [Romans 5:1-11](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 28:10-17](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 73](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 5:1-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 8:31-38](#)

Rejoice in Suffering

It is expected

It drives us to God's love

Jesus really let Peter have it in the Gospel, didn't he? You spouses sitting here, if your spouse says to you "Get behind me Satan," it isn't exactly a compliment, is it? You would probably know you're in a little trouble. I think it has to do with what Jesus said there. "You don't have in mind the things of God. You have in mind the things of men." God's logic and our logic are completely at odds at times, right? What we think God should be doing isn't always what he does. God does the things that we need him to do, but he does it in a way that you and I would never come up with.

Think about God's logic and how completely other than ours it is. Is there anybody here who grew up in a home with brothers or sisters? Has anyone grown up with any siblings? Any of you? Did your brother or sister ever get in trouble? Did they ever get grounded, ever lose the car, ever get punished, or ever have something like that happen to them? How many times did you go and raise your hand and say "Mom, Dad, ground me for the month. Don't ground my brother or sister. I know I didn't do it and they did, but really, I want you to ground me." How many times did you do that? If you did it once, raise your hand. Really? Nobody? Not once? Yet, isn't that God's logic?

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#).) God took all of our sins and put them on Jesus, declared us not guilty, justified us. This is God's logic. He says, *"The wages of sin is death."* ([Romans 6:23](#).) It must be punished. But God is a God of love and wants no one to perish. So what does God do? He comes up with a way that is completely illogical according to the ways of man. He punishes himself. He punishes Jesus in our place. He gives us Jesus' perfection. He credits to our account the fact that Jesus paid the price of our sin. That is not logical. That is not the ways of man. That is the ways of God.

Keep that in mind now as you consider what God said to us in Romans 5. What God says to us in Romans 5, "rejoice in suffering," is not the ways of man, is it? It's illogical. Rejoice in suffering. It makes no sense. Suffering stings. Suffering hurts. Suffering is not something that brings a smile to our face and a joy to our heart and a spring to our step. That's because so often you and I have in mind the ways of man and not the ways of God.

When the Holy Spirit has Paul lay this out for the Romans and for us, he shows us that we can rejoice in suffering. God has done everything that needs to be done so that you and I can have joy in the midst of sorrow. Joy doesn't necessarily mean giddy, giddy, happy, happy. It means this confidence that nothing we go through in this life is worth comparing with the glory that awaits us in Christ Jesus. That's what he said, right? That's the truth our God lays before us in the Book of Romans.

This morning he reminds us to do what is not logical to us. He reminds us to focus on him and find joy in suffering. God has given us a wealth of blessings that bring us joy no matter what our circumstances are and it's because God himself has guaranteed that even when we are going through suffering, that doesn't change the fact that he loves us. That's what Paul lays out for us here. It's so counterintuitive, but then again, so is Christianity.

Christianity is based entirely on grace, not on merit. It's based on God's undeserved love for us and not that we do anything. You and I know that. We rejoice in that. But our God is telling us that's what leads us to rejoice in suffering. Look at what he says. He says, "Therefore, since we have been justified (or declared not guilty) through faith," here is the result, "we have peace with God." Since God took and punished himself instead of punishing us and since God credited that to our account, and since God has declared us not guilty, we are now reconciled, or we are at peace with God. We, who are by nature his enemies, as we see during the season of Lent, are at peace with God.

We are encouraged to take the time to be honest with ourselves and not make anymore excuses for our sin, but look at ourselves and see us for what we are; sinners who do not deserve the love of God. On Wednesdays, we are looking at all these different wounds that we ourselves give to Jesus. When we are honest about that, this truth that he has declared us not guilty is absolutely amazing. Don't become so familiar with it that you take it for granted and say, "Yeah, yeah, God forgave me. I know that. Move on to something else." There is nothing more important in your life because this is what sustains you through life. This is what our Savior is saying.

Through him we have access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. It's an ongoing thing. We live in a state of grace he says because what Jesus did for the world has become ours through the gift of faith the Holy Spirit has given us. That changes us. It doesn't just change us from sinners on the road to hell to saints who have heaven. It also changes us on how we look at everything as we are going through this lifetime. We rejoice in our suffering because we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. The more we are focused on the hope of the glory of God, the more we will find the strength to find God's comfort and God's peace in the midst of our suffering. That's what our God is telling us.

This is the wealth he has given us. He has given us this hope, this certainty, this confidence that we are at peace with God. That won't disappoint us because he's poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us the gift of faith. The Spirit strengthens that faith through Word and Sacrament. The Spirit keeps us

connected to God and this justification that we have received. This is the wealth that God had poured out on us.

When we are going through suffering, it doesn't feel like God is pouring out wealth on us. It feels like pain. It feels like sorrow. It feels like trouble. It feels like difficulty. It feels like everything bad that we've ever known. But our God is telling us that when we are going through it, when we focus on what God has done for us in Christ and we remember that our time here is just temporary and our true hope, our true confidence is not in this lifetime - our hope is not in the wealth of the world, our hope is not in the health of the world, our hope is not in the good relationships of this world, our hope and our confidence is that God loves us and has given us heaven - when we set our eyes on that, he helps us to endure all those times that those other things I just listed go to hell in a handbasket. They will because we live in a sinful world. As we go through it, when we are focused on the hope that we have, the confidence that we have, that does not disappoint us.

You and I might feel like it disappoints us. You and I might say why. You and I might struggle with all kinds of things. Because we live in a sinful world and we have a sinful nature, we will do that. I'm not going to tell you it's never going to happen to you. What I am going to tell you is what is truly important is where you find your answers when you are asking the why questions, and when you are asking the question "God, do you still love me if you are letting this happen to me". Where you find the answer is in what God points us to here in Romans. The certainty of God's love for us in Christ. The certainty that can't be changed no matter what our emotions, our feelings, our strengths or our weaknesses are. The certainty that God loves us. That's what he points out in the second part of the text. He says, *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for us."* When we were dead in our sins and our transgressions, Christ died for us. While we were his enemies, Christ died for us. And if he loved us enough to do that for us before we were his own through the gift of faith, what Paul is saying is you know he is going to be with you through life. You know he is going to be with you as you go through these things now that you are his child through the gift of faith. *"If, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"*

Being saved through his life I think is talking about all the sufferings that we go through. God is not deserting us. God will not desert us because he died for us when we were his absolute enemies, when we had nothing to offer to him, and when we were his sworn enemies. Now, there's a part of us that loves him. Sure, we still have a sinful nature, but there's a part of us that loves him and wants to do his will and wants to rejoice even in suffering, but we struggle doing it. If he died for us when we were his absolute enemies, now that we are struggling because we love him and want to do what is right, he isn't going to turn his back on us. That's a lie of Satan. Don't buy it.

God loved you enough to die for you. He's not going to desert you. That's what he tells us. *"Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."* It really doesn't matter that you

didn't take the punishment for your brother or sister or that they didn't take the punishment for you when you were growing up. What does matter and what should thrill you to the tips of your toes and to the top of your head is that Jesus did that for you. He made peace between you and God, so you can be certain that's the guarantee, that now that you are his child by faith, it doesn't matter what happens. Come hell or high water, your God loves you and he'll be with you. He never promises to make it easy, but he does promise to keep you in the faith. He does it through Word and through Sacrament and through turning to him for those answers in times of trouble.

That's a blessing we have. That's why we want to live in the logic of God, not in the logic of man.