

The Rev. Emily Dunevant

Matthew 9:35-10:8

Exodus 19:2-8a

Psalms 100

Romans 5:1-8

June 14, 2020

The Second Sunday after Pentecost

"Oh Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

We start this morning with a simple prayer to center our hearts. A confession, a petition. God, I have sinned and I need your help.

These are my favorite kinds of prayers. The prayers that we use when we don't have the words, when we don't know what to ask, or what to do, or how to move forward. The prayers we use when we feel overwhelmed and uncertain. I know that for me, I have found myself sitting in silence a lot these days without the right words, maybe you have too. Knowing God has called me into this Christian life to love and to serve others. Yet, I know I have fallen short. I know I have made mistakes. I know at times I have turned my back on the hard work in front of me. I am not sure what to do some days and so I sit...in God's presence and pray.

"Oh Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Maybe you have been experiencing this same kind of emotional and spiritual lethargy. It's so understandable. The world is shifting and changing under our feet. We are learning and growing and challenging long held patterns of oppression and discrimination. We are struggling to maintain jobs and homes and children during isolation. We are trying to stay well in the midst of this virus. And we are tired.

But, folks, we can't stop doing the work of our faith. We can't stop loving one another. We can't stop doing the difficult work of reconciliation even though we may be tired. Our faithfulness and our courage and our strength are needed more than ever. And, so, I wanted to take a moment this morning to pause and allow ourselves to acknowledge our fatigue and then I want us to give it over to God. Give it over and trust that God will take care of you.

How timely that we are offered our text from Romans this morning.

"...we 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."

If you are like me, you needed to hear these words this week. The words of suffering, endurance, character and hope. The words that God's love has been poured into our hearts and into this tired world. For me the beauty of this text is that Romans does not turn away from difficulty. It acknowledges it and shows us a way forward. It says that God knows we are tired but not to give up hope.

Because, if we aren't careful we can get so caught up in what afflicts us or what has hurt us or what we are afraid of that we become stagnant followers of Christ, lost in our suffering. The difficulty can become so debilitating that we often turn away from the one thing that can give us the love and encouragement we need to move forward.

I love in Romans, chapter 2 when Paul asks: "...if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself?" Paul is trying to point out that we can easily become consumed by our own works, our own suffering, our own needs that we forget to teach ourselves, to remind ourselves that God will give us the strength we need. As in...sometimes we need to take our own advice.

That's when our simple prayer comes in handy. "Oh Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

We give it all over to God and trust in God's love for us.

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God...and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

Peace and hope. That is God's gift to us.

Now, if we took these words to heart, what would peace look like for you? What would hope look like? Because God will provide us all with nothing less than a peace which transcends all understanding. And our faith reassures us to never give up hope because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I want to close this morning with a poem I came across the other day. For me, it beautifully articulates the peace and hope that God provides to each and every one of us as we move through these times we are in, when we don't have the right words, when we don't know how to move forward, what to do or what to say. When all we can do is pray, God, have mercy on me. The poem is called *We Will Go with You*.

We will go with you

O Beloved, spring of mercy,
call us, and no matter the path ahead
we will go with you.
In strange cities of change and challenge
you will guard us and guide us.
In meadows of beauty and grace
you will open our eyes to see.
Through deserts of hardship you will provide.

In narrow passages of hurt and suffering
you will be present.
In landscapes of loss and sorrow
you will be enough.
When you lead us into the world's pain
and move us to act for justice
you will be our nerve and our strength.
When we step into the unknown
you are with us;
you are the light in the darkness;
yes, even the darkness itself is you.
O Holy One,
Lover, Beloved and the Flowing of Love:
beckon, and we will go with you.
Bless us and be with us as we look to the future
and step into the present.

Poem written by: Steve Garnaas-Holmes

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

-