

Date: 05 November 2017
Services: 5pm, 930 P
Series: Reformation
Passage: Romans 5:1-11
Title: A church in need of reform
Outline: *Christ creates Certainty*

1. His suffering gives you life and
2. Your suffering, gives you hope

Life has its ups and downs, its challenges and opportunities. At times it can be exciting - a thrill a minute! Other times – well, life is a dog.

// It can be disappointing to say the least. Jobs and promotions that never come through.

Home sales and bad investments. I can't speak to that one – I'm not proud – but I'm not ashamed to say – I'm a failed capitalist!

Even when things are going well, we often hesitate to get our hopes up wondering when the other shoe is eventually going to drop...with up's and down's like this – I'm sure we all wonder:

Are there any sure things in life?

Anything that we can dare dream are certain?

As we just heard, Paul wrote that **there is**; not only for this life, but also for the life to come.

Friends, Christ creates certainty.

When nothing else will – Christ

Creates

Certainty.

In Romans 5 Paul argued that the message of Christ creates certainty:

// **we will be saved.**

He wrote about certainty:

- not only that our former sins are forgiven,
- not only that, justified through Christ, we can make a new start time and time again
- But also that Christ is our salvation.

Christ means certainty.

In Christ, God has given everything to those who deserve nothing and in doing so – makes each and every one of us who claim to be followers of Jesus; valuable, precious; diamonds in the rough.

In Paul's words: justified and reconciled.

Christ creates certainty.

All the way through this passage Paul emphasised this. Certainty that:

//

- 1. His suffering gives you life and**
- 2. Your suffering, gives you hope**

And – friends, no one, NO ONE knew this better than the reformers of the 15th and 16th centuries.

They were committed to Christ and the church to whom they belonged

But as for the state of the church which they loved so dearly – the body of Christ here on earth...it was horrifically deformed; warped; mutated beyond recognition.

The Roman Catholic Church had become a place of debauchery and violent politics.

Popes were known to have mistresses and children. As were many of their senior clergy...so much for a vow of chastity...

Many Popes had been appointed by Italian nobles to suit their interests.

The Roman Church taught that salvation was only achievable through good works and receiving the Sacraments.

You had to pay to receive communion, be married, and be buried on holy ground – each necessary steps to ensure salvation – according to 15th and 16th century Roman Catholic teaching. To teach anything else – ended with you being burnt at the stake, buried outside of the graveyard – if buried at all – and considered damned for all eternity.

On top of financial contributions all were expected to either contribute from their harvest or (if you were a peasant) to work in Church fields, vineyards or orchards for a set number of days each week or month.

Relics were bought and sold – and they could be anything – a feather – a bone – the seller claiming that the item was something Jesus had touched – or worn – a bone of an apostle...and owning one supposedly “pleased God” ...

Clergy taught that in Holy Communion their actions transferred a special power of God allowing them to transform the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ. As I said already - participation in this meal was a necessary step to salvation.

But not the only step.

Salvation was also heavily dependant on your merit.

Your actions

Your deeds

Your commitment to The Roman Catholic Church

And if you were lucky enough to be able to – your wealth could stand in stead of these things.

Out of this period of corruption, some incredible men and women stood – despite the risk of painful death stood in the breach – attempting to draw the Church back to a strong Christology – and a purer belief in and understanding of Scripture

John Wycliffe – for example. The first man to have the bible translated into the common tongue.

One of his contemporaries – a Czech preacher by the name of Jan Hus - accused of heresy and granted a safe passage to Constance in modern

Switzerland to defend himself at trial. He never got his trial as he was arrested regardless of his guarantee of a safe passage by the Catholic Church and burnt in public.

Katharina Schutz Zell – wrote the psalms into songs for women to sing – was a noted pamphleteer – one of the key ways the reformers communicated with and rallied people to act – she co-ordinated the housing for 3000 refugees during the peasants war

Ulrich Zwingli – the leader of the reformation of Switzerland – who destroyed all the stained glass windows, relics, statues of supposed saints – even the organ in his cathedral-like Church (Grossmunster if you've ever been) right in the heart of Zurich – lest they distract from the beauty and truth of the Gospel...

Each and every one of them – had certainty in Christ that:

//

1. His suffering gives you life

So – back to the reading please – and – well, it is in itself a text of highs and lows.

Boasting in the hope of the Glory of God – wow – what a powerful statement...

And yet – how are we – who dare boast in the glory of God – how are we described?

- Ungodly.
- Powerless
- Sinners
- Enemies of God...

It's a text of highs and lows.

These are just some of the words Paul uses in our text to describe our human nature.

// Now he himself was lost – when writing to his disciple in 1 Tim 1:15 described himself – as for sinners “the worst”!

// “Lost and condemned creatures” were the words of Martin Luther.

We might try to convince ourselves that we’re really not that bad.

Maybe not in our own eyes or in the eyes of others, but spiritually speaking, we are in the eyes of God.

By the actions of Adam – by our separation from God – by our human-ness we weren’t friends of God, but enemies.

And as much as I want to disbelieve this notion – man – I know it. Of course I know it!

I am a sinner. As laden and burdened as that phrase is – it’s true.

My very soul urges me to anger, and hostility – just ask the person who drove 20km under the speed limit up the motorway this afternoon!!!

And yet – I know better

I am justified through faith.

At this point in this letter, Paul reminded the Romans – and us - the certainty of salvation comes down to relationship.

Paul moved from the language of legal action which deals with law, judgement and justification, into a language of personal relationship when he talks about hostility, reconciliation and peace.

My relationship with Christ secures my salvation. Though undeserving – it is – and that should bring me peace. We stand – verse 2 – in Grace – we boast in hope – because of the actions of Christ.

He reconciled us to God.

Luther wanted to live a life dedicated to the perfect love of God.

Zwingli – though militant – wanted the same – a distraction free – but fully engaged community of people committed to the idea that they lived glorious lives – peace-filled lives – joyful lives that overcame because of all that Christ had done.

And what had He done? Verse 6: “you see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”

Paul went on to remind his audience that yes – some will die for a righteous person – maybe for a good person – but the ultimate demonstration of God’s love – verse 8 – “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Now this very notion was what put 15th Century Roman Catholics into shame mode.

A God died for us?

We must genuflect!

We must heap our miseries upon ourselves and each other – we must – to the best of our extent – feel the guilt and pain that He did in order that we can appreciate His sacrifice...

But nothing could be further from the truth!

Look at Paul’s words!

This knowledge should bring us joy!

It should bring us relief!

When there is nothing else – Christ died for you and I – that is certain; and being certain in this should be a balm for the soul...

Even when times are tough – especially when times are tough – my second point:

2. Your suffering, gives you hope

Look at second half of verse 2 friends.

We boast in the hope of the glory of God – the hope – the certainty of which we just discussed.

But it goes on – verse 3 and 4:

“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Now Paul knew suffering.

As for Paul, Jesus told a man named Ananias – in Acts 9:15 – during Paul’s conversion

// “I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

Paul was also given a thorn in the flesh. We’re not told exactly what it was – but you don’t bandy that turn of phrase around, do you?

Three times Paul pleaded for God to take it away. God didn’t, rather He told him,

// “my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Any thorns in the flesh that you’re dealing with? Physical, mental, emotional? God might not take it away, but you have the same promise Paul did.

His grace is sufficient for you.

It’s all that you need for this life and the next. God’s grace enabled Paul to:

// “delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

No matter what life might throw at us, no matter what suffering we might endure, no matter what hardships we might face, no matter what storms we suffer, no matter what might threaten to shake our body and soul...

Jesus died and rose again to give us the gift of eternal life!

And like I said – this knowledge should soothe our aching souls – at the times when they ache the most.

What’s more - verse 3 again friends:

// “Suffering produces perseverance.”

The ability to take one shot after another and stand strong in God’s grace.

Well – heck, we aren’t going to learn to stand strong unless we stand in a strong wind are we?

Trees deep in the forest have shallow roots - the ones that are exposed to hardship – they go deep – they stand firm.

And again, as Paul wrote:

// “Perseverance produces character.”

When we are buffeted by the hard times – but remain firmly secure in our faith in Christ – then our very beings mature – grow...

Character is King – my coach once said to me – I would hire 100 people with good character but low skill.’

And when we persevere, when our character is tested and grows...

Well – again verse 3:

// “Character produces hope.”

Hope to live our lives here on earth knowing that we’re not going to be here on earth forever because what comes in the next life – that is our home.

Finally, Paul tells us, verse 5: “hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

Friends, Christ means certainty.

His suffering gives you a sure place to put your feet.

It creates a place in which we can stand – and from which we can boast.

Christ creates certainty.

When nothing else is certain, when suffering and hardship threaten to wear you down

Let your suffering give you hope.

build your character.

bring perseverance.

spill into hope.

And all in the certainty of Christ and His sacrifice for us.

Let us pray