

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
June 16, 2013
Romans 5:6-11

In Christ Jesus, whose love for us is beyond our thought, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Sometimes the simplest is the best. When you look up the word “love” in a dictionary, you see words like “strong feeling, deep affection, warm attachment, passion, desire.” And all of those words are fine.

But when Scripture speaks of love it is not talking about emotions and feelings as much as it is talking about actions and commitment. A great one word definition for love can be “sacrifice”---doing, giving, serving the other.

That definition reminds me of the Sunday School story. A teacher asked her Sunday School class how much Jesus loved them. They thought for awhile and a child finally raised his hand and said this as he stretched out his arms, “Jesus loved me this much.” The teacher responded, “Oh, really. Why that much?” The boy answered, “Because He died on the cross for me!”

What a simple definition and picture of Jesus’ unfathomable love for us. He loved me “this much!”

Well all of our readings this morning speak of our God’s great love for us. Before giving His Law on Mt. Sinai, the LORD Jehovah reminded the people of Israel of His great love for them. He set them free from the slavery of Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. In our Gospel reading Jesus sees the people wearied and scattered like sheep without a shepherd. His heart went out to them and He sent His disciples out to proclaim that the kingdom of God was at hand.

And in our text this morning from Paul’s letter to the Romans we hear about our Savior’s amazing love for us.

In the first 2 chapters of this letter Paul firmly established the fact of the universal sinfulness of all people and of our deserved condemnation by God. Two weeks ago we heard from chapter 3 that “every sinner is declared righteous” by God. That declaration is centered in Jesus and is ours only through faith.

Last week we heard from the example of Father Abraham that faith faces the facts of our own helplessness, but also of God’s great gracious power and faithfulness. Our salvation is an accomplished fact. Jesus **WAS DELIVERED UP BECAUSE OF OUR OFFENSES, AND WAS RAISED AGAIN FOR OF OUR JUSTIFICATION.**

In chapter 5 Paul begins to set forth what this justification means for us in our daily Christian lives. Verses 1-5 serve as an introduction to all that follows through chapter 8. Verse 1 sets the theme for what follows: **THEREFORE, HAVING BEEN JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,**

The emphasis is not on our attitude toward God, but on God’s attitude toward us. There is peace between us and God because Jesus has taken away our sins. Paul is not talking about our attitude toward God but about what will motivate us to have a correct attitude toward God. That is God’s love for us! John wrote in his first epistle, **WE LOVE HIM, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.**

REJOICE IN JESUS’ LOVE!

I: A LOVE WHICH MAKES GREAT SACRIFICES.

We read again vs. 6-8: **FOR WHEN WE WERE STILL WITHOUT STRENGTH, IN DUE TIME CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY. FOR SCARCELY FOR A RIGHTEOUS MAN WILL ONE DIE; YET PERHAPS FOR A GOOD MAN SOMEONE WOULD EVEN DARE TO DIE. BUT GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US.**

Verse 6 is a tough verse to read. “We were without strength and ungodly.” We all like to think of ourselves as having some power and strength, some authority over the things of this life. But as God sees it, we have no strength at all, no strength to seek Him, no strength to serve Him, no strength to save ourselves, no strength to draw His attention to us or to love us.

To admit to this, to confess this is difficult, even for the Christian, because our sinful flesh wants to take at least some credit---“we’re better than others, we at least aren’t as bad as most.” God’s Word stands! We are without strength, powerless!

But the Good News is, that when we are led by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge that we are powerless, than we realize that our salvation is completely dependent upon God's power alone. If it is dependent upon God's power alone, than our salvation cannot be lost, it is assured, it is complete. Paul declares **CHRIST DIED FOR (US) THE UNGODLY.**

How unnatural that is! In war, a brother in arms may give up his life for his brother. But how many would die for their enemy, for someone not worth dying for? Jesus did!

Without strength, ungodly, sinners! That's us! We have missed the mark and continue to miss the mark of God's perfect, unchangeable Law day after day. Society uses the word "sinner" to describe only those who are outwardly evil in their actions. God uses the term to describe all of us on the basis of what is in our hearts.

Sinners, the ungodly, wretched reprobates without any goodness or strength of our own. These are the kind of people for whom Jesus died. What we wouldn't even consider doing, Jesus did without hesitation. Why! Because He loved us "this much!" He showed His amazing love for us in many ways, but the greatest was when He sacrificed Himself on the cross.

REJOICE IN JESUS' LOVE!

II: A LOVE WHICH ASSURES US OF OUR SALVATION.

We read: **MUCH MORE THEN, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM WRATH THROUGH HIM. FOR IF WHEN WE WERE ENEMIES WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON, MUCH MORE, HAVING BEEN RECONCILED, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE.**

All of us have had arguments and fights with family loved ones, friends or fellow workers. When the fight is over and peace is made again, reconciliation and making up is set into motion, it sometimes is hard to immediately trust that the one who was angry with us is over it. The hurt was deep, the words stung. There may be a nagging doubt that it really is over.

As human beings who know that we deserve God's anger and punishment for our sins and who live in a world of heartache, suffering and disappointment because of sin, it is only human and natural for us to sometimes wonder and doubt whether God hasn't decided to punish us after all and remove His love from us.

Paul tells us how foolish that kind of thinking is. If God didn't do it then, condemn us when we were without Christ, but sent His Son to die for us, He certainly will not do it now that we are His children through faith. His love for us is constant, never changing and assures us of our salvation. If God did not pour out His anger toward us while we were without strength, ungodly and sinners, will He now reject or condemn us on whom He has poured out His grace? How absurd! Impossible!

We were His enemies because of our sins. We stood in opposition to Him and everything that He represented, yet He reconciled us to Himself. Our natural sinful state has been changed. Jesus took our sin and removed it and therefore God's hostility has been removed. But we are not just God's former enemies, we are not now just friends, we are now His children, sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father!

When God should have destroyed us because we were His enemies, He didn't. Instead, He removed the reason for His anger toward us by sending His Son, taking our sins and placing them upon Him, letting Him suffer the penalty of death, hell and damnation for us.

The proof of God's acceptance of His Son's sacrifice is Jesus' resurrection. Can God the Father now withhold any blessings from us? Can He any longer hate us and have something against us?

How can He when His resurrected and ascended Son lives and reigns with Him in heaven? Throw away your feelings of doubt, or worry, or anxiety, or despair! Jesus loved us "this much" and the Father has accepted that sacrifice of His love for us now and throughout eternity. No more uncertainty, rejoice!

That leads us to the last point:

REJOICE IN JESUS' LOVE!

III: A LOVE WHICH COMPELS US TO SPEAK.

We read: **AND NOT ONLY THAT, BUT WE ALSO REJOICE IN GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THROUGH WHOM WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE RECONCILIATION.**

Literally the word "rejoice" means "to boast about, to take pride in." That is not an activity that is to be done quietly or when we are unsure of the outcome. The word emphasizes how confident we are of our salvation. There is no room for doubt or despair. We do not boast about ourselves we are boasting

about our God and His great love for us. We take pride in our Savior's amazing love which made the great sacrifice for us and assured our salvation.

How do we do that? By our speaking, by our living, by our doing. Our God gets our full glory and praise! His great love motivates us, moves us with joy and confidence to rejoice and boast about Him in our daily life.

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise.

The glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace!

My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
to spread thro' all the earth abroad, the honor of Thy name.

See all your sins on Jesus laid; the Lamb of God was slain;

His soul was once an offering made for every soul of man.

Look unto Him, ye nations; own Your God, ye fallen race.

Look and be saved through faith alone, be justified by grace!

Amen.