

June 16, 2019  
Trinity Sunday  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
**Always Rejoicing in Our Triune God**

### **Romans 5:1–5 (NIV84)**

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;<sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope.<sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

On Tuesday, the US Women's National Team played their opening match in the World Cup against Thailand. The US women won 13-0 and set records for most goals and largest margin of victory in a World Cup match. Goals in World Cup matches are not easy to come by. So you rejoice after a goal is scored. There was lots of rejoicing by the US team on Tuesday. But what about on the other side? Thailand was shut out. They were under pressure the whole match. Imagine how the goal keeper felt after each goal was scored against her. There was not any rejoicing on Thailand's side. That is how athletic competitions work. You rejoice in victory but not in defeat.

The Apostle Paul tells us that Christians have a different view of life. We are always rejoicing in our Triune God. We rejoice in our Triune God because he justified us. However, we also rejoice in our Triune God when we are suffering. In victory and in defeat, when things are good and when they are bad we can always rejoice in our Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **Because He Justified Us**

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

The word used for rejoice is not the normal word for rejoice. This word is often translated as boast. It means to have confidence in something, to depend on someone, to consider someone more worthy of trust than yourself. So Paul tells us to confidently rejoice that we have been justified through faith. This justification has been accomplished by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Trinity work together to accomplish our justification. But before we talk about their work to justify us, we need to see why we must be justified.

If life was a soccer match between us and the devil, we would have no reason to rejoice. Every temptation is another strike of the ball that lands in the net for a goal. He gives us just the right comeback to embarrass someone who said something mean about us and we say it. Goal for the devil. He puts the image on the screen that tempts to lust and we click it. Goal. He tells us we can handle one more drink and we down more than we should. Goal. When a friend shows us something new they just bought, the devil tempts us to think, "I deserve things more than they do." And envy and coveting begin. Goal. Sometimes the temptations are tricky and hard to stop. Others are slow rollers that we let go between our legs. And then there are times we are kicking the ball into

our own net as we join in sin willfully and join the side of Satan.

And the score is something like 147 billion to zero against each one of us. Can you imagine what the team from Thailand was thinking when the United States went up 5-0, 8-0, 11-0 in the World Cup match? They had no hope of winning. What hope do we have being down 147 billion to zero? None. And when we realize from God's Word that the punishment for each sin is eternal separation from God in the fires of hell, then we really have no hope. There can be no confident rejoicing in our ability to defeat the devil's temptations and live up to our Triune God's expectations. There can be no peace with God based on our own efforts.

But there is grace, the undeserved love of God. By grace, God the Father sent his one and only Son to be our substitute. The eternal Son of God offered himself as payment for our sins. Remember, that is something like 147 billion times eternity. And multiply that by the billions of people who have lived on this earth. Jesus offered his life as payment for the sin of the world. How could one life be worth enough to pay for such terrible rebellion against the Holy God? Jesus is God, one person of the Triune God. His life is worth more than enough since he is the eternal God. We can't fathom what it was like for the Son of God – who has no beginning, who has existed from eternity, who created the universe – to die. In addition, God the Father and God the Son had been in perfect unity as one God from all eternity together with God the Holy Spirit. But to suffer hell for all people, the Son of God must experience hell, the separation from God. And when Jesus is hanging on the cross, he is forsaken by his Father.

Therefore God has justified us through Christ Jesus. The Father knows about every one of our 147 billion sins. Yet, he declares you to be not guilty because Jesus has paid for every sin in full. Justification is that God declares you (and the world) not guilty because Jesus paid for every sin through his suffering and death. But who can believe this message? Who can trust in God's justification. Enter the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us faith to trust in Christ's work that justifies us. And we rejoice confidently in our Triune God. The Father justifies based on the Son's work and the Spirit convinces us that Christ did all this for us.

### **While We Suffer**

*Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

Why does Paul have to go and ruin our rejoicing. It is easy to rejoice confidently in the victory given to us by the Triune God. But rejoice in suffering?! That is not normal. How can we do that? First, we remember that it is the Holy Spirit who gave Paul these words to write so this is God's Word and not Paul's. Second, we see what God has in mind by allowing affliction, struggles and suffering in our life. Then we have hope in God and can confidently rejoice in his good plans.

But it is not easy. What is your reaction when you stub your toe? Probably not rejoicing confidently in God. Instead one might utter a curse upon the object that dared to be in the way of your big toe. Or it may be that you get angry at whoever left that object in your path. A stubbed toe hurts for a short time and so do many afflictions in this life. The car breaks down when you need it to get to work. Do we curse the car? A child is sick in the middle of the night, keeping you up all night. Do you rejoice in God at that moment? Your spouse forgets to do something important that they agreed to do? Is there anger? Your friend, maybe even your best friend starts spending lots of time with another person and not much with you. One doesn't usually rejoice when they are lonely, sad, scared, afflicted and suffering.

When we see affliction and suffering as only negative, then we are not confidently looking to God and seeing his promises. Instead we are only looking at the earthly and temporal consequences of the suffering. And that can lead to making excuses for our sin. “I’m impatient because I’m not feeling well.” “I’m angry because he or she made me angry.” “I lied because Mom or Dad were going to be mad at me.” “I’m the victim here. I’m the one suffering so I have an excuse to think and act in a sinful way.”

However, instead of causing sin, pressure and suffering show what we are. Martin Luther said it well when he wrote, “Tribulation does not make people impatient, but proves that they are impatient. So everyone may learn from tribulation how his heart is constituted.” (Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, Kregel Publications, p. 91). Suffering often brings out the worst in people. It can certainly show what is in our sinful heart. What is the solution? Repentance.

We repent of our lack of trust. We repent of our lack of hope in God. We repent of our sinful words and actions that become public knowledge in times of suffering. We repent and realize that we have no chance of living as God’s child on our own. Then and only then does the rejoicing in God begin. For when we despair of all hope in ourselves, God builds up our hope in him. Then suffering has brought about a good result. We have turned from our sin and turned to the Triune God for forgiveness and help to amend our sinful lives. Then we can confidently rejoice that God will produce these results during our lives:

*suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

If a child is given whatever they want as soon as they ask for it, we might expect the child to be spoiled. That child will have no perseverance because they never had to wait for anything. They will have no character because they got what they wanted by throwing fits and playing one parent against the other. This is not what you want for your child. God does not want this for his children either. He has lavished his grace on us in Christ. He has poured out his love upon us through the Holy Spirit. And he will develop in his children perseverance, character and hope.

Maybe you know a believer who has that confident hope in the Lord that is shown most clearly in suffering. Their life is not good on the outside. They are suffering physical pain from disease or emotion pain because of how they’ve been treated by the world. But they still rejoice in God and when you talk to them to try to encourage them, you end up being the one who is encouraged. I want the perseverance and character of that believer. Therefore I will rejoice in my sufferings because God loves me enough to want my perseverance and character and hope in him to grow.

In this life, there will be times we feel like we are losing 13-0 in a World Cup match. And there may never be a time we feel like we are winning by such a score. Jesus does not promise us a life on earth without trouble, but instead promises that he has overcome the world. The score is already recorded in heaven and Jesus wins. Because God’s Son has won the victory over sin, God the Father has declared that you are not guilty. And the Holy Spirit gives us faith to connect us to all that God the Father and God the Son have done. We confidently rejoice in our Triune God.

Amen.