

Sunday, June 14, 2020 – Second Sunday after Pentecost
“Resting with God”

Romans 5: 6-15

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV
Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

If you're looking for the escape hatch from reality, you're not alone. There are healthier ways and unhealthier ways to handle that feeling. A couple weekends ago I spent 36 hours out in nature with zero phone signal, zero internet connectivity. This week, I'm traveling to a place I can stay safely with family. These are healthy practices that aren't practical for the long run. Eventually reality comes knocking again.

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” With those words from our Epistle lesson this morning God reaches down from heaven to stop the world for you and for me, to let you get off and come up and sit down by Him for a little while, a time to be restored and encouraged. Things look so different from up here with Him. Be still now and let God be God and behold the kingdom and the power and glory forever and ever. Amen.

We are not so very good at it though, are we? Being still I mean and letting God be God and marveling at the miracle of salvation that's happening all around us. We are much too busy, too worried about big important things to think about the comfort he provides.

I know I have my things – in my house, my work life, my personal life, my relationships. What's on your list? Listen, “at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” He stops the world for us to get off and come up and sit down with him for a look around.

Paul writes to a sin-sick people in Rome very much wrapped up in their own kingdoms, their own power, and their own glory both then and now Paul demands the unthinkable, the undoable – he declares righteousness as the only source and standard for living. And righteousness is this – it is the spotless, holy, perfection of your every thought, your every word, your every action. And He rightly pronounces this judgment: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

If righteousness is what it takes to survive the international, national, local, and private mess that life is in then there is no hope. That is if that spotless, holy perfection of thought word and deed must come from somewhere inside of me. But thankfully Paul didn't stop after he said "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The rest of that sentence is this – "and are justified freely by His grace."

Justified: made righteous, declared innocent, given spotless, holy perfection, not by works, not by your own effort, but by grace – a gift. The story is so old and worn out it shouldn't be allowed from the pulpit anymore but it always makes the point: a man died and went to heaven and at the gates St. Peter met him and explained that entrance required that he score 500 points on the entrance evaluation. The man began confidently – "I was happily married and faithful to my wife for 55 years." St. Peter smiles and says, "That's good – it's worth three points." The man was a little startled, only three points, and continued on, "I was a pillar of the community I lived in, attended church regularly, and contributed generously to many charities." Again Peter smiled, made a check mark and said, "that's very good, you get one more point for that." Now the man grew nervous – he recited the Ten Commandments and their meanings from Luther's Small Catechism together with the Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer, sang a half-dozen hymns and quoted numerous key Bible verses and hearing that all of it combined was worth only one more point he shook his head in frustration and said, "At this rate the only way I'll get in is by the grace of God." And of course Peter smiled and said, "Now your talking – come on in."

God has entered the circumstances of your life – while you were powerless, while you were still sinners – purely and solely by His grace. He came down from heaven and was born into human flesh and became a man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. God pulled no punches, he did not change the circumstances of life for Jesus, he entered our circumstances suffering and dying and by His presence He changes us!

We have been justified by His blood, declared righteous, given the spotless, holy perfection required by God in order to live the real life we were created to have – a new life – a righteous life – turning from the empty, dying kingdom and power and glory of this world, our own little world of worry and suffering, to worship Him and serve Him forever and ever.

You have been saved, Paul says – and it is not some escapist little daydream about avoiding the trouble of this world – you have been saved from God's wrath. You have been reconciled by the death of Jesus. You know what that means? It means you get to sit by God in this worship service and survey the landscape of time from His vantage point. You get to see what He sees and from up here it looks very different than it does from down there. Jesus looked at the crowds our Gospel lesson says, he looked at you and me and He had compassion because we were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

I don't know what tomorrow holds in store for us internationally, nationally, locally in our church or personally. But I know that in Jesus God has entered our circumstances to change us from timid, worried, self-preserving people into the people of God who have the eyes of Jesus, who look at the world differently than we did at the beginning of this worship.

Be still now for a little while longer. Let God be God. Watch the mighty things He is doing through your life, through mine to accomplish the singular goal of all history – salvation! We can't just stay here. We have to GO!

Go to your family, neighbors, colleagues, and others who don't know the Good News of Jesus with them. Point them to our live stream and our burgeoning list of resources through our new YouTube channel and Facebook page.

Tell them about our wonderful school ministry, the safe camp program, the wonderful education that our school provides. Let them know about our warm and smiling School Connections Counselor Michelle who'll be more than happy to give a campus tour, and that we're enrolling for school this fall.

Rejoice, Paul says at the end of our text, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. What an amazing view there is from up here! In Jesus' name, Amen.