

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Sunday After Ascension, May 24, 2020**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 375, 370:1, 372, 373:1-4, 47.

Lessons: Genesis 28: 10-17, Romans 4: 16-25, Mark 8: 31-38.

Text: Romans 5: 1-11.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“I wouldn’t do anything for him – or for her. He – she – doesn’t deserve a thing!” How often have we felt that way when someone asked us to do something for them, or when someone wasn’t appreciative of what we did do for them. That’s human nature, sinful human nature, to feel that way.

But the God who created you and sent you a Savior doesn’t feel that way – Thank God!

**WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD**

- 1. God has justified us, that is, he has declared us NOT GUILTY despite our sinfulness.**
- 2. This gives us hope! And peace! And comfort! And encouragement for each day!**

The word “*Therefore*”, makes our sermon text a conclusion, of sorts. So let’s back up a little bit and talk about what God has just told us in the chapters before our sermon text. Paul told us how Abraham is not only the physical father of all Jews, but he is also the spiritual father of all believers in Jesus Christ. “*What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’*” (Rom 4:3 NIV) “*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*” (Rom 4:3 KJV)

That is the picture of justification: To justify as it is used here means to declare not guilty, to declare innocent. We sometimes use the word justify meaning to explain why I think I am not guilty of something. That picture is one of making me look blameless, or trying to explain why I should not be punished for something. But let’s go one step further than just trying to argue why we should not be punished. Let’s look at it from the judge’s perspective. In a human court trial today which is to be decided by a judge and not by a jury, the judge will hear arguments from both sides. He will listen to the people who are defending an accused person, and he will listen to the people who are accusing someone of a crime – or of many crimes. He will then have the job of deciding whether or not that person is really guilty. Then the judge will declare his verdict. As law-abiding citizens who want justice to be done, we want the judge in an earthly courtroom to declare the accused person as “guilty” if he or she is really guilty. If the judge doesn’t do that when the person is guilty, we get angry and feel that justice was not done.

But in God’s courtroom – the courtroom that judges all men as “sinners” or “not sinners”, we know what the verdict should be. God tells us plainly in Romans chapter 3 that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” (Rom 3:23 NIV) God repeats that idea that all humans since Adam and Eve have sinned in the verse immediately after our sermon text: “*just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*” (Rom 5:12 NIV) And how bad is that sin? God says plainly in the letter of James “*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*” (James 2:10 NIV)

If you had bibles with you, I’d ask you to look up one of those passages – Romans 3:23. It says “*all have sinned.*” But just before that, it says “*This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” (Rom 3:22-23 NIV)

But we have to go back to the word Justify: ***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** We have been justified. The judge – God – who should have declared all of us guilty of eternal damnation – has declared us NOT GUILTY. That is what justification means. Even though you are guilty of sinning, and know you are guilty of sinning, God, the supreme judge, has declared you NOT GUILTY. Innocent! And do you know why? He decided to punish someone else in your place. He punished Jesus Christ, who never committed any sins at all.

You heard a summary of that in our Epistle lesson when you heard Paul write: ***“The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*** (Rom 4:23-25 NIV)

God declared all mankind not guilty because of what Jesus did. This is the God who, as we learn in Paul’s first letter to Timothy ***“wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”*** (1 Tim 2:3-4 NIV) God, the good judge, the accurate judge, the righteous judge has made the declaration that all sins of all mankind were paid for because of what Jesus Christ did. But not everyone will receive God’s gift of eternal life, because God also says ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** Believe it and you will be saved, and all these blessings that are connected to eternal life with Christ in heaven are yours. (Mark 16:16 NIV)

These blessings include the fact: ***“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** This peace is not just a feel-good kind of emotion in the heart of the believer. This is a peace that comes from God. He created it and provided it. It is a peace that comes ***“through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** No sinner can do anything to create that peace. It is a gift of God. If you look a few verses ahead, you will see our natural state: powerless, ungodly, sinners, God’s enemies. But God reconciled us, he made peace with us through the death of his Son, Jesus Christ. God is not angry with you because of your sins. Believe it, and receive this peace with God! This is the peace that the angels announced at the birth of Jesus Christ.

In addition to having peace with God, ***“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 believer is free to come to God’s throne of grace with any and every petition. Ask God for anything, just as we do in the Lord’s Prayer! This is all possible because of our connection with Jesus Christ.

You can talk to God at any time, through prayer, without fear of him being angry with you because of any of your sins. And there’s more! ***“And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”*** We have a glorious hope for the future. The peace with God we have now is just a tiny foretaste of the unspeakably greater glory we will have in sharing heaven immediately when we die – as Jesus told the thief on the cross a few weeks ago – “Today you will be with me in paradise!” Our souls will be with Jesus in paradise, heaven, awaiting the Day of Judgment when the glorified bodies of all believers will be joined to their souls in heaven.

That glorious hope makes bearable the inevitable crosses and difficulties that come into every Christian’s life. These crosses not only become more bearable, but in the midst of them the Christian can still rejoice. He and she can do that because we know that under the loving care of a good and gracious God, even suffering leads to blessings and positive results in the Christian life. Thus Saint Paul can make the bold claim that we rejoice not only in the hope of future glory, ***“but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. 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.”***

When you read the scriptures, realize that a number of passages in Scripture set up a sequence, or chain of blessings. Here, Saint Paul wants to end with “hope”, in the sense of trust and confidence.

Suffering produces “perseverance”, the quality of bearing up under adversity. Such perseverance produces “character”, as seen in the reliability and dependability of the person who has withstood and survived some challenging situations. Thus character leads to “hope”, which is nothing other than trust and confidence. Christian hope does not disappoint us. God is faithful, trustworthy, and reliable. The object of trust is God, and he has generously given his love into our hearts. In the Greek form of the verb “poured out” here, God makes the point that he has previously done this and the effect of it still continues at the present time. God sent his

Holy Spirit into our hearts to bring us to a knowledge of God's love for us. The Spirit has worked in us a faith that reflects a confidence in God's continuing love for us.

Then Scripture explains again just why God did this. Love is the key word. ***“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”***

We have not earned or deserved anything that God does for us. We are sinners, and as believers in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, we daily repent. That repentance is something we want for all men, as well as for our entire nation and the whole world. Repentance for our sins, individually and as a nation, as a world, is something God wants. Many humans today do not worship the true God, but worship false gods and even worship themselves. But Scripture says in Acts: ***“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”*** (Acts 17:30 NIV) It is only because of God's grace that we are permitted to continue in all we do.

Paul in our sermon text has reached a conclusion in the facts he has presented to us. In the previous chapters, he has pointed out plainly that we are not saved by obeying God's laws or any laws for that matter. We are saved by faith. ***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 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.”***

All the armies on earth cannot create or maintain peace with God. God himself did that, and he delivered that message to us through his Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God, caused that message to be written down in the Holy Scriptures. And the Holy Spirit has sanctified us, that is, he has called us to be God's children, he has made us holy and given us the assurance of eternal life. He has given us hope.

And so we rejoice in the hope that God gives us. We have access to God. We can approach him at any time in prayer. And we can hear God speaking to us through his Holy Word every time we read from the Bible, or listen to or read a sermon which proclaims God's Word in its truth and purity.

Would you do something for someone who doesn't deserve a thing? We probably would not want to. But God did want to and he did it.

God saved you. He sent his son to be punished the damnation you deserve because of your sins. Because we have Peace with God, we can rejoice, and endure anything that God permits to happen to us. You know he loves you. Don't ever forget that! Amen.