

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Third Sunday After Trinity, July 3, 2022

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

Hymns: 660, 393:6, 421, 409, 347:1-2

Lessons: Genesis 6:5-22, 2 Corinthians 11:16-31, Matthew 16:24-27.

Sermon Text: Romans 8:18-25.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In the verse just before our text, Paul wrote *“Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”* Romans 8:17 (NIV) In chapter 5 he wrote *“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. Not only so, 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.”* Romans 5:2-5 (NIV)

If believers in Christ really stand up and speak out about the truth of Jesus Christ, they will be persecuted because they follow Christ. We will endure persecution and suffer because we publicly confess and live our faith in Jesus Christ. We don't have to go out of our way with the intention of being persecuted, but it will happen.

The words of our sermon text came from a man who suffered much and was beaten because he proclaimed the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. He writes in Second Corinthians that he was beaten by the Jews five times with 39 lashes and *“Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned.”* 2 Corinthians 11:25 (NIV) The letter to the Romans was most likely written from Corinth after Paul wrote those words. He suffered far more for Christ than we have. Today we see that

GOD COMPARES PRESENT SUFFERINGS WITH FUTURE GLORY.

- 1. Even everything that God created is suffering because of sin,**
- 2. Just as mankind is suffering because of sin.**
- 3. Believers patiently wait in hope for relief on the Day of Resurrection.**

Paul compares our future glory as God's children with our present sufferings as God's children.

Even the creation has been suffering because of the sins of man – and even more so in 2022 than in Paul's day. The world is suffering because of sin, greed, selfishness and man's desire to do things his way.

We could find several words telling how the sins of mankind have harmed what God has created. The first word that comes to mind is “pollution”. Mankind has polluted almost every part of the world God placed us into. When God created man, *“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”* Genesis 1:28 (NIV) *“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”* Genesis 2:15 (NIV) If you *“take care of”* something, you are not to abuse or misuse it.

It is true that because of sin God told Adam *“Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you.”* Genesis 3:17-18 (NIV) Life on earth would not be easy. It would not even produce food for men without difficulties.

But man has also abused the earth, the air, and the seas. Let's just look at two examples. First, there was a time when people felt comfortable burning things like leaves in the fall and burning trash and garbage in their yards. Secondly, people were OK with just burying trash and garbage almost anywhere, just so it was out of sight. But we have learned that what we bury in the earth can come to cause harm to the environment and even to the human body. We have learned that simply burning all sorts of trash and garbage helps negatively affect our air quality and, as a result, negatively affect human health.

So today even more so than when Paul lived on the earth, we can see that the creation itself is bound to decay and ***“that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”***

And mankind itself has been suffering because of sin. We can look at diseases which mankind has brought on himself. One example that comes to mind is sins against the sixth commandment. God simply commands “You shall not commit adultery.” God created male and female and ordained that marriage should be between one man and one woman who should live together for a lifetime in a chaste and decent life in marriage. The sexual immorality and amorality of mankind has contributed to terrible physical diseases like HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). It has contributed to mental distress like guilt and shame. And it has contributed also to mental attitudes such as questioning one's sexual and gender feelings. This has led to homosexuality, transgenderism and the “questioning” attitudes and lifestyles of the LGBTQ movement. Such attitudes are accepted in today's world, and some have even become behaviors “protected” by man-made laws. Even more terrible is that such behaviors are condoned and approved by churches which claim to teach what God says.

We could also look at people's sinful attitudes toward one another. Such an example is violence and murder. Daily we hear and read about humans killing one another, in what seems to be an ever-increasing world of rage and violence.

If only people would repent, turn from their sins and learn of the forgiveness of sins that Jesus Christ brought to earth and offers to all mankind through his Word and through you who have been called to share that Gospel of Jesus Christ!

We read that ***“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”***

It was God's judgment to curse the earth and have it produce thorns and thistles. Yet God also gives hope that even all that he has created will be freed ***“from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”***

Believers, too, are waiting for the day of Resurrection. ***“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.”***

We are God's adopted children and that is completely true even now on earth. But we are waiting, in a sense, as it were, for the final papers and judgment because that will be the Resurrection of our bodies, redeemed from all that sin has brought upon us and makes us suffer while here on earth.

For unbelievers, it will be a day of judgment, a terrible, horrible day when they are given the fate they earned by their unbelief and rejection of God and his will and the Savior he sent to redeem mankind. But for all those who believe in Jesus Christ and what he did to redeem them, the Day of Resurrection will be the moment when God reveals and even frees all creation from the bondage of sin.

Even creation is waiting for judgment day. God has subjected all creation to the service of sin because of the sinfulness of man. But God had a future change in mind for all the things he created. The creation itself will be set free from the bondage of corruption and sin.

We Christians, having received the Spirit of God from above, have the first-fruits of the heavenly glory in our hearts, as a definite guarantee of the full blessings which shall be ours in the future in heaven. We read in Ephesians that ***“the promised Holy Spirit ... is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.”*** Ephesians 1:13-14 (NIV) That will surely happen

because ***“it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”*** 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (NIV)

We are children of God even now, by faith, through the working of the Spirit. But we are waiting in hope for the full possession and enjoyment of our inheritance in heaven.

We must remember the words from Philippians that ***“our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”*** Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)

And it is still a hope, because we haven't received the final redemption yet.

We are living in hope, but it is a sure hope because God promised, and God never lies and so we can wait patiently for this. It is a sure thing because of the faith God has worked in us. ***“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”***

We – and Holy Spirit praying for us – pray for patient endurance under suffering as we wait for God's great day. Faith and hope combine to work patience in Christians as they wait for God's good time to come. But faith often wavers, particularly in suffering.

Christians are sure that their bodies and souls will finally be delivered. But meanwhile our time in this world is a time of waiting and hoping.

The conclusion of our salvation will be ours when Christ comes to judge the living and the dead and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life.

Hoping and seeing exclude each other. If we hope for what we do not see, then we wait through patience and endurance. We steadfastly and longingly wait for it. At the present time Christians must have patience, trusting in God to deliver all that he has promised, in his right time. Just as Jesus Christ didn't come to earth precisely when the Jews wanted, needed, and expected him, so our eternal life will come when God wills it. In the meantime, we wait patiently, trust God, and do the work he has given us to do while we wait.

And, of course, while we are waiting we have the assurance, as Paul tells us a few verses after our text ***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*** Romans 8:28 (NIV)

May God give us his patience and encourage each of us through his Word as we wait! Amen.