

Hannover International Worship

June 15, 2025

Romans 5:1-5

Sermon by Rev. Chelsea Lampen

Good morning friends, and welcome to our home church away from home. Jeff and I have had the joy of getting to worship here with all of you since last fall. We delight so much in this community because it provides us space to actually practice sabbath in our calling as pastors of RELISH.

This morning, this Trinity Sunday - where we hold together the joy of the Holy Spirit coming from last week at Pentecost with the hope of Christ and the love of the Father - I wanted to point our hearts to one of the lectionary passages: Romans 5:1-5. The section title of this piece of Paul's letter is entitled "God's love poured into our hearts" which I am ALL IN FOR. So let's read our verses together.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom has been given to us.

Holy smokes - there are so many beloved words that we could attach to in this passage. Paul just spent chapter four talking about how Abraham (and therefore the

people who descended from him) have been justified by faith. In fact this entire short passage is filled with phrases we - I at least - often cling to when trying to understand the depths of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's love for me and those around me. **Justified by faith; the peace of God. The Grace in which we stand. Our hope of sharing in God's glory. Endurance, character, hope. Even the word shame I could AND HAVE given lovely sermons on. All these amazing words in this short passage. It's because all of them are part of the journey coming to the final part - God's love being poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.**

As one of my old professors would say at the beginning of many'a'sermons - come on a journey with me friends, and let us know our destination will be this place of being filled.

Let's begin the journey with the first half of the first run-on sentence Paul give us in this passage - **"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through home we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand.** Because I am the daughter of a grammar teacher, I have to ask - what is the tense of the verbs here? *We have been justified* is present perfect passive tense - or to say something that has already been completed SO THAT we can have the active present tense of *having peace*. This happens again in the next segment of the sentence. *We have obtained access to grace* (already happened) so that we can presently *stand*. All this grammar to say that God has already done the work SO THAT we can presently stand with both peace and grace.

It is really important that we understand this - that we are presently standing in that very place with our tennis shoes rooted in peace and grace - because we need that before we can go into the second half of the passage. We aren't supposed to boast about this hope we have in glory, but *we are* supposed to hold on to it with white knuckles through afflictions or suffering through enduring life's ups and downs.

Standing with our feet planted firmly in peace and grace. What does that mean in real life?

I want to share a story with you from Jeff and my life. Some of you will know parts of it, but I think it will help us all understand a little better of what all this theological jargon Paul uses in his run on sentences means. And I think that you will probably be able to relate as well.

Prior to covid, and the entire year of 2021, I thought I already understood what being rooted in peace and grace meant. We had already lived in Romania, serving young people there. We had been pastors in Illinois for a year and a half. And I was a parent of two amazing young children - what more can teach you about grace?!

But covid hit us all differently. And we walked through these words that Paul uses - affliction, endurance, and character - trying desperately to make it to hope each new day that we spent cooped up in our homes, scared for those around us and those who were vulnerable. Smack dab in the middle of this world saga, Jeff and I found ourselves pregnant with identical twin boys. We had

experienced two miscarriages prior, so we were beyond excited to receive this crazy news. And let me tell you, pregnancy with twins is not a walk in the park. Three times the amount of blood is flowing through your body. Because the boys shared a placenta, I had doctors appointments twice a week. All the while trying to breath through a mask as one little boy jumped on my bladder and the other pushed into my lungs.

As we marched closer to both advent season and the birth of our boys, we realized that while it would be lovely for a pregnant woman to get to preach on passages like the birth of Christ, I just couldn't stand in the pulpit any longer. So we decided I would write the sermons and Jeff would give them. On Sunday, December 5, Jeff preached on the Mary's song in Luke 1:46-56, and how, like her cousin Elizabeth, you can see in the passage that Mary is feeling deep excitement and rejoicing for the LORD even as she doesn't quite understand how she possibly got there. She was holding two feelings at the same time. And I talked about how Elizabeth, ripe in years, was holding more than one feeling at the same time while pregnant with John - both hope and grief - hope in what would be and grief in all the years that she had been barren. Affliction, endurance, character, hope.

The next morning, at my appointment for the boys, we found out that Sebastian, our son, had a lowered heart rate, and because we were so close to our due date, they decided to have an emergency c-section for our twins. I was ecstatic. And. And as we went through the next four days, we watched as Evander grew in health - off the feeding tubes, no longer needing oxygen, little eyes open - and our

Sebbie lose health. His kidneys would not filter urine. His brain could not tolerate the influx of fluid and he started having seizures. And on December 10, we held our sweet boy for the last time. Talk about two feelings at the same time. We walked out of Sebastian's room weeping, and held our Evander as he took a bottle. Affliction, endurance, character, hope.

On the one-week birthday of Evander and Sebastian, we had Sebbie's funeral, where I remember our beloved friend Ray preached on how it is hard to hold the truth of God's hope in our heads while our guts were crying out in anguish. And on Christmas Eve, the eve of dear Mary giving birth to Christ, we brought home just one beloved son instead of two. Affliction, endurance, character, hope.

Friends. Here today, we are all walking through something. Governmental paperwork. Struggles at work. Missing friends and family. Waiting on answers from eye doctors or for surgery. We listen to the news in the United States and Palestine and Ethiopia like we heard last month. **Oh how the world groans. How are we supposed to stand with our feet planted in peace and grace in the present tense with all that is going on around us.**

I can tell you how. **We stand knowing that our beloved Father knows what it is to hold both grief and hope. He knows what it is to send his only Son into the world. And we stand knowing that beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, knows affliction. He knows what it is like to cry out in the middle of the night and say WHY?! Take this cup from**

me. He knows what it means to quote the psalms of lament. And our beloved Advocate knows what it means to move in the very hearts that feel like stone and says, “I give you life. I will continue to prove my faithfulness.”

Friends, we serve and are loved by a trinitarian God who knows the bounds of relationships and loss. And they walk with us. We do not walk this road of affliction, endurance, character, and hope alone. We walk each new step, knowing that there is work that has been done in the present perfect passive tense so that we can stand here presently and walk in faith. We walk holding hands with grief and hope - knowing that it is okay to have tears running down our face even as we walk in hope. And because this is true we can love our neighbors around us all the more.

Yes, this passage from Paul is one that is chalk full of theological jargon; AND it is full of the truth of the gospel - that Christ came, lived, died, and rose again - and he did all of this for us, though we knew nothing of it; though we didn't and never will fully understand it all. And it will never be put to shame. **Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom has been given to us.**