**June 16, 2019 Romans 5:1-5**

***A Peace Found In Hope***

**Scripture:** Romans 5:1-5 NRSV (1)Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2)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. (3)And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, (4)and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, (5)and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

**Notes:**

1. The ***challenges*** of life are for the sake of God.
   1. By faith we are able to find ***peace*** with God.
   2. The Lord is there to ***guide*** us and ***direct*** us.
2. We are told to ***boast***
   1. ***Boast*** in our hope
   2. ***Boast*** in our sufferings.
   3. ***Proclaim*** the love of our Lord.
   4. Christ ***acted*** out God’s love for us.
3. It is ***difficult*** to boast in our hope and sufferings
   1. That one string provides ***HOPE***
   2. Focus upon what lies ahead, all was not ***lost***..
   3. Every obstacle creates ***opportunity***.
   4. Setbacks create ***determination***.
   5. ***Nothing*** should stand in the way of who God has called us to be.
4. There is ***hope***.
   1. One string is God's instruction to keep on ***playing***.
   2. You are called to do something ***distinct*** and ***definitive***.
   3. God has given you one string, keep ***playing***; we need the ***music*** that God has given you.
   4. ***Boast*** in the hope and in our sufferings
   5. Strive everyday to live the teachings of Jesus; following his example, led by the Holy Spirit, bringing ***Glory*** to God the Father, and others to a ***saving*** ***knowledge*** of Christ.

**Transcript:**

I was introduced to a painting this week which has captivated my attention. The name of the painting is entitled HOPE, by G.F. Watts. One would imagine that with a name like HOPE, that the image would be one of excitement; that the image would not only show people with hopeful exuberance, but show many people with the same enthusiasm. However, that is not what I see when I look at this image and I wonder, what do you see when you look at this image?

Many of us may look at this image and see something different. They may see this woman who is blinded by the events of this world, and the bandages cover her eyes that may have seen too much destruction, and not enough love. They may see that her feet look as if she has walked many miles; miles of rough terrain, miles and miles without any protection for her feet. The dress she wears is a raggedy remnant of a once luxurious garment, worn thin and frayed, paled and weathered by the years. The object in her hand is badly broken and in need of repair. She bows her head, perhaps in deep thought, thinking of the things that have happened to bring her here; discouraged by the events of this life. Her face is without expression, we cannot determine whether she is saddened by the place where she sits, or whether she is just trying to find a moment to rest.

What I see is a painting of a woman, sitting on a globe, blindfolded. She is dressed in a gown that flows to her feet, and yes, she is barefooted. In her hand is an instrument much like a harp or lyre, and all of the strings on this instrument are broken, but one. With one hand she holds the instrument and with the other it looks as if her fingers are caressing the one remaining string. Her head is bowed toward the instrument; the expression on her face is one of focus. She appears as if her emotions are focused upon the instrument and the sound of that one string, in Hope that as she caresses the string, she will make the most beautiful music there ever was.

We each look at the events of our world and see something different. Seeing the image of this woman holding on to that string instrument made we wonder what she had encountered in her life. What were her experiences, her joys and pains? What were her disappointments and frustrating moments? Had she experienced life as being a series of failures, or did she experience the beauty of what this life offers? Was she holding onto the one thing that brought her promise...her instrument? Or was she being reminiscent of an instrument that once made beautiful music? Perhaps it did not matter to her that the instrument was not complete as it was initially constructed to be. All of the strings to play that beautiful instrument were no longer in place; what remains was one lonely string; only a single strand that could be played. One string that signified that all was not lost, there was still hope.

Our passage today helps us to grasp hold of the hope we may find in paintings such as this, and helps us to understand where this hope comes from. Open your Bible as we share in our sermon passage from Romans 5:1-5.

(1)Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2)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. (3)And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, (4)and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, (5)and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. (Romans 5:1-5 NRSV)

Paul writes to the people of Rome speaking of a faith, a faith that can only be described by a single word, PEACE. A  “*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*(v.1)”. Paul had to ensure his audience in Rome, whom he had not met, that all that they may have encountered, that all that they had gone through, the challenges of life that they may have confronted were for the sake of their new beliefs and faith in God; a faith in something and someone greater than themselves. Paul shares that it is through the work of Jesus Christ that we are offered such grace. We are made right by faith in the redeeming acts of Jesus.

If we do not have faith, faith that Jesus’ death could offer us forgiveness then what do we have? Nothing, those without faith have nothing but their present sufferings and condition. But those with faith, have the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ, the promise of an eternity in His kingdom, the hope of things we cannot comprehend or imagine, and it is by faith that we are able to find peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our relationship is restored, we are reconciled, and our trust is in His words, His promises, His touch, and His presence. Faith that no matter what obstacle we face the Lord is there to guide us and direct us.

And for this reason, we are told to boast; boast in our hope. Boast of the promise of Jesus’ saving grace. Boast of the healing power of Jesus name. Boast of the peace we are given. Boast of that promise of eternity in his presence. Boast in our sufferings. Boast of the situations that are out of our control. Boast of the events in life that we have been brought through. Boast of a Lord and Savior who provides for us in our darkest hours. Boast that we have been to the edge of disaster, and we are still here shouting praises to our Lord and Savior; proclaiming the love of our Lord to all who are receptive to His work in their life.

“…*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit* …” This is the first time Paul mentions love in the letter to the Romans. Christ has acted out God’s love for us. It is that same love of the same God that the Spirit pours out to, and through, us. “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (17)"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17 NRSV)*

In a world or a society where we encounter so much negativity, it is difficult to fulfill this call to boast in our hope and sufferings. We rarely see or experience individuals who speak of a hope. Most people try to tear down what God has built up, and many times they do not realize that they are doing it. They are too busy focusing on the negative things and they fail to see the possibilities. All that most people can point to is what might be missing.

Many people see the negative when looking at the picture of *HOPE*; they see that the strings are not in place, they comment on the broken strings they see, they comment on the brokenness of the instrument that is not able to be played. They miss out on the string that is being played by the woman; one string that gives the instrument its integrity, one string that gives the instrument its identity, one string that gives the woman the ability to make beautiful music. That one string provides HOPE; that there is still promise of a different future for her and there is still promise of a different future for her instrument.

The woman wore a tattered dress; it is long, which covered her entire body. Her feet bare as if she traveled a mighty long way, carrying her musical instrument. One could imagine that she suffered through agony and defeat. The obstacles that she was able to overcome were all the motivation she needed for her to continue on, for there would be nothing that could hold her back.

Her blindfold is positioned over her eyes as she peers downward, not consumed or concerned about what is around her for there was nothing around for her to see. Her head is held in a position to hear what that single string might play, to focus upon what lies before her and what she must do with it; a simple reminder that all was not lost.

Those who have had to suffer for a worthy cause do not give up easily if at all. Progress in our society could not have come to be if suffering were to be a barrier for future progress. Think about all the progress that has taken place in our society. Think about all the progress we have seen in our lifetimes. And think about all of the things that have challenged us and our society; be it Disease, Disability, Discrimination, Racism, Political Extremists or antagonists. This is the short list.

Every obstacle we face, creates an opportunity for innovation and growth. A reason to overcome and adapt to the situations we face, a challenge for the human race to unite as whole, in an effort for the common good of all creation. Each triumph allows for progress to be identified and each setback creates enough determination to drive us on. That is how champions are made.

Benjamin Elijah Mays was an educator, scholar, minister and president of Morehouse College for 27 years? He said,

*“… the tragedy of life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. It isn’t a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream. It is not a disaster to be unable to capture your ideal, but it is a disaster to have no ideal to capture. It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim is sin.*”

In other words we fail to reach our goal, because we fail to realize what our goal is. However, our goal is plainly marked in these passages if we would only take the time to truly read them and listen to what these words say.

Nothing should stand in the way of living fully into who God has called us to be. That woman is more than just a woman blindfolded and sitting upon a globe. She is more than what her feet or her dress may suggest. She is a musician, one who is able to make beautiful music even with one string. She risked to be defined by her character as being just that. Yes, she may have suffered, but she pushed on and continued on. She is a woman who God has called to do something different and something unique. Maybe that is what Paul is trying to say to the Roman people that if you are able to go through the suffering and continue on to build the character of who you are that there is hope on the other side. We have peace with God that is found in the hope we find in the promise and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ; “and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

I don't know about you. I do not know what you have been going through. I do not know of the sufferings, the trials, the tribulations that you have encountered, but I encourage you to keep on pushing through. Do not allow the things that, once were, but are no longer; hold you back.

The lady could have stopped and put down her instrument, saying, "I have but one string; what else can I do?" But she continued to play. She recognized that that one string was perhaps God's instruction to her to keep on playing.

Maybe that one string is saying you have been defined to do this one unique thing and to do it in a way that nobody else is able. Recognize inside your heart that you too have been called to do something distinct, recognize that you too have been called to do something definitive. God has given you but one string. Keep on playing, for we need to hear the music that God has given you to play for us all.

We have the promise of God that we are justified by our faith. Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God; we have access to His grace, and we must boast. We must boast in the hope of sharing the glory of God, but also boast in the sufferings; suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint because God’s love has been poured upon us by the Holy Spirit that the Lord sends to us; by the Holy Spirit that the Lord has given us. We must strive, everyday, to live in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ, to live following his example; striving to be led by the Holy Spirit, so that we may bring Glory to God the Father, and bring others into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.