

March 4, 2012
Sermon for 2nd Sunday in Lent
St. Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Romans 5:1-11

Romans 5:1-11 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

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¹ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, mercy, and peace from the one who touches our lives, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We just heard our Old Testament reading. Our Text ended with Abraham laughing. *“Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”*

There was Abraham, falling on his face, laughing at what God the Father had just said. Abraham dealt with things in much different ways than we might expect this patriarch of the faith to do.

Sarai his sister 2x, trying to have a child with Hagar, just to name a few

Before he was Abraham, his name was Abram. God called Abram to go Move away from his family Abram called upon the name of the LORD and God promised that He would bless those that bless him and curse those who cursed him and that in him, God would bless all families of the earth. God’s grace to all mankind through Abraham’s lineage.

Calling upon the name of the LORD was not just a simple acknowledgment, or mere acts of prayer; they were acts of faith, by which men expressed their genuine confidence and trust in God as they came to Him in their everyday lives as well as in worship. (Gen 12:8)

Yet, only a few verses later, Abram wavers in his trust in the LORD in Egypt, when he fears for his life and convinces Sarai to go along with the lie that she was his sister rather than wife. We know how that turned out as Pharaoh took Sarai as his wife and suffered all sorts of physical ailments because of it.

Afterwards, again God blessed him, telling him: *“⁶ I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.* God further promises that He will give him the land all around him and Abram built an altar and worshipped God. Gen 13:16

Abram grew in riches and stature. He rescued Lot from some evil kings, he received a blessing from Melchizedek and then wavered again, worrying that God was not going to bless him with any heirs so he tried to appoint an heir, Eliezer of Damascus. Again, God the Father renewed His covenant with Abram telling him *“Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

Yet in the next breath, he succumbed to the temptation presented to him by his wife Sarai, to take her slave, Hagar and have a child with her for his heir.

We want to ask Abram, or maybe shake him a little bit saying, come on man, God is with you, He is blessing you and you keep turning directly against His will. Yet, even as Abram strays, God honors His covenant.

When Abram reaches 99 years of age, The LORD renews His covenant with Abram, promises again that he will have many descendants. As God said: *“No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.”*

God also changes Sarai's name, saying: *“And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her*

name. ¹⁶ *I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.*"

From here, we might expect Abraham to fall on his knees, praising God for His goodness. Well Abraham fell, but not in reverence. Again our Text: ¹⁷ *Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old?... ¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!"*

All right, this is getting ridiculous! God laughs at God's promise and then reaches back to a 13 year old child of his disobedience and tried to lift up his illegitimate child. Not that Ishmael carried the blame, but Abraham himself for trying to circumvent God's will.

Sarah did conceive, because God fulfills His promises even when man does not, yet even with a wife, high with child, carrying the very heir promised by God, Abraham resorted to trickery when he faced Abimelech king of Gerar.

After all of this, when you or I would have given up on Abraham, God blessed them with the promised heir, Isaac.

Throughout all of Abraham's wavering and downright turning away from The LORD, God granted Abraham wonderful, undeserved grace. Undeserved grace to an undeserving man in the depths of his fear and hopelessness are words from a loving God that raised Abraham to his feet and filled his empty heart with hope. The Lord had not abandoned him. The God of grace is not an abandoning God, but a seeking Shepherd who never rests until he finds his lost sheep.

There's a lot of Abraham in all of us. We've hurt our families by our little lies, our half-deceptions, our struggle to have things go our way. When it comes to self-interest, we all know the tricks of the trade, which result in broken homes, broken lives, and broken promises.

What are we to do? Repent: tell the truth about ourselves no matter how much it hurts. Repent: open our mouths and confess to God what He already knows—that we have lived as if God does not matter.

It's not about knowing God, Abraham called upon the name of the LORD. It's about doing His will. We are called to repent: turn from the sins that send us down the paths Abraham trod and turn to the One who trod for us the path that leads to the cross. Turn to our Lord Jesus Christ, and we will find in Him alone peace with God.

It was to all of us Abrahams that the apostle Paul spoke the words from Romans 5 (see v 1). We have "peace with God," which is more than a fluttering emotion within the heart, more than absence of conflict. This peace is rooted in the One who is our peace, Jesus Christ. We have peace in Him, for in Him the flames of divine wrath against us have been doused, the fires put out by the blood of His sacrifice.

We have peace in Christ, for in His human nature and in His death on the cross our Savior took our nature upon Himself. He took the penalty for our selfishness, our meanness, our anger, our grudges, our pettiness, our perversity. All that we are, all that Abraham was, Christ took upon Himself. Therefore, into His flesh were driven the nails of our judgment.

Into His brow were beaten the thorns of our sins. Into His feet were placed the spikes of divine vengeance. And, worst of all, in His heart and soul burned the flames of divine justice that should have burned in our own. The man of peace became the sacrifice for sin, condemned by God, that in His death on our behalf, we might have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Son of God did for us not only what we're incapable of doing, but even what we had no desire to do in the first place. (See Rom 5:6–11.) Behold the divine love of the Father: not for friends, not for family, not for equals, not for servants, but for convicted criminals, wicked enemies, haters of God. For all of us—for the selfish, homeless, hopeless ones—Christ died.

If, while we were in such a pitiable state, Christ was willing to die for us and thus reconcile us to God, what blessedness must now be ours since we are God's children and heirs with Christ!

What divine acceptance we now have that our crucified Savior is also our living High Priest, who constantly intercedes for us at the Father's right hand!

Jesus, whose hands were pierced with nails has inscribed your own name upon the palms of His hands (Is 49:16). He will never forget you, for He can never forget Himself, and it is Himself—His very own flesh and blood—that He places inside you as you eat His body and drink His blood in Holy Communion. You are washed in His saving blood, remade in His image, and it is His name that is written on your brow.

In this life of grace and divine acceptance, yes, we still suffer. In this valley of sorrow, yes, we must bear many crosses, endure many temptations, and constantly cry out to God for help. But as we do, recall Abraham.

Even as he left God's will behind, God never broke His covenant with him. The same grace comes to us through Abraham's heir, Jesus Christ. We too are the heirs of Abraham. We live under the new covenant in Christ. As we call upon the name of the LORD, we do so in Jesus name, and for the sake of Christ, we are justified by His blood. Even in the midst of Lent, we can rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.