

**"Peace Be with You" - Romans 5:1-5 – Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs**

Today we hear a lot in the short passage from Paul's letter to the Romans. You may know that Romans is the first of Paul's letters in the Bible coming right after the book of Acts. But it was not the first book written by Paul, in fact it may be one of the last. Scholars have only come to the conclusion of how Paul's letters were organized as we have them in the Bible is that they are longest to shortest with Romans being longest with 16 chapters. Another interesting point of these letters is that all the others written to the various churches were written in response to a correspondence from them that Paul received or to encourage a particular church he had established. This letter to the Christians at Rome was a letter introducing himself as he explains in the letter he is hoping to come that way on his next missionary journey he was planning to go on to Spain. Unfortunately, it did not turn out that way as he was arrested in Jerusalem and ended going to Rome as a prisoner and there he was condemned and executed.

So, this letter is seen as a good summation of Paul's beliefs as he tries to explain himself to the people he hopes to meet. And in the brief piece of the letter, we have this morning we see his belief in the Trinity as he writes in the first sentence, *"we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* And in the last sentence, *"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."* Here we have a sense of Peace with Justice for today as well as love all mentioned. It reminds me of the scripture often read at weddings, *"And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love."* (1 Corinthians 13:13) And hope is in this passage as well as Paul explains how we achieve it, *"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."* (Romans 5:3-4)

Troubles can sometimes disturb our peace. We can have a peaceful day or evening, but then trouble hits and the peace is shattered. These troubles can cause a reaction of anger or fear to well up in us and overflow sometimes making a bad thing even worse. They can cause us to fret or worry, which is no help. During the Cold War, an American lawyer is recruited to defend an arrested Soviet spy in court, and then help the CIA facilitate an exchange of the spy for the Soviet captured American U2 spy plane pilot, Francis Gary Powers. In the telling of the story in the movie *Bridge of Spies* there is an interesting line in the dialogue between the lawyer and the spy which becomes a prophetic word for us when the spy remains calm throughout the ordeal and the lawyer asks why he isn't worried. He simply replies, "Would it help?" Friends, worry does not help!

Troubles and worries may be debilitating to some or to some of us some of the time. But I hear Paul calling us to a peace in Christ that is such a part of our Christian character that we can hold onto that peace and connection with God even in the chaos of the worst of problems? Paul wrote this to the Christians in Rome: *We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28) They were not to be afraid, but to be at peace even in the midst of oppression and persecution.

Here in this passage this morning there is a natural progression as Paul points out that troubles or problems lead to endurance which develops a strong character which produces hope. We are strengthened in our faith and our life by the challenging times and situations. And as we have experienced God and the people of God being with us and strengthening us in the worst of times, they hopefully become some of the best of times as we endure in the hope of the One who goes through it with us. May the presence and the abiding peace of Christ be with us each day.

For Paul peace comes from righteousness. This is not self-righteousness which brings discord but God-righteousness which brings harmony! Might we also look at other-righteousness which is justice if we do what we can to not only make sure we are right with God but right with our neighbors and by our neighbors as in the Great Commandment - *Love God wholly and love our neighbors as we love ourselves*, or in the Golden Rule – *Do to others as you would have others do to you*.

As we close this service and prepare to go forth might we do that this morning by offering the peace of Christ with one another as we bless one another that the peace of Christ will go with us. Some congregations do this in place of a greeting at the beginning of the service but others have found meaning in ending the service with the offering of peace in response to the message and for facing the coming week. From the beginning Christians have exercised this practice. *“Peace be with you”* was a greeting Jesus himself used with his disciples (John 20:19). He came to earth that we might be at peace with God and with one another. He offered us peace through his death and resurrection. Offering peace is not a simple gesture though reaching out a hand or offering a hug may be simple, working for peace and justice in a broken world is hard. Reflect this week - What troubles are affecting you and the people around you? What is God calling you to do about it? How might you share the Peace of Christ with others this week? May the peace of Christ be with us as we strive together for justice. Alleluia and Amen.

### **God, Today We Pray for Peace**

Jeffrey B. Childs 6/7/25

God, today we pray for peace,  
For others and for us,  
That turmoil and war may cease,  
By the peace of Jesus.

The disciples received your peace,  
When on them Jesus breathed.  
Their hope and faith did increase,  
Their worries were relieved.

There is high anxiety,  
Everywhere we turn.  
May we, with holy piety,  
Peace with justice learn.

Give us your strength and hope,  
And fill us with your grace.  
We know that with you we can cope,  
No matter what we face.