

Sermon Title: "Future Glory"

July 19th, 2020 – 7th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Romans 8:18-27



Theme:

What's in it for me?

Sermon Text:

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last week we held our voter's meeting to approve our Church budget. We heard how we are doing financially as a congregation. We also heard an update from the call committee regarding our search for a new Pastor. We did a lot of praying about what direction God wants us to go over the next 12 months.

On Tuesday, I attended our Circuit's Winkel online. The Winkel is where the Pastors of the area get together to discuss various topics of mutual concern and to support each other. We each took time to update the group on how our congregations were doing and pass ideas off of each other. I don't think anyone is surprised to hear that how we are responding to Covid-19 was a major topic. Concerns brought up included keeping members safe while worshiping in person, the role of online worship, and the care of our most vulnerable members, to include the mental health issues that go along with isolation and social distancing. To mask, or not to mask, that is the question. A common theme was that we need to refocus our thoughts away from "my rights" and spend more thought on our neighbor, especially those who are higher risk.

So, with that being said, I have to ask you, how are you holding up? Are you getting used to wearing a mask? Have you been experiencing cabin fever? Have you noticed any changes in behavior of your loved ones? One of the key factors in surviving this challenge and staying positive is that one must believe that this suffering is temporary. A belief that this will never end, can often lead to more serious mental health issues and if you know someone like this, they may need to seek professional help.

Paul, the author of our Epistle, was no stranger to suffering. He grew up studying under the premier Rabbi of his day and was his best student. Not an easy task to be the best of the best. I imagine that took a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to achieve his religious and academic goals. Then there was the roadside encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Following Paul's conversion to Christianity, his old friends tried to kill him, and his new friends were suspicious of him. Was it a rouse? They

weren't sure. Then there were the beatings and arrests that Paul endured, most of which were illegal, since Paul was a Roman Citizen. So, Paul was no stranger to suffering, but he was able to help us put suffering in the proper perspective.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul tells us that our current sufferings pale in comparison to the glory we will experience when Jesus returns. He compares the current sufferings to a mother in childbirth. The birth pains are intense and extremely painful, but once that child is born, it was all worth it. So it is with our sufferings. We suffer with hope, because we know that Jesus Christ has the final victory, even if we can't see it right now. Maybe you are suffering from cancer, loneliness, financial loss, or coronavirus restrictions. I know these things have been going on for quite a while now, but we know how it ends, with Jesus' victory. Your sufferings do not define you. Jesus does, so we must learn patience.

Here is what I find most comforting about this section of Paul's epistle, God sends us the Holy Spirit to help us in our weakness. When we don't pray the way we should, the Holy Spirit does, and He prays for us. When we don't know how to articulate our prayers into words, The Holy Spirit understands us and makes us understood. Did you catch that? God understands you where you are at right now. We have a God that knows what it is like to suffer. We have a God that not only knows you, but wants to hear from you, even if you don't know how to say it right. We have a God that doesn't expect us to fix everything in our lives that is messed up, He sent Jesus to do that.

Now I don't expect us to have a competition to see who has suffered the most. We know Jesus wins that hands down, but I'm not looking for second place either. When trying to help someone who is suffering, "one-upping" can be very counterproductive. We all want to sound kind and compassionate, but be careful how you respond, because it can sound like you are downplaying their suffering instead of trying to be that sympathetic ear. Best thing you can do is to listen. Then ask how you can help. Let them know that you are there for them, and so is Jesus.

I know that we are all tired of the Covid-19 restrictions we are experiencing. Some folks want us to be more cautious, while some want us to reopen and return to a Pre-Coronavirus world. One thing is certain, no matter what decision is made, someone won't agree with it and that disagreement leads to friction and conflict. Stress and anxiety usually follow. Be aware of this and monitor yourself and your loved ones. Remind yourself that it's only temporary. Give yourself five minutes each day to have that conversation with God. He wants to hear from you and help you cope. God's got this and He's using the present situation for the greater good.

Paul says in Romans 8:28, *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."* Did you hear that? No matter what harmful or evil thing happens, and there are a ton of those each day, God can and does use it for his purpose. He

knows us and our nature. How many of us would have even considered online worship unless we were forced to due to Covid-19? Not many of us, but because we were forced to go online, there were people who heard the Gospel for the first time. Because we were online, our shut-ins were able to reconnect and interact with the congregation in a way they had not been able to do for some time. We are also better prepared to deal with persecution should it come. Even if our church building were to burn to the ground or we were not able to meet in person, we can still share the Gospel via technology. Many of you have recognized the need to continue online services and rightly see it as a supplement for our physical ministry. I pray the seeds planted online will bear fruit for Jesus.

I can see even in my own life how God will use difficulties in my own life to prepare me for something down the road. I don't always understand it or why. Sometimes I never will, but God still uses it for His purpose. Back in 2016, you voted to call me to study as a Licensed Lay Deacon. At the time, it seemed nice, but kind of a luxury. Pastor Matt was here, and the congregation was going strong. Then Pastor Matt took another call just as I was completing the coursework. Pastor Eilers used me a few times, but there is a lot of learning on the job. Pastor Luther was very experienced in supervising Licensed Lay Deacons and one of the first things he did, was get me up in front of the congregation. It didn't always make sense at the time, but I think we could see God preparing me for leading this congregation through a very difficult time. Because of the Licensed Lay Deacon training, I was already familiar with an online platform that we could quickly launch and get us up and running very quickly. I truly believe Pastor Luther was sent here to prepare me to lead our congregation through this pandemic. I am truly grateful for that mentorship as I would not have been able to prepare weekly services in sufficient time or as comfortably as I am now able to do so. Our sister, Judy Lensegrav went to her Savior during this time and to have someone who could do a bilingual service was not an accident. I hope Judy's nephews back in Japan were able to take in the service and message, even though they were unable to travel here. In just these examples, I can see how God can take someone like me and use me for a greater purpose. I am still in awe as to how he has used me here. I can also see that God does the same for each and everyone here. Take a look back at your own lives. I bet you will find examples of how God took difficulties in your own lives and used them for a greater purpose. I know He has a plan for us, and He is preparing the next shepherd to come to us and lead us. God brought us all together for a reason.

I spend a significant amount of time in my messages talking about how we can engage with young people, many of them de-churched or un-churched. Young or old, we cope with loneliness and hopelessness. People need a place to be loved and to have a reason for their lives. We find that love, hope, and community here in the body of Christ. I just think we need to do a better job of articulating

that to young people in a way that they can understand. This pandemic provides a unique opportunity to do so.

I don't know who our next Pastor will be, nor do I know how long it will be before he comes to us. I don't know how long this pandemic will last. I do know that God has each and everyone of us in His arms and all of these difficulties we are experiencing now not only pale in comparison to the joy of Jesus' return, but are also working together for God's Glory. God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called. Right now, He's calling you.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

Timothy Quindt,
Licensed Lay Deacon
(503) 358-0770
tquindt@hotmail.com

Quotations from Scripture come from:

Various Authors. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.