

THE GLORY THAT WILL BE REVEALED IN US
Sermon for the 7th Sunday after Pentecost 2020
Romans 8:18-27

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is taken from Romans 8:18-27: ¹⁸ **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time do not deserve to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us.** ¹⁹ **For the creation is waiting with eager expectation to see the revealing of God's children.** ²⁰ **For this created world has been subjected to futility, not by its own choice but because of the One who subjected it; in hope,** ²¹ **because the created world itself will also be freed from its slavery to decay, to have the glorious freedom of the children of God.** ²² **For we know that all the creation has been groaning together with them and labouring with birth-pangs together with them until now.**

²³ **Not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as His children, for the redemption of our bodies.** ²⁴ **For we have been saved by hope. If hope is seen, it is not hope. Who hopes for what he sees?** ²⁵ **However, if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it, with patience.**

²⁶ **In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what we are to pray for as we ought to, but the Spirit Himself pleads for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.** ²⁷ **He who searches our hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is. For the Spirit pleads for God's holy people according to God's will.**

Lord God, heavenly father, sanctify us through Your truth, your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Both the Holy Gospel of Christ and the attitude or behaviour of the Christian are a puzzle to natural man. As regards to the Gospel, natural man views the Gospel of the cross and the central doctrines of Christianity as the foolishness of God. Writing to the Church in Corinth Paul said, *"But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness..."* and *"The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"*(1 Corinthians 1:23, 1 Corinthians 2:14).

After centuries of Christian preaching, nothing has changed even today. While all sorts of revolutionary changes have taken place, nothing has changed in the spiritual condition of man. Much fantastic progress has been made in arts and sciences and other fields. Many diseases that were once deadly have now been eradicated. We've gone from the horse and cart to modern vehicles and machinery. We can communicate with people all over the world with the push of a few buttons. It would appear that the grasping powers of the human mind know no bounds - except in the ability to grasp heavenly things. What simple truth is contained in the words of Christ, namely, that *"He who believes and is baptised will be saved,"* (Mark 16:16), and yet, this Gospel truth is still a stumbling block for natural man.

As regards to Christian attitude or behaviour, not only the doctrine but also the behaviour of Christians is a puzzle to natural man. There is the strange behaviour of Christians, in all things guiding themselves not by the principles of profit and loss, likes or dislikes, comforts or discomforts, but by the principles of right or wrong according to the Word of God. Then there is that strange behaviour, an almost incomprehensible attitude, towards the most horrible of all human experiences, death. Of course, death is an eventuality to be considered, but not a subject to be introduced into polite conversation, yet Christians always seem to think about death. Actually, not only do Christians think of, or freely discuss death, but they even wait patiently for it! Well, why not? With Paul, we say, ¹⁸ **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time do not deserve to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us.** Who wouldn't want to be free from this sin-destroyed world to live in the next?

However, when Paul writes of **"the glory that is about to be revealed to us,"** and a little later about how **"we wait eagerly for our adoption as His children, for the redemption of our bodies,"** it is not as if our redemption were not yet complete. Our redemption is a present reality. Our salvation has been achieved. The Bible says that God the Father has *"sent forth His Son"* (Gal. 4:4-5). As God the Son, we are told that in perfect obedience, Jesus fulfilled the Law which we had transgressed and took upon Himself the punishment which we had deserved. He became the *"The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). With the words *"It is finished"*¹ the actual work of the redemption of mankind has been completed. For the purpose of bringing the benefit of this vicarious suffering and death to all nations, provision has been made to preach the Gospel to every creature. As God, the Holy Spirit has also not failed to carry out His part as well. On Pentecost, the Spirit of God was poured out *"upon all flesh"* (Acts 2:17), and operating ever since through the Gospel, He still calls, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

¹ John 19:30

There is nothing that we can add or supply to this, and this must be emphasised on account of the false doctrine which would, in whole or in part, make man's redemption depend upon his own merits and works which, in reality, is saying that Christ's work was not enough.

So what can be done to a possession in which the ownership of, comes with a free title? A possession completely purchased and fully paid for? In last Sunday's Second Reading, Paul claimed that "*if we are children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*" (Romans 8:17). What can an heir do to an inheritance which comes to him as an altogether unexpected bequest? Listen to these words, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, that no one may boast*" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Like love and mercy, "grace" is a term that gives us a glimpse into the heart and mind of God. The essential aspect of God's grace is that it speaks of a quality in God that makes Him willing - even eager - to give us undeserving sinners great and precious gifts. It is an undeserved gift that through faith, we have been saved, for God has given us saving faith as a free gift.

By definition, faith is nothing more than simple trust and confidence that takes God at His word. Salvation is by grace, an undeserved gift freely given by God without the contribution of any human works. Our own Lutheran Confessions state that "Christ's merit is obtained not by our works or pennies, but from grace through faith, without money and merit."²

Neither is there anything lacking in Christian faith and hope. As mentioned moments ago, children of God are "*heirs of God,*" which makes them "*joint heirs with Christ.*" Even now, we rejoice in our redemption and give thanks to the Father, for "*He has rescued us from the authority of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son, whom He loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*" (Colossians 1:13-14).

Without this assurance of our completed redemption, we would be forever tormented by unceasing doubts. Compare the early days of Luther. In 1505 Luther entered a monastery under the delusion, common at that time, that the best service to God was to abandon home, family, and the world for which Christ died. At the bottom of his monkery, fastings, prayers, exercises, and confessions in the cloister of Erfurt, was always the secret fear of incomplete redemption. Luther soon picked up the ascetic practices of the monks, at least once spending three days without eating or drinking. At one point he was missed from the services and was discovered unconscious on the floor of his cell. Luther later said, "If ever a monk could win heaven by monkery, I must have reached it." Yet for all the severe treatment of his body, he gained no sense of pardon nor of an inward welling up of spiritual life. Almost forcefully a person by the name of Dr Staupitz comforted Luther with the words, "The just will live by his faith." Expressing his fear to Dr Staupitz that God was still angry with him, the reply was made, "God is not angry with you, but you are still angry with God." This same hidden fear lurks in the background of every religion which teaches that man must, either completely or partially, secure his salvation by his own merits or works.

That is not so. Listen to these words, "*you have been washed, you have been made holy, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Corinthians 6:11). "*Who will condemn? Christ Jesus, who died and, more than that, has been raised, is the One who is even at the right hand of God, who is also interceding for us.* ³⁵ *Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?* ³⁶ *As Scripture has said: "For Your sake we are being killed all day long. We have been considered as sheep to be slaughtered."* ³⁷ *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor present circumstances nor future circumstances, nor powers,* ³⁹ *nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:34-39). Since Christ has paid the full penalty of our guilt, there is no need for fear or doubt as to our completed redemption. Isn't this a source of comforting joy! We have our redemption, we own it, and it is ours. The title is clear. There is none to dispute it. In a measure, we are already enjoying the possession - in faith and hope, but we have not yet entered into the complete enjoyment of our heavenly Father's wealth. That is what we are waiting for.

Here, upon this earth, misery, tribulation, trouble, and death are all around us. But the completed redemption is coming, after the tribulations of time. Acts 14:22 tells us that "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*" In verse 18 of our text we have the word "**suffering.**" If we follow on after this word, later in the sentence, we see the word "**glory.**" "**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time do not deserve to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us.**" There is glory in store for us. This is completed redemption, life, and salvation. Our souls will enter heaven, and then on that final day, our bodies will be raised to share in that glory. Body and soul joined will forever enjoy the unspeakable goodness and blessedness which the heavenly Father has prepared for us.

I am not going to attempt a description of this glory, except to repeat what Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 2:9, which is, "*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has comprehended what God has prepared for those who love Him.*" This is the "**glory that is about to be revealed to us.**"

² Smalcald Articles, II, article II, paragraph 24

As regards to the waiting for our completed redemption, it is to be admitted that it is a waiting. It is a painful waiting on account of the **“sufferings of this present time.”** The sufferings of our present time are not very pleasant. We all have our own crosses to bear, and some of them hurt and leave deep scars. It’s nothing new, though. Remember Asaph in Psalm 73. Asaph, seeing the God-fearing suffer, complained of *“the prosperity of the wicked”* (v.3), and our Lord Himself once said, *“Truly, truly, I tell you that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy”* (John 16:20). It is a waiting in patience, however, it is only for a little while.³ This is a comforting thought. As St. Paul says, **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time do not deserve to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us.”** No wonder that **“we wait eagerly for our adoption as His children, for the redemption of our bodies.”**

Moreover, it is a waiting in confidence. In human affairs, plans often miscarry. Disheartening eventualities must be considered. But here we have the positive reference to the **“glory that is about to be revealed to us.”** That is why we do not have any second thoughts when it comes to thinking or speaking about death because when we pass out of this veil of tears, we count ourselves included in the promise of Christ who said, *“Truly, I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43).

Furthermore, as an evidence that our waiting is not in vain, we have many proofs in our text. Just as we have signs of the coming judgement mentioned in the Gospels⁴, so we also have a few signs as to the certainty of our coming complete redemption. There is the testimony of the Spirit in our hearts. We can be certain because we already have **“the first-fruits of the Spirit.”** In Old Testament times, God had commanded His people to offer the first of the harvest to Him.⁵ For the believers to cheerfully offer the first of the crop to the LORD implied their trust and confidence that God would be giving them more later on. As such, the “firstfruits” came to be looked at as a pledge, a token, God’s down-payment, assuring that God would give them the rest of the harvest also. Paul uses that picture when he speaks of **“the first-fruits of the Spirit.”** God’s sending the Holy Spirit into our hearts is His down-payment assuring us that He will also give us the rest of what He has promised.

Another proof is contained in the words of our text. Paul says that **“the creation is waiting with eager expectation to see the revealing of God’s children.”** This is a most remarkable proof. Every part of creation was affected by the sins of the human race. The very fact all creation is now waiting, literally, stretching its neck, in earnest expectation of the **revealing of God’s children**, is in itself a proof of the glory that will be revealed in them.

Finally, then, when God created the world, He pronounced it *“very good”* (Gen. 1:31). As to the detailed restoration of His creation to its perfect original condition, we shall leave to the wisdom of God. Some theologians, probably with good reason, imagine heaven filled with birds, animals, flowers, plants, and all the physical beauties of nature. Whatever nature this restoration of the visible creation is to assume, at any rate, **“the created world itself will also be freed from its slavery to decay, to have the glorious freedom of the children of God.”** With this statement, we rest upon solid ground. The entire world is sighing for release from the bondage of corruption, while the children of God are waiting for the completed redemption at the final coming of man.

Certainly, then, strong comfort is given to us in our text for today. Weighted down with the woes of earthly existence, we are waiting for the glory which will be revealed. And for further encouragement, remember that **“the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what we are to pray for as we ought to, but the Spirit Himself pleads for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.”**²⁷ **He who searches our hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is. For the Spirit pleads for God’s holy people according to God’s will.”** Christ intercedes for us in heaven⁶ but the Spirit intercedes within us. We are never alone. In His boundless mercy the Lord has bestowed upon us the clear title of eternal glory. *“To Him who, by the power that is working in us, can do immeasurably more than anything we ask or imagine,²¹ to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever”* (Ephesians 3:20-21). Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty and merciful God, we praise Your holy name. We praise You for Your witness to Yourself in your glorious creation, with all its wisdom and its wonders, and in all the blessings that come to us through them. We thank You, Father, for giving us a clearer and fuller message of Your truth in the Holy Scriptures. By the Spirit who inspired them, make us living stones in Your temple, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Above all, centre our lives in Your Son, whom You have sent as the living Word, to convey to all people Your full grace and truth.

We praise You that Your Son became a human being like us. We praise You that He has given us His life of perfect obedience to redeem our lives, and to set His example before us. We praise You that He has died to take on Himself our sins; and that He has risen to give us unending life. We praise You for making these blessings of Christ our own through Baptism and the gift of faith.

³ John 16:19

⁴ Eg. Matthew 24 and Luke 21

⁵ Exodus 23:19; Deuteronomy 26:1–11

⁶ Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1),

Grant that we may grow in them day by day, so that we may always be clothed with His righteousness and live the new life. By Your Spirit, help us to put to death the desires of our sinful natures, to put away all hatred and bitterness, to conquer all evil habits, and to live in fellowship with You.

Spirit of the living God, we praise You for bringing the Church into existence. By Your gracious power, renew it daily in faith and life. Move Your people to offer their whole selves to their Lord and to proclaim His saving love.

Give saving faith to the nations of the earth, that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, and live before You in obedience. Bless our country Australia with leaders whose consciences are guided by Your voice, and with citizens whose minds are fixed on doing Your will.

Bless all who are in some special need of Your help. Remember, in particular, those who are sick, or suffering physical or mental distress. Touch them with Your healing love, and show them what great things You have prepared for them.

O God, Creator, Saviour, and Advocate, help us during our days on earth to let Your light transform every area of our lives, and, when death comes, keep us for Your eternal kingdom. These things we ask in the precious name of Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and rules, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE 7th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Proper 11)

Isaiah 44:6-8

⁶ This is what the LORD, Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD of hosts, has said: "I am the First and I am the Last, and there is no God except Me. ⁷ Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it! Let him recount to Me what has happened since I established an ancient people! Then let them predict what is to come and what will happen to them! ⁸ Do not be terrified and do not be afraid! Have I not been telling you and declaring it from long ago? You are My witnesses. Is there any God except Me? There is no other Rock. I do not know of any."

Romans 8:18-27

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time do not deserve to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation is waiting with eager expectation to see the revealing of God's children. ²⁰ For this created world has been subjected to futility, not by its own choice but because of the One who subjected it; in hope, ²¹ because the created world itself will also be freed from its slavery to decay, to have the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² For we know that all the creation has been groaning together with them and labouring with birth-pangs together with them until now.

²³ Not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as His children, for the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For we have been saved by hope. If hope is seen, it is not hope. Who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ However, if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it, with patience.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what we are to pray for as we ought to, but the Spirit Himself pleads for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. ²⁷ He who searches our hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is. For the Spirit pleads for God's holy people according to God's will.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

²⁴ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ However,

while people were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat came up and formed grains, then the weeds also showed up. ²⁷ The owner's slaves came to him and asked him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?'

²⁸ "He told them, 'An enemy has done this.'

"The slaves asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them out?'

²⁹ "'He said, 'No. If you pull out the weeds, you may pull up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest! When the grain is cut, I shall tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burnt but bring the wheat into my barn!"'" ...

³⁶ When Jesus had dismissed the crowds, He went into the house. His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain the parable of the weeds in the field to us!"

³⁷ He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world. The good seeds are the people who belong to the kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the Evil One. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore, as the weeds are gathered and burnt with fire, it will be like that at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send His angels, they will gather out of His kingdom all the things that cause sin and the people who continue to do evil, ⁴² and they will throw them into the fiery furnace. There people will weep and grind their teeth. ⁴³ Then righteous people will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let the one who has ears listen!"