



SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Second Sunday After Pentecost

June 14, 2020

Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



In our Genesis reading, Abraham was eager to show hospitality to these 3 visitors because in the culture of this time, a person's reputation was very much connected to their hospitality – the sharing of home and food. Even strangers were to be treated as highly honoured guests. Meeting another's need for food or shelter was and still is one of the most immediate and practical ways of obeying GOD. It is also a time-honoured relationship builder. In the letter to the Hebrews chapter 13:2 **Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.** This thought should be on our minds the next time we have an opportunity to meet a stranger's needs.

Nothing is too hard for GOD – who is personally involved in our lives and often nudges us to ask for His power to help us.

Abraham's wife, Sarah, had a typically human response when challenged about laughing when she heard she was going to have a child. She was afraid of being discovered – afraid that her inner thoughts and emotions will be exposed, or wrongdoings discovered. But as we all know, such behaviour causes greater complications than telling the truth and can bring even more problems. Our psalmist shows us that GOD is very responsive and that we can always reach Him. He bends down and listens to our voice. The psalmist has experienced answers to his prayers – so, if you feel discouraged, remember that GOD is near and listens carefully to every prayer. He answers each prayer in order to give us His best.

When I was asked to be a part of M13 Cursillo team, the theme of the weekend was Romans 5:5 "GOD's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who

has been given to us. The first 5 verses of this passage contain some difficult concepts. In beginning to understand the next 4 chapters of this letter, it helps to keep in mind the 2-sided reality of the Christian life. ^On the one hand, we are complete in CHRIST – our acceptance with Him is secure. ^And secondly, we are growing in CHRIST – we are becoming more and more like Him. At one and the same time we have the status of kings and the duties of slaves. We feel both the presence of CHRIST and the pressure of sin – which means that we enjoy the peace that comes from being in a relationship with GOD; but we still face daily problems that often help us grow. If we can remember these 2 sides of the Christian life, we will not grow discouraged as we face temptations and problems. Instead, we will learn to depend on the power available to us from CHRIST, who lives in us by the HOLY SPIRIT.

^Paul tells us that, as believers, we now stand in a place of highest privilege – ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast

in our hope of sharing the glory of God. Not only has GOD declared us NOT GUILTY; He has drawn us close to Himself. ^Instead of being enemies, we have become His friends – in fact, His own children.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul states clearly that faith, hope and love are at the heart of the Christian life.

^Our relationship with GOD begins with **faith** – which helps us realise we are delivered from our past by the death of JESUS. ^**Hope** – grows as we begin to learn all that GOD has in mind for us – and it gives us the promise of the future. ^And GOD's **love** fills our lives and gives us the ability to reach out to others.

For first century Christians, suffering was the rule rather than the exception. Paul tells us that in the future we will BECOME – but until then, we must OVERCOME. This means that we will experience difficulties that help us grow. We rejoice in suffering – not because we like pain or deny its tragedy – but because we know GOD is using life's difficulties and satan's attacks to build our character. The problems that we run into will develop our

perseverance – which in turn will strengthen our character, deepen our trust in GOD, and give us greater confidence about the future. I think we all find our patience tested in some way each day. ^We should thank GOD for these opportunities to grow, and deal with them in His strength.

All three members of the Holy Trinity are involved in salvation. The Father loves us so much that He sent His Son to bridge the gap between us¹. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to fill our lives with love and enable us to live by His power². With all this loving care, how can we do less than serve Him completely!

We were weak and helpless because we can do nothing on our own to save ourselves. Someone had to come and rescue us. Not only did CHRIST come at a good time in history, it was the perfect time – according to GOD's schedule. GOD controls all history – and He controlled the timing, methods, and results of JESUS' death.

¹ John 3:16

² Acts 1:8

And while we were still sinners, GOD sent JESUS to die for us – not because we were good enough – BUT BECAUSE HE LOVES US. Whenever we feel uncertain about GOD’s love for us, we need to remember that He loved us even before we turned to Him. If GOD loves us while we are rebellious, He can surely strengthen us now that we love Him in return.

So, the love that caused CHRIST to die is the same love that sends the Holy Spirit to live in us and guide us every day. The power that raised CHRIST from the dead is the same power that saved us and is available to us in our daily lives. We can pray for GOD’s power and love to help meet every challenge in our lives.

GOD is holy and will not be associated with sin. All of us are sinful and so, without JESUS, are separated from GOD. All sin deserves punishment – and instead of us receiving the punishment we deserve; CHRIST took our sins upon Himself by dying on the cross. Through faith in CHRIST’s work, we become reconciled to GOD rather than being enemies and outcasts.

Katherine Grieb, a New Testament scholar and author at the Theological Seminary of Virginia contrasts Paul's focus on the death of Christ for the ungodly in Romans with the mission of the 12 disciples in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew rightly sees a relationship between the authority of Jesus Christ and the mission of the church. Nowhere is that relationship clearer than at the very end of the Gospel, where the risen Christ declares, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." We are given a foretaste of that resurrection authority in this reading, a preview of the newness of life that awaits the church of the risen Lord.

With Paul, Matthew links God's mission to humanity in Jesus Christ with God's compassion and mercy. As Jesus goes about his work of teaching, proclaiming the good news and curing the sick, we are told, he has compassion on the crowds, because they are harassed and helpless, "like sheep without a shepherd." The mission of the disciples follows immediately.

Anticipating the Great Commission at the Gospel's end, Jesus summons the 12 disciples and gives them his authority to cast out unclean spirits and to cure diseases. The 12 disciples are individually named and redescribed as apostles (those sent out). Their redescription occurs right before they are named, while the statement that Jesus "sent them out" immediately follows their names—a clear sign that their identity is defined by their mission.

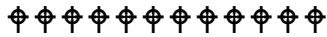
They are to go to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," those same "sheep without a shepherd" upon whom Jesus has compassion. His authority funds their authority; his compassion defines their compassion. The disciples, now apostles, are to do what Jesus himself has done: proclaim the nearness of the reign of heaven, cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. There is no suggestion that they will be unable to do any of these amazing things; nor do the disciples themselves raise any such objection. That the mission Jesus sends them on is a

reflection of God's own gracious mission to humanity in himself is made clear by the saying, "You have received without payment; give without payment."

What are we to make of God's gracious mercy to us, the proof of God's love for us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly? Here Paul and Matthew are in close agreement: in addition to doing on our behalf what no one else would ever do or could ever do, God pays us the greatest compliment by including us in God's own ongoing mission.



From today, I think we can take away that GOD takes us as we are; but He loves us too much to leave us that way. Paul's focus on the death of Christ for the ungodly in Romans can be contrasted with the mission of the 12 disciples in the Gospel of Matthew. We are called – not coerced or ordered or even cajoled – to go and make disciples in our mission field – as the final verses of Matthew's gospel tells us – knowing that the power which raised JESUS from the dead, lives in our hearts always. We just have to recognise it.



May we pray: the prayer that we will pray at the end of the service:

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Send us out in the power of your SPIRIT to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen

Life Application Study Bible

Daily Prayer 2020

https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2008-06/apostles-new-identity?code=IR3loIUvmDKQ7WQjCBbX&utm_campaign=2507a3adab-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_09_11_08_32_COPY_08&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Christian+Century+Newsletter&utm_term=0_b00cd618da-2507a3adab-86182999 Date accessed 13 June 2020