

Romans
“The Fruit of Jesus: Peace, Access, Joy, Endurance”
Romans 5:1-5”

Welcome to Palm Sunday celebration. This is a week where we remember and celebrate and give thanks for all the work of Christ. For his birth? Yes. And his ministry. His trial, his endurance of mockery and shame and beatings and ultimately death. And then his resurrection. These are the things we celebrate now. Today we're going to look especially what Paul has to say about it. We've been looking at the book of Romans for the last few months, but we're going to go back to an earlier passage that describes what the sacrifice of Christ and the resurrection of Christ means for us.

Romans 5. I'll read it to you now, and I ask you to hear the word. Apostle Paul says this.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured definitively into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

You may be seated.

Can I ask you to remember the life of Christ is born, of course, as we know, grew in wisdom and stature before God and man, and had about 30 years of utter silence with His father, searching scriptures, working with wood. And then around the age of 30, probably around the year 2728 A.D., I can explain that another day.

Jesus began his ministry quietly. That's described in John chapters one, two, three, and four. A miracle. His first sign in a wedding can of Galilee. And then conversations with people like Nicodemus, a self-righteous Pharisee who saw in Jesus more than a teacher, and a conversation with a woman who couldn't be more different from that leading teacher of Israel, a Samaritan woman five times divorced. Jesus had a conversation with her by the well. This was the quiet ministry. A few miracles here and there. And then after about a year, he burst upon the world. People came into his presence, crippled, unable to walk, and left. Bounding with joy. They came unable to speak, and they left, shouting with joy, with perfect speech. They came rigid and came out of his presence, loose and flowing. They came on stretchers, paralyzed, and walked on home, sharing their mats. The news spread like the best possible gossip and people flocked to him. They flocked to him. They were so eager to get to Jesus, they sometimes reached him without even proper plans for food or where they'd spend the night. So one time, 2 or 5000

men, it says males, adult males, which means there were probably 15,000 people, counting women and children who had come to hear Jesus for days and ran out of food. And Jesus said, well, give me five loaves and two fish, and I'll feed you all will have baskets full left over. He dined with the masses. He dined with the elite like Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel. He also dined with Pharisees and tax collectors and spent time with sinful women. And people began to grumble. Who is this guy? Doesn't he know that righteous people, righteous leaders, stay away from people like that? Doesn't he know he shouldn't be with Roman collaborators now? Many people loved it. They thrilled that he welcomed sinners, an outsiders, an outcast to himself. But other people became angry. And among those people who were angry, the chief of them all was the religious leader.

Sadly, those who should have been quickest to welcome Jesus were actually quickest to judge him for failing to meet their standards as they understood them. And so they grumbled about him, and they said, who is this? Who is this to forgive sins? Who is this to speak in God's name? I mean, he's a teacher. He's gathering disciples.

Who gave him the right? With whom did he study? Where did he get his degrees? The answer is he didn't get degrees. The father taught him, but they opposed him, and their opposition slowly became greater and greater to some extent. The more Jesus was loved, the more they hated him. And the Pharisees eventually linked up with a group they didn't usually spend time with.

The Sadducees were joined only by an antipathy to Jesus and the Pharisees could move the crowds. The Sadducees were elites. Those elites had access to the powers of Rome, and they somehow managed to convince the Romans of something they knew to be false. And the Romans had to be false. And that is, Jesus is dangerous. He's leading the crowds astray.

He may start a rebellion. You know what happens when rebels come, pilot? You know you could lose your role if you don't suppress this. You've got to put him to death. So they did. They killed him on the third day. This the most righteous man who ever lived, rose from the dead because death could not hold him. Now.

Now he is not only the priest who dies for our sins, he's also the judge declares us to be clean. Is this passage says, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God. Jesus, the one who gave himself for our sins, declared us to be free from sin. And now we know who God is. You know, 1.1 of the disciples said, Jesus, show us the father.

And Jesus said, well, if you've seen me, you've seen the father. And so we know by looking at Jesus what God is like. He's not a great grandfather in the sky who dispenses gifts, you know, little trinkets he pulls out of his pockets, or \$10 for taking a plate over to the dish washer. He's not like that. He's not that kind of smiling, benevolent, mindless grandfather. No, no, he is not essentially a lawgiver. God gives laws, no doubt about that. But God is not essentially one who

tells us what to do, nor is he essentially a commander giving us missions to complete. He is essentially the Redeemer, and Jesus has done every last thing it's necessary to bring us to God. If you haven't yet claimed Jesus as Lord and Savior, you need to know one thing.

You don't need to do anything. Jesus did all of it in his death, in his resurrection on the cross. All you have to do it's hardly even a deed is recline on him, rest on him, trust him, and you'll be justified by faith. And you'll receive all the benefits of the faith, which include peace with God, access to God, and then a certain a surety that when life is hard, there's still a purpose, there's still hope, and you'll become a stronger person for it.

Now all of this comes through a tiny little phrase that appears in our passage in verse one, and then sprinkled throughout Romans five, chapters five and six and eight. And that little phrase is with God or with Christ. We call that union with Christ. So we have been justified by faith and now have peace with God. And if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly also be united with him in life.

Chapter six says, and if we have died with Christ, we also live with Christ. And if we suffer with him, we will also be glorified with him. The Christian life is a life with Christ in union with him. I said a moment ago that he does everything necessary for our salvation, including the empowerment to live a good life because we are indeed with Christ.

We're with him, and we enjoy the consequences of that which begin with peace, but also access to God and also hope and suffering, peace, joy. The passage also mentions so we had our children come down as we do and bless us by singing and the palm branches. And they did that at the 8:00 service. And of course, knowing the ways of parents and children, I knew also knowing the way of John Haines, I knew that they wouldn't just roll in at 8:01. They'd be here well in advance and I knew that the parents would bring those children to church every day and maybe use your 11:00 service, and they're coming at 730. And I know that means they got up at 630. And I know what that means. I know the wrangling and the mangling and the weeping and gnashing of teeth that preceded that beautiful march. And that's the way it is with children. You know, we're thankful for our children. But, they weep on the basis of insufficient evidence. They do not have a proper rationale for the way in which they disturb our lives and upset our preferences. I feel like I heard a really quiet hymn in there, but the Bible says children are a gift from the Lord.

And because we believe that we believe God's Word, we say despite the sufferings of weeping children, crowned lessly weeping children, irritable children who don't want to get up that early, despite all that, we are going to count children and join a blessing. Because we believe that God is going to carry those children through. And of course, we had baptisms today and I guarantee

you that most of the people who were baptized had many, many prayers prayed over them when they were little.

So our union with Christ and our trust in Christ as sovereign King, not only Savior but also King, teaches us how to handle it when things don't quite go the way we want. And we look at the capering and the laughing and the games and the tumbling and the lisping of our names of children, and we say, good enough.

I rejoice in the children God has given me joy and peace. Peace with God. Now people often seek peace as something like calm is an end in itself. I want to have a calm life and easy life. That's not quite the way the Bible puts it. The Bible says having been justified by faith, we have peace with God, which means above all that the peace we have of God is not a subjective feeling.

Like I'm calm today because I had some good exercise or a lovely meal with friends. Those external things. It's an object of reality. With God, I have peace with God. And it says specifically we have peace with God. Now, one of the things that Bible scholars do is they attend to little words and the way they come in patterns it's already talked about with passage stresses peace with God.

But I also want to tell you that pronouns vary in the book of Romans. In the book of Romans, in the beginning, the most common little word is not a pronoun, yet it's a noun is men. And Romans chapter one, it's men. Men do this. They rebel against God in these ways and those ways. In Romans chapter two, the most common little word is you 26 times in the original language, 26 times.

Paul says, you and what he means is you have sinned. You are guilty. You're accountable before God. And then in chapter three and four of Romans, the most common word is he, and the antecedent is Jesus Christ. He came to give an atonement for sins. He came to redeem you from your sins. He came to justify you. He came to offer a propitiate to sacrifice.

He came to reconcile us to God. That's Romans three and four. Chapter five is why 16 times it says we because of who we were and what you have done, because of what Jesus has done. Three and four we have peace with God. We have access to God. We have assurance in suffering. We and we and we is foremost.

It's not an emotional matter. It's not how you feel at the moment because you just saw a good comedy and had a good laugh and you feel about it. It's not an emotional state, it's a forensic state. You know, lately we've been talking a great deal about people who live in America. And I'm not trying to take a political stand here at all, but people who live in America and weren't born here, who is the most peaceful person who was not born in America?

The most peaceful person is somebody who's become a citizen and lived here for 11 years. They're citizens. They're completely at peace. There's no doubt about their status. And that's the way it is with us and God. We have a certain status, a definite status offered to us by Christ. We've been born in the family of God, and therefore we have peace with God.

That's a consequence of the work of Christ. No guilt, no condemnation from God. Now, that's not all there is to it, though. When God justifies, he doesn't just become a judge who says no more condemnation for you. He also becomes our father and our friend. So you see, when Adam and Eve first sinned, and when we sense our sin, we tend to run away from God.

And the Bible says that God pursues us and as a result of his pursuit, his objective pursuit, we have peace with him. Here's Isaiah 53. Many of you memorized parts of Isaiah 53. In the first two clauses I'll give you, you say, oh yeah, that's those are good Easter verses. But you got to hear the third one that goes like this.

He, Jesus, was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Familiar. And then it says upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. We have peace with God, and ordinarily the feelings follow. But then always follow. Now there's someone who has been with the Lord for 20 or 30 years now, and he made a statement that people either like or dislike and I'm not going to try to take too much of a stand about it. It's a little bit provocative, he said. There's nothing you can do to make God love you more. There's nothing you can do to make God love you less. Now some people will say, oh, that's antinomianism. That allows people to do whatever they want.

But he's the person who said that was saying something very important. What he was saying was, your status with God does not depend on the vagaries and vacillations of the way you been behaving for the last 24 hours. God is not going to look at you and say she got hungry and she yelled at somebody. He's sleep deprived and he got irritable again.

And so I withdraw my love. That is not going to happen. Our behavior over the last 2470 two hours does not change the love God has for his children any more that a parent gives up on a child because they've misbehave for the last 24 hours. We have peace with God, and we have the statement that God has poured out His spirit and poured his love into our hearts.

That's a perfect tense in the Greek, which means a past act with ongoing consequences. God has poured out his love. His spirit is ours. His love is ours. Through the Lord Jesus Christ. So he says, we have peace with God and now we have to live like. And that's the challenge. This is ours. We want to appropriate what is ours.

So I don't know about you, but probably most people have bought a pair of shoes in the last year. And sometimes you buy shoes because their shoes are manifestly worn out. You can't

polish them anymore or walking shoes or running shoes, you know, the heels torn to pieces, etc. but sometimes we, we buy a new pair of shoes, not according to plan.

And it goes like it did last Sunday when it was raining so very hard. And you go outside and you think you have a nice pair of shoes and when you get inside from walking through the puddles, your feet are wet and you think, well, What? What happened there? And you turn your shoe over and you see there's actually a hole in your shoe, and you think to yourself, well, I need to get a new pair of shoes.

And should you buy a new pair of shoes? Now, I gotta tell you something really weird about humanity. Some people buy a new pair of shoes and they put it on right away. And some people like to let that shoe age for a few months. Am I talking about some of you? I know I am. You like to put it on that shelf and see how shiny it is, and it's polished.

There's no dirt on it. You want to weigh whether it's actually worth it or not. I see husbands and wives giving each other looks like he's talking about you. Yes, but I'm not really talking about shoes here. I'm talking about claiming what's yours when you buy that new pair of shoes. Dry feet are yours. Just have to put there your shoes. You just have to appropriate it. So what we need to do is appropriate the peace that we have with God. And we do that with the love, loving support in our hearts and the wisdom he gives us now. Simple illustration - five years ago, my wife had a strange accident and broke and dislocated. More to the point, the pinkie on her left hand and it was a bad dislocation.

And so it wasn't just snapped back into place, it was surgery with a pin and, you know, giant thing on her hand for weeks. And we were doing pretty well overall with, with, people bringing us meals. And, you know, I prepare the meals and, and wash dishes, do the laundry, clean the floor. It was going very well overall, except for one area.

And that area is conceptions of the proper way to clean the floor. And if I spill something on the floor, it's quite likely that I'll, I'll reach for, a t shirt or maybe even take off the t shirt I'm wearing. That's kind of two thirds dirty, and just throw it on the floor and do that. And the floor is clean. Now. And she sees this and puzzles over it and comments upon it occasionally. And I said, you know, honey, we're doing great here with this, this surgery. And I really think that if we want to do our best, when I clean the floor, you just go to another room and I promise you the floor will be clean, even if it won't happen exactly the way you intended or caught into your standards.

Now I'm talking, of course, about appropriations. Happy marriage. Behave like it. Loving marriage. Behave like it. Peace with God, appropriate it, claim it, make use of it.

We have superficial ways of robbing ourselves a peace. You know, you leave a little bit too late and then every time a car is going slowly hit a light, you're upset. That's pretty superficial. And then it can go deeper, can be that sense of loss when something the fear of loss was something

is very dear to us. When stock market goes down and our finances go down, we can become very anxious people.

Some people in this church are very anxious about, the next pastor, for example. And, and what's going to happen when the next pastor comes as if, as if God suddenly will abandon this church, you know, at the end of 2025, that's unlikely. It's not going to happen. And then there's the real danger that we don't have peace with God.

We don't know who we are, and God offers us peace again and again. Jesus offers peace to his people again and again. Jesus met a sinful woman who was repent and said. Your faith is saved. You go in peace. You have peace with God. And Jesus was talking to people who've been burdened by all the extra rules that the Jews threw upon their people.

And he said, take my yoke upon you. Find rest for your souls. Peace. Before Jesus died and the last night he spent with his disciples, knowing he would die, be arrested and slain the next day he said, peace I leave you, my peace I give you, not as the world gives, I give you my abiding peace. We know how to lose peace.

We know how to become tense. When there's a threat. We know they'll become anxious. When somebody says something unkind about us. Or when we fail somebody else. And we're afraid someone will notice it. Human tendency is to go like this to end anxiety. We try to do what we can to become secure. When we're angry, we try to seek justice.

When we're ashamed of something, we try to do better. I'm not saying those are all wrong, but I'm saying they're mostly wrong. Even as what we say in our house often when we make a mistake is, well, I'm never going to do that again. Have you ever said that? If I ever said I'll never do that again, I'm going to find peace after I did something wrong by vowing I'll never do it again.

How many of you have made that statement and then have done it again? Of course you do it again. We know how to fall into bad habits. We know how to sin. Yes, the solution is not to try harder and harder. Jesus did not come to this world to say, try harder. Everybody. He came to redeem us. He came to give us peace through the cross.

We will never stop doing that again, and we will never earn our way into God's favor. You know the story of Martin Luther, the man who more than anybody else, rediscovered the gospel after it was lost for many years he was a young man with a plan. Brilliant. Going to be a lawyer, become powerful and wealthy to please his father.

And he was walking across a field, one day, and a tremendous storm came down with lightning and thunder all over the place, and a lightning bolt hit yards away from him. He fell to the

ground and said, Saint Dan, help me, I'll become a monk. Now, if very few people today say, in a thunderstorm, I think I'll become a monk.

He said it for a very specific reason. The reason was that if you're a monk. You're by the sacraments all day, every day. You take communion, you can go to confession. You can express your contrition. You have access to the deeds that will make you right with God. And so he did it for years, and his superiors recognized his zeal.

And so he sent him on a pilgrimage to Rome, walked essentially 500 miles, 1,000,500 miles back. While he was there, he offered masses. And he heard that if you crawl up the steps of Saint Peter on your knees, saying the Lord's Prayer on every step, that will give you a great deal of grace. And so he did that at the top of the steps.

He said, I wonder if it's true. He went back to Germany and decided what he really needed to do was confessed his sins. He wore out his confessor, who finally said, stop bringing trivial sins to me. Come back when you've murdered your father. Come back when you've blasphemed. Stop it! Don't you know that God loves you? Don't you know that God is not angry at you?

You're angry at God, God's son, angry at you because crippled as he was, you seem to be a true believer, a very confused believer.

He realized that we have peace with God not by works, not by trying harder, not by never doing it again, but by the work of Christ finished upon the cross. And so he had peace with God. Now our society offers peace in a variety of ways. You know, there only I say only 600 million Buddhists in the world.

But Buddhism has a sort of a pervasive influence among secular people. And Buddhism tries to give a nuanced answer to the question, how do I find peace? And their answer is this resignation or indifference? The message of Buddhism is you will find peace when you just don't care very much. When you want something and you don't get it, you'll be disappointed.

So stop wanting things. That's not a message a whole lot of people can live by. It's actually a message that is older than Buddhism. In Jesus day, the number one religious ethical system was known as stoicism. And that's exactly what stoicism said. The way to find peace is to not care so much. If you love a woman, if you're speaking to a man.

They were men speaking to men. If you love a woman and she doesn't return your love and marry somebody else, don't let it bother you. Think about how that man is happy. And if you're a soldier and your army lost the war, don't be sad that you lost the war. Just think about it. There's another army that did win the war, and you should be content in that. There we go. Thank you so much. Be content in that. Don't let phones going off rob you of your peace, friends. It didn't bother me very much. It's just that much. The way to peace is not is not but

dashing your own hopes by working hard, trusting in Christ. And that's also how we have the second blessing, which is access to God. The passage says chapter five, verse two says, we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. Now, the word stand here doesn't mean stand up. It means take a stand. Stand and stand there and be confident that you belong in the presence of God. Yeah, if we think about it, we might realize if we stand in our sinfulness in the presence of God, it might not be all that comfortable because God is so holy and we are not. And we're all familiar with the experience of feeling we don't quite belong.

Maybe you've been in a in a meeting and people kind of point it. And why? Why are you here? Or maybe there was a banquet and everybody was famous or well-known or clearly powerful or something. And one of the leaders said, but who are you? It happens to us. But God says, you belong in my presence. Stay right there.

When I was in grad school at a famous university PhD program, I came to the realization, about six months in that not only am I not what I used to be the smartest guy in the room, I realized I was probably a little below average. Not only that, but I also realized that most of my classmates worked harder than me. They would do things like hear about a book that the prophet recommended, and stay up til four in the morning to read the whole book 500 pages and take notes on it. And I thought, man, I don't belong here. What am I doing in this room? But you know what? The head of the department asked me to work with him on my dissertation, and we met for two hours every other week for a year.

Now, in this parable, it's a true parable. And this parable, my dissertation was just kind of like God. And I said, what am I doing here? What am I in this? Why am I in this department? Most of people are smarter and work harder than me. I'm the least in the group. But the department chairman said, come on over. And so God is like that. We may say I'm the least. I'm the I'm the worst. I don't belong here. I'm going to I'm going to run from God's presence. I don't I don't have any place in God's presence, God's family, God's purposes in this world. And God says, come on, I want to spend time with you. And that overcomes whatever doubts or feelings of inferiority that we might cast upon ourselves.

If access to God. God is not angry at us. God is glad to have a stand in his presence many times that we're uncomfortable standing here and there. My wife had a car accident one time, only one in her whole life. It was a rainy night. Dark roads were slick, there were leaves all over, and we had a daughter who just talked nonstop. She turned to look at her daughter. Our daughter crashed into a car. A cop car. He was grumpy. And he kind of punished her. She had to go to traffic court. Traffic court is where nice people are. But that particular court was the only traffic court that night. But it was a bad dude court that night. Also, there were men with tattoos on their face. There were men that looked like they'd just had chairs broken over their heads in the last 24 hours. There were scary dudes. My wife was scared, and she appeared before the judge,

and the judge asked her for her plea. And at that court, there were three possible pleas. Number one was innocent. Plea number two was guilty. Plea number three was guilty with an explanation. I did it, but extenuating circumstances. And she is such a good person. So law abiding that when she stood before the judge to say guilty with within with an explanation. For the only time in her entire life I, I saw her unable to get a word out of her mouth. A cloud of gnats came out of her mouth and fell to the floor. And then she went. And I said, Your Honor, I became her advocate. your honor, what she's trying to say is guilty with an explanation. I explained what happened, and the judge said, I'll give you as much mercy as the law allows to wipe out most of what the police officer imposed on you. But you hit a policeman at a stop sign, and you're going to pay for it.

That's not the way it is with God. Jesus does not stand up to say, as our advocate, guilty without explanation. He says innocent with an explanation. Here's the explanation. I paid it off for this person. I paid every last bit of it. There is nothing more to be said. And we can stand with our feet apart in the presence of God, with access to God, with our sins and our guilt and our demerits evaporated, gone because of the work of Christ.

Furthermore, God is not only our judge, unlike all human judges who make their rulings and then dismiss people, God is a judge who, after exonerating us, says, and now let's be friends. Let's sing in the same chorus, let's play games together. Let's be friends. Let's get to know each other. Let's spend time together. Yes, God is judge, but he's far more than judge.

We stand in his presence as his friends. This is what the Bible says on multiple occasions. On Paul's other epistle he says this. We have boldness and access to God with confidence through faith in Christ. It's Ephesians three and over in first Peter the apostle Peter says, Christ died for our sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God.

And Hebrews chapter four says, let us now or let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, seeking help in our hour of need. This is the objective reality that is ours. We belong in the presence of God, whether we feel worthy or not. The third and more briefly, the third benefits are a trio of joy and endurance and maturity.

Even when things go wrong. Look at verses three and four again. Paul says not only that, not only do you have peace with God and access to God, but we also rejoice in our sufferings. Know that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Now in the New Testament, hope is, generally speaking, hope of the return of Christ.

But sometimes it is simply a hope in what God is doing in our life. What God is doing in our life is that while we suffer and we do trials and loss and illness, while we suffer, we're not going to be overcome by this is not this is not the secular saying what doesn't kill me makes it strong, makes me stronger.

It's more than that. It's saying, what doesn't kill me by God's grace, by God's purposes, sending me the means of grace will help me come to maturity. Not with some terrible sense of resolve, but when we are ill, when poverty comes our way, when we don't understand why, when I was preparing the sermon and I was with a couple who got a hard diagnosis for their young son, he's going to live with the problem the rest of his life.

Mom and dad believers hear this. It's hard to hear it. It's hard to explain it to your child. You're going to live with this the rest of your life. We're going to be beside you and we. And it's easy to think, Lord, how did you why did you allow this to happen to my child? But suffering and endurance give us hope.

What does that hope mean? Does not mean here comes a virtue program. You see, God's going to give you hard things to do. When you do hard things, you're going to get tougher. Now, there's some truth to that in athletics. There's truth to that. But it's not the way of God's plan for our maturity. Jesus did not come to tell us to try harder.

Jesus came to redeem us. His love has been poured out into our hearts. So as Christians, we don't say, hope does not disappoint because nothing can stop me. We don't say hope does not disappoint because I'm going to outwork them all. You may or you may not. We are peace with God because we believe that God has enduring purposes for us, even in the hardest moments of life we trust.

We don't see it yet we trust. And what basis do we trust? We trust on the basis of knowing who Jesus is. And on Palm Sunday, we celebrate that Jesus is King and we do the same thing at Easter. On Palm Sunday, they said, Hosanna to the Son of David, and he is the Son of David. Jesus is the Son of David, the greatest king ever.

And how did he manifest his kingship? Well, he manifested it that week by getting to the cross, which he knew he needed to do at the right time. And then after death he rose and proved that he is king over death and King of life. But he's also he's also our intercessor and also our friend, and also the one who pours out his love into our hearts and gives us His Spirit to take us forward.

And so we have my friends through the work of Christ, much to celebrate. We have peace with God. We have access to God, and we have assurance that come what may and this difficult life, we have a hope that will not disappoint us because God is at work in our lives. All it takes, in one sense, is to trust him and let him do his work.

And I hope you do. Let's pray. The father, I thank you for the words of the Apostle Paul, who reveals to us all that the work, Lord Jesus that you performed means. I pray that we would take it to heart, that we would live it out. We live it out one by one, and that together we would live it out and share the good news with others.

Now, Lord, we do love you and we want to worship you to live in union with you. We pray that you will give us the wisdom to rely upon you, to trust you, to walk with you, with you, with you having peace in your presence. We pray it all in Jesus' name,

Amen.