

Scripture:

Psalm 100

Romans 5:1-11

“Made new in Christ.”

The great Martin Luther said of the book of Romans ----- “It is really the chief part of the New Testament ---- and the very purest Gospel.”

And he goes on to say --- “It is in itself --- a bright light --- almost enough to illumine all the Scripture.”

“The chief part of the New Testament ---- and the very purest Gospel.” -----
--- “... a bright light --- almost enough to illumine all the Scripture.” ---
pretty high accolades --- and from a pretty highly respected theologian.

And the heart of the book of Romans is chapters 5-8.

And today we’re looking at the very first part of these 3 chapters.

Let’s listen again to the first part of Romans 5 --- this time from Eugene Peterson’s translation known as The Message:

“**5** ¹⁻² By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us --- set us right with him, make us fit for him --- we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus.

And that’s not all: We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that he has already thrown open his door to us.

We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand --- out in the wide open spaces of God’s grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.

³⁻⁵ There’s more to come:

We continue to shout our praise even when we’re hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us --- and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next.

In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary --- we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!

⁶⁻⁸ Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready.

And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway.

We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice.

But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatsoever to him.

⁹⁻¹¹ Now that we are set right with God by means of this sacrificial death, the consummate blood sacrifice, there is no longer a question of being at odds with God in any way.

If, when we were at our worst, we were put on friendly terms with God by the sacrificial death of his Son, now that we're at our best, just think of how our lives will expand and deepen by means of his resurrection life!

Now that we have actually received this amazing friendship with God, we are no longer content to simply say it in plodding prose.

We sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!"

So Eugene Peterson translates Romans 5 verse 1-11.

And the very last sentence is crucial --- especially in our culture --- where Christianity is so often --- brushed aside and looked down upon.

The last line again ---- "We sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!"

"We sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!"

Verses 1-10 explain in great and powerful detail much of what we have been blessed with by God in Christ.

They are a kind of concise Christian systematic theology ---- a summary of much of what we believe as followers of Jesus Christ.

Because of Christ --- because of God acting in Christ ---- everything is changed and we are made new.

Salvation and reconciliation --- God's unending love and grace are ours.

Thanks to Christ coming and sacrificing as He did --- everything is now right between God and us --- all is well --- God is pleased with us --- and all because of Christ.

In the NIV 2011 edition of the scriptures ---- the word "boast" --- appears twice in Romans 5 ---- in verse 2 and then again in verse 11.

Verse 2 -----

"through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God."

And then verse 11 ----

"Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

"And we boast in the hope of the glory of God."

and ---

"... we boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

I have to say ---- the choice of the word boast seems a little odd.

Why boast? --- Why choose the term boast?

Isn't boasting kind of like being prideful ---- isn't boasting acting out of pride ---- being full of ourselves.

And doesn't scripture caution us against boasting and being prideful?

So why the word boast?

Why is it --- “Here is a list of wonderful --- and true --- and life saving faithful truths about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ --- now go and boast about them?

Isn't it wrong --- less than faithful to boast?

Why not --- “rejoice in” --- or ---- “be happy about” --- or --- “glory in” --- or ----- “be full of” ---- as other translations render the word ----- so why boast in 2011 translation?

I think it's because “boast” suggest an active response that involves words - --- an active response that involves proclamation --- testifying to --- sharing - -- and bearing witness to.

In this case “boast” ---- doesn't mean brag --- or be prideful --- or hold above as being greater or better yourself.

In this case --- “boast” ----- has more to do with declaring an achievement or possession.

Declaring an achievement or possession.

Holding up something that which is praiseworthy.

That's what Paul is speaking about here.

Declaring an achievement --- an achievement of God ---- something God has done.

And declaring a possession --- something we as follower's posses thanks to God.

More specifically it's --- holding up that which is praiseworthy ---- God's love in Jesus Christ that leads to freedom and salvation.

Rejoicing and being happy about ----- are both things that someone might do without ever uttering a word --- without ever sharing in words the reasons for their joy and happiness.

Boasting ---- not boasting as we know it --- as in bragging or drawing unnecessary attention to oneself ---- but boasting as in declaring an achievement --- declaring an achievement of God ---- something we now possess --- claim as our own ----- means using words --- sharing what is making us so joyful and happy.

Paul wants us to --- as Eugene Peterson captures in verse 11 ---- “sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!”

Yes we are happy about --- glory in --- rejoice in --- but we also must --- declare the achievement of Christ --- and declare what we have --- what we possess ----- boast about what we have been blessed with thanks to Christ.

As Christians we possess the most powerful thing in all of creation ---- the forgiveness of Christ --- the understanding that we mess up and God forgives us and welcomes us home every single time we come to Him.

Paul says don't just rejoice in this --- rejoice in it for sure --- but don't **just** rejoice in it --- don't just keep it to yourself --- go and boast about it --- go and share it --- tell others just how fortunate you are ---- and not because of anything you have done but because of what God has done for you in Jesus Christ.

If our bank suddenly notified us that we were credited with 1 billion dollars.

1 billion dollars --- and they said any friend we refer would also get 1 billion dollars --- we would be bragging about how great our bank was wouldn't we.

We wouldn't just rejoice in it --- or be happy about it or glory in it --- but we would boast in it --- we would go and tell all our friends hoping they too would get a billion bucks --- we'd tell everyone about it without hesitation -- -- and urgently and passionately --- we wouldn't want them to miss out.

That's what Paul is talking about here --- sharing with others with urgency and with passion such that they too get the beautiful gift --- salvation --- and reconciliation --- things worth far more than just a billion dollars.

Heavenly days there are a whole lot of things I'd boast and share that are worth a whole lot less than 1 billion dollars.

If at my next trip to Tim Horton's or Starbucks they told me it was free coffee for life at this location for everyone I refer --- I'd be letting every coffee drinker I know about it --- with urgency and passion --- I'd want everyone I know to know --- "Did you hear about Tim Horton's and Starbucks --- go to the one on Dundas Street and the one up on Taunton --- tell them I sent you it's free for life.

Why isn't it the same when it comes to our faith?

Why are we capable of sharing so many other things that bring us such joy -- - but we often shy away from sharing our faith.

Well ----- Paul has one pretty good answer.

Paul has one answer that seems to be true for many people --- and unfortunately it seems to work at shutting many down from sharing their faith.

And the reason is --- because the reception is so poor.

Because the reception we get when we share our faith is often so poor --- we often stop sharing it.

We aren't as enthusiastic about sharing our faith --- most of anyways --- not because we haven't tried --- but because the reception we received has so often been so poor when we have tried.

Few are the examples of people who shared their faith once and the person responded favourably.

More often than not --- very little --- if anything happens the first time we share our faith.

More often than not ---- people look at us blindly and say very little when we share our faith.

Very often there is a kind of silent --- perhaps even awkward moment when we share our faith with someone who isn't a person of faith --- or who has fallen away from faith.

The response is often less than favourable --- less than what we had hoped for --- and so over time we kind of give up or at the very least are less and less enthusiastic about it.

In verses 3-5 in Romans today Paul addresses this saying ---- “but we also glory in our sufferings --- because we know that suffering produces perseverance --- perseverance character ---- and character hope. And hope does not put us to shame...”

We are often made to feel lower and less --- uncomfortable --- awkward --- somehow weak or broken ---- dependant and weak when we share our faith - --- instead of the great myth of independence that our culture wrongly values so much.

Paul calls us to hold up and lift up what God has accomplished for us in Christ.

Reconciliation ---- forgiveness.

Freedom --- our salvation from dark forces.

Many people boast in what they have done --- built a business --- written a book or many books --- been successful at ... ---- and so on.

Paul says instead we are to boast about what God has done.

Share what God has done --- hold it up as something to be amazed by ---- something worth listening to and hearing about.

That's the boast --- that Paul is talking about.

The sharing of God's goodness with passion and commitment and zeal --- with personal investment and perhaps even a little bit of urgency.

Paul wants us to be passionate about God getting attention.

Even when the response is less than favourable.

Think of a child when they go to boast about something with someone.

If the first response they get is unfavourable most children just move on to the next person and the next person and the next person and the next person - --- until somebody finally responds and is as amazed as they are by what happened.

That's kind of how Paul wants us to be when it comes to sharing our faith.

Share it and share it and share it and share it ----- until somebody is as amazed and interested and awed by it as we are.

We are made new in Christ.

Everything about us changes --- even if we don't really know it --- or see it - -- or recognize it ----- everything about us changes in Christ --- because suddenly when God looks at us He sees something so very beautiful in us --- humility --- openness ---- teachability.

When a child does something that is bad --- and they come to their parent to talk about it and work it out --- and own up to it and ask for forgiveness --- they are somehow even more beautiful in the eye of the parent for their humility --- openness --- teachability.

When an adult sees a situation differently --- anew --- and goes to someone and says something like ---- "Hey I really blew it there the other day --- I'm really sorry!" ---- they become different --- we suddenly see them differently --- they are more beautiful --- humble ---- graceful somehow.

We've all experienced this right.

A situation being reconciled ---- forgiveness extended in a difficult situation ----- it's a beautiful thing --- we can hardly --- if at all --- contain it --- it's infectious and life giving --- it fills the room.

When someone comes to Christ it is the very same --- they become even more beautiful somehow --- their brokenness ---- the recognition of their brokenness makes them all the more beautiful and real.

That's what Paul is talking about ----- that's what life in Christ is all about.

Newness and beauty ---- forgiveness and reconciliation ---- salvation --- humility ----- grace.

And it's all right here in 10 sentences in Romans 5.

Luther just maybe right ---- Romans just might be ----- "... the chief part of the New Testament ---- and the very purest Gospel." ----- "... in itself --- a bright light --- almost enough to illumine all the Scripture."

Whatever the case --- however you choose to describe it ----- Romans 5 is a powerful glance into the beautiful reality of God's love for us.

Transforming us in Christ.

Making us into something far better --- and far more beautiful and true than we could ever accomplish on our own.

We are made new in Christ.

We are changed when we meet the crucified and risen one.

In Him we do in fact have something to say to the world.

Something --- someone worth sharing.

Christ is rich and beautiful and true to the point that we cannot keep Him just to ourselves.

Paul wants us not only to rejoice and be happy --- but He also wants us to sing and shout --- share Him.

Boast about Him --- means go and talk about Him --- the amazing things He has done.

We're not always good at --- "... sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!" --- or --- "... boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

But that must change.

It must change.

We are made new.

And the new demands that we "... sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!" ---and --- "... boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

At some point we will all be called to "... sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!" --- and --- "... boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." --- perhaps it's today during coffee hour with one of the children here today --- or later at lunch ----- trying to swindle a free coffee at Tim Horton's or Starbucks because you thought you heard the minister say it was free coffee today ---- who knows when the opportunity to shine for Christ will come and your number will be called.

However it happens --- may we be faithful when our time comes.

Amen.