

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 8, 2019
2nd Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 11:1-10, Matthew 3:1-12
Hymns: 6; 63; 65; 95:7

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Romans 15:4-13

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. ⁵Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. ⁸Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* to the fathers, ⁹and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy, as it is written:

"For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles,
And sing to Your name."

¹⁰And again he says:

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"

¹¹And again:

"Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles!

Laud Him, all you peoples!"

¹²And again, Isaiah says:

“There shall be a root of Jesse;
And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles,
In Him the Gentiles shall hope.”

¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our coming Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: John’s Message of Repentance

A common image of John the Baptist is probably pretty severe. The Scriptures characterize John’s message as being one of repentance. At times it was harsh and to the point. In our gospel lesson this morning we read John’s words directed to the Pharisees and the Sadducees who made up the spiritual leadership of the Jewish people. He called them a “brood of vipers” (Matthew 3:7) and he warned them of judgment to come, saying the ax is already laid at the root of the trees, (Matthew 3:10) indicating that in their outwardly upright lives they actually lacked true and sincere repentance.

So maybe that is what comes to mind when we think of John, but that is a very incomplete picture. The preaching of repentance includes a call to faith, to faith in the gospel. We should remember that John was preaching by the Jordan River and was there baptizing people for the remission of their sins. In all John’s preaching he was very direct in preparing the way for Jesus and ultimately, literally pointing at Jesus, and directing people to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) John came in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The proclamation of the truth of the Scriptures,

both law and gospel not only characterized, but **defined** the ministry of John the Baptist.

It is our custom to review the message of John the Baptist in our preparation for Christmas and Jesus' coming to us. So this morning we celebrate this --

THEME: Advent Blessing: the Joy and Peace of Believing.

This blessing, the joy and peace that comes with believing, doesn't just happen in a vacuum. That is the first point that Paul makes in our text, He emphasizes for us --

I. The Essential Role of the Scriptures -- for our faith and in our lives.

We may take the Scriptures for granted. On the other hand we may understand the Bible is the Word of God and that the Lord communicates His wisdom to us in His Word. Even knowing that, we may fail to appreciate just how important the Old Testament Scriptures are. Hear once again the inspired words of the Apostle Paul from our text.

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Paul is emphasizing **especially** the Old Testament Scriptures and how they were written for our learning, OUR learning, not just for other people that lived a long, long time ago. We need to comprehend exactly what Paul is saying about gaining patience and comfort. The word here for patience is translated by others as "endurance." That is a good translation because it conveys the idea and being involved in something for a long time, and not for an hour or a day. It also conveys the idea of a burden or a weight that one carries. Indeed it often comes in life that we carry a burden. It may be that we have a certain

malady that makes life more than challenging, but rather down right difficult. It may be that we have a condition that makes us vulnerable to certain temptations, or to despair. Many people carry such burdens for many years and even decades. We are told of the sufferings and trials and temptations that faced people of old, and how the Lord delivered them in His time, in His way, in His faithfulness to His words and promises.

It is through the Scriptures that the Spirit leads **us** in all truth, and the Spirit builds us up spiritually that we might endure with patience whatever cross may be ours to endure, and that we will be comforted in knowing that the love of God is with us. In the Old Testament Scriptures we have the absolute record of God's faithfulness, that He has fulfilled all His promises of old, that He will faithfully watch over us and in His way deliver us from every evil.

Oh, but we need to learn patient endurance not only for ourselves, but for others as well.

The peace and joy that comes to us as an Advent blessing is given to us to bestow upon others in their affliction and temptations, and even to restore a brother in time of sin that they might come to recall the peace of sins forgiven for the penitent sinner. Paul encourages this in our text.

Romans 15:5-7 "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."

This is the same idea now carried over from enduring our own trials and tribulations to enduring the challenges that our Christian brother or sister in Christ is struggling with in their lives. It could be grief, it could be a sin, it could be a personality disorder, It could be a physical condition that cannot be helped, It could be a bad habit or just the

way they engage other people, and it will require that same kind of patience and endurance the Lord has had with us, that the Spirit has taught us and worked within us for ourselves.

As much as we may like to dote on our own problems we don't always have a great deal of patience for the distress that someone else feels. There is so much here for us to learn. First we are **one** body in Christ. Our fellowship is built around a common faith in Christ Jesus, and agreement upon the truth of God's Word. That is what makes it possible for us to glorify God with one mind and one mouth. It is not based upon our personal thinking but upon the truth of Christ.

With that we are then enabled by the Holy Spirit to receive others just as Christ has received us. He has received us with grace and longsuffering mercy. He puts up with a great deal in me, and so also with us all, for we all daily sin much. Each day we are led by the Spirit to confess our sin, and renounce the sin in our lives and graciously receive forgiveness. Consider how Paul addressed this for us in other epistles. In Colossians we read:

Colossians 3:12-13 "Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*."

Do you see in these words the joy and peace of believing? It is not only the joy and peace we possess in our hearts, but it is how we embrace our brother and sister in Christ, not only when everything is going great, but when there is distress or pain, or sin and guilt. Then we put on tender mercies and kindness, and humility, and meekness and longsuffering. Then we bear with one another, and forgive, Not only forgive when someone confesses a sin that doesn't involve us, forgive when we are the victim of

that sin. We have sinned against Christ, and Christ with much love secured the forgiveness of our sins so that He daily and richly forgives us far more than anyone has ever or will ever sin against us.

Again we read Paul's encouragement for us in Galatians:

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Even when, or especially when someone falls into sin, even gross sin, public sin, repeated sin, we approach them as loving brothers, with humility and gentleness.

This is bringing The Advent blessing of Peace and Joy extended to others through us, for this isn't about peace between nations or even in a community, it is about assuring another sinner of the peace that they have with God, because of Jesus coming into the world to be our Savior. To know the love of God, to know His forgiveness brings peace and joy.

II. Jesus Unifies Us in the Joy and Peace only He Brings.

People see differences. Not just the little differences that make us all recognizable in the way that human characteristics are arranged on our face. No, people see differences in race, in language, in ethnicity, in social class and sophistication. People tend to make a big deal out of these differences, when in fact they are inconsequential.

Among early Christians the most noted difference was between being Jewish or Gentile Christians. Jewish Christians, having been raised with the ceremonial law automatically regarded these regulations of great

significance, including especially the rite of circumcision. From days of old God had commanded the Children of Israel to keep separate from the children of this world, and not to intermarry. There was a difference, and that difference was that they were the people of God, and the world served dumb idols fashioned by the hand of man. But now that Christ had come into the world, and both Jew and Gentile believers found life and salvation by faith in Christ, there was no difference. The difference had been taken out of the way by Christ, through faith in Christ! They were one in Christ.

Romans 15: 8-9 “Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* to the fathers, ⁹ and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy,”

We are to receive as Christ has received us, with love and acceptance; not the acceptance of impenitence becoming the partaker of another man’s sin, but the genuine love that covers a multitude of sins of the penitent sinner. For there is no difference as Paul explained earlier in this same epistle to the Romans.

Romans 3:22-24 For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Whether we are Jew or Gentile, we are sinners saved by the grace of God in Christ. He redeemed us from the curse of the law. Jesus not only kept the law, He was and is the fulfillment of the law, particularly the ceremonial law., Paul wrote: “*So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*” (Colossians 2:16-17)

The Lord regards all believers in Christ the same; they are His children and heirs together of the grace of life. To

emphasize that this is not a new thing, but the fulfillment of God's plan for the salvation of the world, Paul cited a number of Old Testament Scriptures which, as he reminded us, were written for our learning. In them there is a progression of thought expressing God's determined will to have people of the gentile world, all of us, glorify God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as the God of our salvation.

And where do we end up? With that blessing that I frequently repeat right after the sermon. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (v. 13)

Our Redeemer God is the God of Hope. He alone can fill you with joy and peace through faith in Christ Jesus. This faith comes by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit working through that Advent gospel of Jesus' coming into this world, and into our hearts that we might have life in His name. This is our Advent Blessing.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.