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**Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Text:** Romans 8:18-25

**Theme:** Will it get better?

 If there was a Fear Index, what do you think the current level would be? As of today, the 26th of July 2020 I think the level would be through the roof. Will this COVID-19 pandemic ever end? There is so much news, on the TV, Radio, internet. Much of it is scary! It seems to be only bad news. Opinions are polarized. Mask or no mask? School districts, open or not? People are out of work. Businesses are struggling. There is trouble in our big cities with crime. You might be tempted to throw your hands in the air and say; “Is it all worth it? **Will it ever get better again?”**

 Paul, in our text for today, is addressing that very thought. His readers were dealing with a lot of fear. There was the mounting pressure from a public who were backed by the government. The Roman government declared the religion was illegal. It did not result in just a fine or a small jail sentence, they were tortured and killed in horrific ways.

 You can almost feel the balloon ready to pop. Their trials and struggles seem to multiply. The sole cause of it all was that they were Christians. Paul is concerned that they would begin questioning their faith, question whether all of this was worth it, question if it **will ever get better?**

Sound familiar? It your balloon about to break? Is your frustration level overflowing? Are you afraid? **Will it ever get better?**

 Paul’s message to the Roman Christians, and to us today is, **of course**, that, yes, it is all worth it. **It will get better!**  In fact it’s more than worth it. Listen to what he says, **“For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us”**

 Paul makes a comparison. Trying to compare things of values that cannot be compared. If you need water, can you compare the value drop of water against lake Michigan? If you look at wealth, can you judge the difference between a handful of coal and a handful of diamonds?

 Not worth it? That is, not worth comparing! What is waiting for us is much better! Paul makes it clear. But, it’s very easy to become distracted. We think that this life is the be-all, end-all of everything there is. That is what the Devil want us to think. Eat, drink and be merry! That is what you need to do, to have it all! And when it is not. We get frustrated.

 But what a wretched state that would be! Remember that word from last Sunday? Paul called himself a wretched man. Why? Because of sin! I looked up the word wretched. It means to be in a very unhappy, miserable or unfortunate. As much as we try to pretend otherwise, this life is horrendous. We have pain and misery, sickness and disease. They ravage our bodies, and we are often miserable. We groan. Yes, that is the word Paul uses in our text. **We groan!**

 Why? Because this world is getting worse. It is decaying! When God created it, it was perfect, but, sin, yes, **our sin ruined it.** Sin’s very presence in this world is why things fall apart, break, and die! “**19In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. 20For creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope 21that even creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption, in order to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time. 23And not only creation, but also we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we eagerly await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body**

 But more to the point, the sins that you and I commit against each other bring suffering and disaster to this life. Sin upon sin. It appears as if the whole world has lost its mind. Especially here in our own country. Everyone is so focused on themselves. We don’t see how we’re hurting and destroying each other. So, we groan. And we should groan. We know what we deserve. Death!

 A woman walks into a doctor’s office. She schedules an appointment and sits down it the waiting room. When it’s her turn to talk to the doctor, she describes all of her symptoms, and they’re unlike anything he’s heard before. The doctor runs a few tests and steps out of the room. He comes back later, and says, ‘Well I have good news and bad news.’ The woman says, ‘I’ll hear the good news first please.’ The doctor replies ‘The good news is we’re naming a disease after you! You will be famous. The bad news. It has no cure!” [source: https://worstjokesever.com].

 So, frustrated, and scared, what is next? Is there any hope for a better future? Paul tells us Yes! We have hope. God has given it to us. But that hope is not like the hope about which we often speak. “I hope my football team does well this year.” “I hope it doesn’t rain on our picnic.” or “I hope tomorrow will be better than yesterday.” There’s no confidence in any of those statements. Will they truly happen?

 But when God gives hope, it is a certain hope. It’s waiting for something that’s coming. **24Indeed, it was for this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he already sees? 25But if we hope for something we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patient endurance.**  It is sure. It is certain!

But you might be thinking to yourself, Pastor how can you be sure? Well, we’re not playing “Let’s Make a Deal.” Perhaps you remember that game show on TV from a while back or the more recent version. In that show the contestant trades something to get a prize. Then they are allowed to take a chance and trade what they have for a bigger prize. Sometimes the prize behind the curtain was worth trading the other prize for—maybe it’s a new car or a vacation. But there’s also the possibility that they’ll trade a handful of cash for a plastic bowl, a roll of tinfoil, or a broken tricycle. Unlike the game show, though, there’s no doubt what’s coming. Paul says we’re standing here with that handful of coal and by God’s grace we will be given a handful of diamonds.

A new, a better life is coming. We know that to be true. It is in heaven waiting for us. Where God promises a new heaven and a new earth. Were all things will be right again and perfect.

 But it’s not going to come to us here in this life. The world we live in is not going to be able to solve every problem that comes up. And we’re not going to put an end to sin on this earth. But listen, we don’t have to, because God did. Even though we ruined everything, God fixed it. When Jesus came. He took the punishment for every sin. He paid the price. He took the pain and misery and guilt for everything that was and will be done wrong.

Jesus has restored us. Through faith in him we are the children of God. Every time that we’ve hurt someone, God has forgiven us. Every time someone else has hurt us, God has forgiven them. God has fixed the sin problem. Now we can live a better life here on earth showing others the problem is fixed. Showing others that they to can be a heir to eternal live.

And as we end this message, take this to heart. He has given us his Holy Spirit. Living in us. And he enables us to bear up under the pain, the disease, the heartache, the frustration and the fear. Listen to these words. Not mine but God’s: **Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we  have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  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.  Not only so, but we**[***c***](https://biblehub.com/niv/romans/5.htm#footnotes)**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, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.**

Hope! We know something better is coming. Jesus has given us real, certain hope!

**Amen**

**First Lesson**

**Isaiah 55:10-11**

10Just as the rain and the snow come down from the sky

and do not return there

unless they first water the earth, make it give birth, and cause it to sprout,

so that it gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

11in the same way my word that goes out from my mouth

will not return to me empty.

Rather, it will accomplish whatever I please,

and it will succeed in the purpose for which I sent it.

**Second Lesson**

**Romans 8:18–25**

18For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. 19In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. 20For creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope 21that even creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption, in order to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

22For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time. 23And not only creation, but also we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we eagerly await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24Indeed, it was for this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he already sees? 25But if we hope for something we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patient endurance.

**Gospel**

**Matthew 13:1–9, 18-23**

That same day Jesus left the house and was sitting by the sea. 2A large crowd gathered around him. So he stepped into a boat and sat down, while all the people stood on the shore. 3He told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen, a sower went out to sow. 4As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it. 5Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. Immediately the seed sprang up, because the soil was not deep. 6But when the sun rose, the seed was scorched. Because it had no root, it withered away. 7Other seed fell among thorns. The thorns grew up and choked it. 8But some seed fell on good ground and produced grain: some one hundred times, some sixty, and some thirty times more than was sown. 9Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

18“So listen carefully to the parable of the sower. 19When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the Evil One comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the seed that was sown along the path. 20The seed that was sown on rocky ground is the person who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21yet he is not deeply rooted and does not endure. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. 22The seed that was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word, but the worry of this world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it produces no fruit. 23But the seed that was sown on the good ground is the one who continues to hear and understand the word. Indeed he continues to produce fruit: some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times more than was sown.”