

This Sunday's texts:

[Isaiah 44:6-8](#)

[Romans 8:18-27](#)

[Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#)

**The Hope of Glory**  
**Pastor Felicity Grover**  
**July 23, 2023**

The Gospel reading for today is from the gospel of Matthew Chapter 13 beginning at the 24th verse:

<sup>24</sup>Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup>But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup>When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

<sup>27</sup>The owner's servant came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you so good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' <sup>28</sup>'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' <sup>29</sup>'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" ... <sup>36</sup>Then He left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." <sup>37</sup>He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup>The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sews them is the devil. The harvest is at the end of the age and the harvesters are angels. <sup>40</sup>As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup>They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear"

The gospel of Our Lord. Grace and peace to you from my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I am so blessed and so thankful for the privilege to be here today with all of you, as we continue on this journey that you have been taking through the book of Romans. Over the past 6 weeks, you've been listening to Pastor Jim and Pastor Joe share the truth of the Gospel as heard in Paul's letter to the Romans and how through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God has shaped and guided, and blessed the lives of every Christian. Martin Luther considered Paul's letter to the Romans to be the chief part of the New Testament and the purest gospel, that is,

the good news of salvation for everyone who has faith, for all who believed that Christ died for their sins and have been set free from the bondage of sin and death.

By grace through faith, we have been set in a right relationship with God and His beloved children. We follow Christ along the same path that He followed that will lead us to share in His glory. That path, however, is not an easy path. It is a path of suffering as Jesus himself taught that apart from his suffering and death, there can be no glory. The glory of Christ is the splendor and radiance and power of His resurrection and the full revelation of all that God has promised us, the glory that we will share with Christ.

Last week, you heard how, as believers of Christ, you have all received the spirit of adoption as children of God. That is the present reality and truth of your status as Christians, but you haven't yet come into your full inheritance. When Christ returns in glory, the fullness of your status as God's children will be revealed and you will be glorified with Christ, through the resurrection and redemption of your bodies. That is the hope of glory. We can only imagine how wonderful that will be. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the disciples, Peter, James, and John a sneak peek of His divine glory when He took them up the mountaintop and was transfigured before them. Luther wrote that the Transfiguration nearly burst the eyes from their sockets, bringing hope to the Christian heart.

This hope that the Gospel offers to all who trust in Christ for salvation is the focus of our text from Romans today. Christian hope is the hope of glory, a hope that enables us to endure the sufferings and groanings<sup>1</sup> from this life, and the hope that when our Lord returns in glory with great power, we will be glorified with Him, and our bodies will be completely redeemed, conforming to the likeness of Christ.

So here we are. We are suffering and groaning as we wait in hope of glory. But do you know what? It is perfectly okay to groan. Groaning is our best prayer. It draws us into Christ's unfolding story of redemption. Our groaning helps us to get from our present weakness and suffering to our glorious inheritance.

We all groan. And creation groans. And even the Holy Spirit groans. It is okay to groan. Paul declares to us in verse 18 that he considers that the suffering of this present time is not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. "For," Paul says, as he goes on to support his declaration, beginning in verse 19, "creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the

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<sup>1</sup> [Romans 8:22-23](#)

will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and bought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”<sup>2</sup> We are not alone in our suffering nor in our groaning and nor in our waiting. For all of creation is waiting with us, imagining the glorious future that awaits all God's children.

So why does creation long so avidly for the revelation of God's sons and daughters? The answer to that question can be found in Genesis 3:17-18 where it is written “To Adam He said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat from it,” Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil, you will eat from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you.” So as a consequence of the fall of Man, God pronounced a curse on the earth. The curse was not directed at Adam, but at the ground because of Adam. Creation, therefore, has been subjected to frustration or futility, meaning that it has not fulfilled the purpose for which it was made by God and is held in bondage to corruption and decay.

So creation, like humanity, is suffering and groaning. But it is not without hope, the hope of a glorious future that will liberate the whole of creation from its futility and decay. The point here is that not only will believers be delivered from corruption and suffering in this broken world, but the creation itself will also be redeemed. As the curse of sin is removed and creation is restored to the former beauty it had before sin entered the world.

Paul uses the metaphor of labor pains to describe the period of turmoil, pain, and agony that causes all creation to groan as it waits in eager expectation. Every mother here knows exactly how intense these waves of pain are and fathers, [Pastor] Joe are you listening, you know or should know never to try to have a conversation with your wife while she's in labor because she is groaning. Amen? We know that the outcome of birth pains is the hope of new life and that the outcome of our present suffering and groaning is also the hope of new and eternal life.

God is making all things new and we can be sure of that, as Revelation 21:4 says, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Our pain and suffering will be a distant memory in the light of the glory that is coming. Christ by his suffering not only saved us from the devil, death, and sin, but His suffering is an example that we ought to follow in our sufferings. Every Christian

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<sup>2</sup> [Romans 8:19-22](#)

must be aware that suffering will not fail to come at some point in our lives, for everyone suffers. We often hear people ask questions like “Why does God allow so much suffering?” or “Why is this happening to me or a loved one or these innocent young children or to the elderly or to you fill in the blank?”

Suffering was never intended by God. It is a product of the Fall, a consequence of sin against God. Suffering which comes from the Greek word *pathéma*, describes what happens to a person and must be endured. It refers to the pain, anguish, distress, hardships, hurts emotional and physical, trauma, and the death and decay of our bodies. These are all experiences that we actually feel, touch, and see in this present time. We do not choose to suffer, nor can we avoid suffering. No one, not even Christians, is immune to suffering.

Then we also ask how people get through a crisis or tragedy or whatever is causing them to suffer without faith. In baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit, a gift that was promised to everyone who hears the word of Christ and believes in Him. In Paul's letter to Ephesians, chapter 1, Paul says that we have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, by having received the first fruits of the Holy Spirit, we have been given a full taste of what it will be like when we are glorified with Christ. So while we are still living in these fallen bodies that are prone to temptation, sin, and suffering, we have the sure and certain hope of glory because the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us. Those, however, who are not believers and have not received the gift of the Holy Spirit, follow a path of suffering that leads them to a dead end. They have no hope.

In this world, we suffer as a result of our own sinfulness, or our own poor choices. We suffer as a result of natural disasters, pandemics, famine, war, rejection, abuse, economic distress, injury, cancer, disease, and a host of other troubles. You and I, we all ache for an end to the pain and suffering. As sons and daughters of God, we will be insulted, falsely accused, and persecuted on account of our faith in Christ. Here in America, we are blessed with incredible freedom to gather for worship, prayer, study the Bible, and enjoy fellowship with other Christians. While there's been increasing hostility towards Christians over the recent year and we are experiencing some discomfort, inconvenience, social ostracization, and silencing, our suffering pales in comparison to the level of extreme suffering that countless global Christians face every day and even their suffering pales in comparison to the glory that awaits them.

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<sup>3</sup> [Ephesians 1:13-14](#)

We can take heart because our hope is secured. Christ has overcome the world and we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit who works in and through us to help us to endure our suffering and give us hope, the hope of glory, and the redemption of our bodies. So we are suffering and groaning as we wait in hope of glory.

Judy's life was a story of suffering and hope. Judy had taken care of her mother who had died from Huntington's Disease, a genetic, progressive, degenerative disease that destroys the cells of the brain and one's functional ability. Judy herself had inherited the same disease. She saw what her own suffering was going to be like. Once she reached the early advanced stage of this disease, she told her husband that she wanted to move into a skilled nursing home where she could be cared for 24/7. She spent the last four and a half years of her life there, isolated from her family, from her community, and from her church. In the face of her suffering and struggling with Huntington's Disease, Judy had hope, a hope that was born out of her confident faith, belief, and trust in the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the glory that awaited her as a child of God. The Holy Spirit of our Lord sustained her throughout all her pain and suffering and helped her to live courageously and victoriously and patiently endure this cruel and incurable disease. I visited with her every week, watching as she eventually became immobile and unable to communicate, except by way of groaning. Sometimes seeing how weak fragile and helpless she was, all I could do was groan with her, as I prayed, asking God to help her.

Remembering what Paul tells us, "The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words,"<sup>4</sup> While we all suffer in different ways, we are a lot like Judy, often unable to verbally express our pain in our prayers. So we groan, longing for renewal and restoration of our broken and weary bodies and relief from all that is causing us to suffer.

A few weeks ago, I visited Abe, a faithful and beloved brother in Christ who was 100 years old and just recently went home to our Lord. As I sat at his bedside, Abe, who was blind, pulled the bed covers up over his head, so that I could not see him. He was crying. I could hear him. I heard him groaning and occasionally, I could hear him cry out for help.

When our suffering weighs us down and our hope grows dim and all we can see is our pain, we all just want to pull the covers over our heads, groan and cry out for help. But lo and behold, the Holy Spirit groans too, helping us to see

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<sup>4</sup> [Romans 8:26 \(ESV\)](#)

through eyes of faith and hope, the goodness and mercy of Our Lord. One day, we will all see the fullness of His glory, but for now, all we can do is wait, wait for the fulfillment of all that God has promised to us in Christ. We wait in hope of glory. The Holy Spirit helps us wait, groaning with us and for us in our suffering.

How comforting and encouraging it is to know that we have such a good and gracious and loving God who sees our suffering and knows our hearts and is so deeply touched when He hears our groaning and our cries for help. Our groans express what our words cannot. But they are not meaningless. Nor are the groanings of the Holy Spirit, for when the Holy Spirit of God groans, He makes our suffering His own suffering and joins us to the sufferings of Christ our Lord and Savior. The groanings of the Holy Spirit help us to realize how close He is. His powerful presence is at work in us and through us, as He enters into the depths of our pain and into the longings of our hearts and groans with us. He is our strength in weakness, our help in times of trouble, and the light in the darkness of our sufferings. He fills our hearts with the hope of Glory.

So let me end with words of encouragement from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 4: "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."<sup>5</sup>

Pray with me. Lord Jesus Christ, help us to be still and to wait patiently and eagerly for Your return. We offer to You all of our brokenness and our pain and are suffering with just a deep sigh. Lord Jesus, help us to be prayerfully attentive to You and the groanings of Your Holy Spirit and to trust in Your promises and in the hope of glory. And as the Apostle Paul himself prayed, "May the God of all hope fill [us] with all joy and peace and believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit [we] may abound in hope."<sup>6</sup> Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> [2 Corinthians 4:16-17](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Romans 15:13 \(ESV\)](#)