

May 23, 2015      “Resting In The Grace of God”      Romans 5:1-11

Confession is good for the soul. So I need to confess I have been very selfish about this morning's service. I trust that you know that I love the choruses in The Master Chorus Book. And I enjoy the praise songs that I know, that are in the St. Andrew's Spiritual Songs, collection. But this morning I wanted to sing the hymns that we have sung, from the Book of Praise. That says more about what lies before me in this coming week than anything else.

I also wanted to share with you something of where I am in terms of my state of mind, were I a Baptist or a member of the Salvation Army to testify before you about my walk of faith and the current state of my soul. Frankly, “it is well,...it is well with my soul.” a number of my friends have asked me (none from this church by the way), if I am apprehensive about my upcoming surgery. So far as I can tell, the answer to that question is “No I am not apprehensive. No matter what occurs I cannot lose. Jesus Christ is Lord.” I am doing my best to rest in the grace of God which is what I believe the apostle Paul meant when he wrote, “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.”

It can sound like so much religious mumbo jumbo, Bible speak, religious jargon, that veils rather than reveals the heart. So here is what I mean when I say I am trying to rest in the grace of God, having gained access by faith into this grace in which I now stand.

I understand I did not have a right to life when I was born. I was not innocent as a baby or a child. I am not an innocent man. Even in the earliest decade and a half of my life when I would

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have claimed to have no faith at all...certainly no faith that focussed on the Lord Jesus Christ and His accomplishments on my behalf at Calvary....even then I somehow had arrived at the conclusion that if there was a God in the heavens, He had given me life for reasons I had yet to discover. But that comes a lot closer to fatalism than it does to Christian faith. So I say to you as a Christian and a Christian pastor I understand that I did not deserve life. I did not earn it. It was given to me. It was gifted to me.

On one level it was the result of the simple truth that my parents loved each other. On a whole different level I have for over 53 years understood God gave it to me. Life. And through His Son Jesus Christ, He gave me the gift of eternal life. And by means of His Holy Spirit, God gave me the power to live life as His servant, His servant in the midst of a community to be served in His name and His way. And I must share with you that in the attempt to live as God's servant, I know I have never been perfect. My service has never been good enough not to be in need of the saving grace of God.

What I am trying to say is that I have never suffered from the delusion that I had earned my relationship with God. I have never believed my standing in the Church ( a circle that is far bigger than The Presbyterian Church In Canada) was something I had earned through my knowledge, my faith or my effort. I have always been blessed and recognized I was a blessed recipient at the hand of the God who loves and saves and sustains.

So when I say I am doing my best to rest in the grace of God, what I am really saying is I am trying to remember in what is a moment of crisis, that God's grace has always been greater than my

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part, my effort, my planning, my doing in terms of trying to live my life....and get it right. My Lord, who is Jesus, has always been close at hand, leading and guiding me, shaping and molding me, even when I could not see it happening, or understand the details of experience. Knowing that that has been the case, I am attempting to rest in the Biblical truth that that is the case.

Barbara and I have been through a lot in the past 12 months. From the day that her brother Douglas was diagnosed with cancer we knew we were going to lose him. We lost him on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2014. When we thought we were in danger of losing her brother Ken, the Lord graciously gave him back to us. It did not occur to me that I would come face to face in a few months with my own mortality. And yet, as a young Andre Crouch wrote (and by the way we lost Andre Crouch in the last 12 months too) “ through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in

Jesus, I've learned to trust in God. That is what it means to rest in the grace of God.

Doug's passing is part of my experience of God's grace. Committing his remains to the earth in Thunder Bay a little under 2 weeks ago is part of my "through it all experience." So was Ken's restoration to health. So was my diagnosis back in March, Maundy Thursday morning. So was the trip to Israel....walking in the footsteps of Jesus. So has been the experience of serving this congregation, sharing the journey of faith with you. I have received so much more than I have given, so much more than I will ever be able to give....it is the grace of God, exceeding by every measure our efforts. I rest in the simple reality that God is so good, that the love of Jesus is so profound, that the presence of the Holy Spirit is so marvelous...especially when we need miracles.

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The message of the Lord's Supper is that Jesus died to redeem. He died to redeem those who believe in Him. He died and He rose to redeem those who are not sure what is believable and what is not. He died and He rose the 3<sup>rd</sup> day to redeem those who do not believe He is the Christ...those who we tend to cast in the roll of being His enemies. For you...for me. He died and rose to redeem us. I am doing my best to rest in this grace of God. Long, long ago I knew that I believed. Now is the time for trust...resting in that grace that is so much greater than anything I or we for that matter, deserve. I have been honoured by God in being allowed to serve among you. I look forward to serving among you in time yet to unfold....resting in the grace of God.

Let us pray.

Precious, precious, Lord Jesus. Watch over us during the time in which we are apart. Watch over us and give us the eyes that can see that your grace touches us in the best of times, and gets us through what we perceive to be the worst of times. Minister to us in the mystery of the Supper that we might remember you, in all the parts of our journey.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen