

Prayer of the Week:

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your grace that your faithful people offer you true and laudable service: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, Proper Thirteen)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Christian Hope

Romans 8:18-25 (NRSV)

August 2nd, 2020

Glory Revealed & Glorified

Paul states that our present suffering isn't worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed **to** us (vs. 18).

Paul seems to be saying that no matter how bad the nature of my suffering, the goodness of new creation will be greater.

In his book "The Patient Ferment of the Early Church" author Alan Kreider argues that the earliest Christians knew the value of patient hope. This moment in history is a real opportunity for Christians to display a unique hope and patience. And to display the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, self-control. It is precisely when the world seems to be falling apart that our confidence in God's ability to work in the midst of all things is put to the test.

Paul, then uses glory in different way. He says that creation itself groans and awaits for the children of God to be glorified (vs. 21). We learned last week

that glory, when applied to humanity, refers to an elevation of status or authority as God's co-rulers over creation.

Illustration: The children in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* are elevated as co-rulers over Narnia with Aslan.

The whole creation sits in bondage to death and decay. It groans for redemption and for the children of God to be glorified and take their rightful place as co-rulers with God. Suffering is universal to life, but we look forward to a day when all things will be made new and we can be restored to the glory (authority) God intended for us.

Hope

The text invites to hope, but what is Christian hope? There are a number of thoughts (misconceptions) out there:

Escape: We'll be going along the time space continuum when all of the sudden God will take us up into the sky and take us to an eternal place that is apart from this world.

Optimism: There is a plane of reality on which all of us live, but if we can adjust our attitude toward something more positive, then we'll be able to get by.

Progress: As history goes along, we should be getting better at sharing life together. Hope is found in the confidence that with the passing of time, we'll learn what we need to learn to overcome challenges that we face.

Restoration: Restoration is often seen as a circle - returning back to that which was. But, God's plan is not for us to return, but to dynamically move us forward.

Resurrection: Biblical hope is found in resurrection. When the world was headed fully toward death and the ways of death, THEN GOD.... Resurrection is God intersecting human history and setting it back on the right course. Resurrection is God bringing everything to its completion; setting the world right in such a way that even death is overcome and defeated.

Hope is the ability to be honest about where we are and yet confident of what is to come. Paul says it this way: "we can't hope for that which we cannot see." (vs. 24)

Illustration: *The Lord of the Rings* talks of the "growing shadow" in the land. Things eventually become so dark, there is little evidence or light to move forward. Yet, this small fellowship, separated and broken, continues on their journey in hope.

As Christians we are called to wait in patience for the things that are to be revealed. And we do so on the basis that Christ is risen! Resurrection of Christ was the downpayment of new creation.

These are difficult days as we face racial tensions, economic struggle, public health crisis, and division. But, God is at work in the midst of all things, working with us, to make all things new. So, we continue to hope for the day when all the sad things will come untrue, the shadow will be lifted, and God's new world will be revealed.