

**Message - 06/12/22**  
**Prov 8:1-4, 22-31; Ps 8; Ro 5:1-5; Jn 16:12-15**  
**06-12-22 Trinity Sunday**

*Years ago, NBC's Moscow correspondent, Irving R. Levine heard a Russian greet a friend with: "Have you heard? Pravda is running a contest for the best political joke. The first prize is 20 years."* Reader's Digest

Suffering is a fact of this world. We have before us always Jesus' gracious and loving willingness to suffer – for us and for all of humanity who will come to know and believe in Him by our witness. Do we shrink back from suffering? Sure we do. That night in the garden, when Jesus was in agony of prayer bowing down before His heavenly Father, He told His disciples:

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt 6:41)

Our flesh is weak. We do not seek out suffering. Yet, suffering comes to us in various ways. You suffer when see and hear of the people of Ukraine struggling with the cruel aggression and violence of Putin's army. I know you do. It wears us down to hear of it day after day, month after month. We suffer as people, as mothers and fathers, as citizens of our nation when perpetrators of hatred and evil destroy our neighbors and children and teachers and doctors. We suffer when the mentally ill unleash evil upon the innocent. We cannot escape it.

The Apostle Paul reveals in the midst of disease, poverty and lack, the grace of God the Father is poured out on us in Jesus Christ. Our Savior brings us into the kingdom of God – and we bask in God's presence, His glory – but especially we are called to share this grace, this glory with everyone around us. Our hope is our amazing transformation: we become agents, vessels of God's grace. And I ask you plainly, isn't this the meaning and purpose of your life – of my life? Every form of earthly glory – every reward or trophy or advantage offered by the world – cannot bring joy or righteousness. Only God's kingdom overcomes the sufferings of this life. Only God can satisfy your soul.

Paul further claims that we boast in this suffering. Wait, we boast in our suffering? The Greek boast -- *καυχώμεθα* (*kauchōmethay'*) means more than just arrogantly boasting that we have suffered and have also seen God's glory. It means that we exult and rejoice in God's purpose for us that we are counted worthy and faithful to stand in place for the Gospel of the Kingdom of God – through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are then baptized in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. – our Triune God – the Trinity.

Can the Lord count on you and me to show up and to continue to be faithful witnesses to Him as we move through the trouble and suffering we face day by day? Have you and I shown ourselves to be trustworthy to follow through on the wisdom we have been given by the Holy Spirit? We learn as we remain faithful through years of time and continuous suffering in this world. We have the reality of God's presence and His glory now, not just later in the next life.

Strengthening does not take place for everyone who suffers. Some people, and I know a few, are completely broken by the suffering and loss that this life brings them. We can only pray for the broken ones. We can offer encouragement to trust God in everything.

To my broken brothers and sisters, I say again: We have been made right with God because of our faith. So we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through our faith, Christ has brought us into that blessing of God's grace that we now enjoy. And we are happy because of the hope we have of sharing God's glory. And we also have joy with our troubles because we know that these troubles produce patience. And patience produces character, and character produces hope. And this hope will never disappoint us because God has poured out his love to fill our hearts. God gave us his love through the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us. (Ro 5:1-5 ICB)

Amen.