

Romans 5:6-15
"Just the Right Time"
Pentecost 3 (Proper 6A)

June 18, 2023
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.
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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly"
(Romans 5:6).

At the right time. At the right time, Christ Jesus died for you! God's Word speaks much about His timing. In Mark 1, following the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus said, ***"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel"*** (Mark 1:15). Through the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul proclaims in Galatians 4: ***"When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons"*** (Galatians 4:4-5).

The Triune God is above time. He controls time. So, He knows the right time for everything, since He is in control of the seasons.

At just the right time ***"God show[ed] His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"*** (Romans 5:8).

That's the right time? Shouldn't the right time be when humanity follows His Word? Shouldn't the right time have been when all of humanity chooses to serve God? That's what we, in our sinful nature, may believe. We, in our sinful nature, think that it is possible to love God and obey His commandments. That's what the Israelites believed at Mount Sinai who said, ***"All that the Lord has spoken we will do"*** (Exodus 19:8). How well did they do in keeping God's commandments? Not too good.

Now, most of these Israelites were eyewitnesses of all the power and majesty of God. They witnessed God's power in bringing them out of bondage in Egypt. They witnessed God's power in bringing them safely across the dry ground of the Red Sea.

But before all of that, how many of these Israelites truly trusted in God? Yes, there was Moses and Aaron, but how many of God's chosen people would have rather remained in Pharaoh's bondage than be saved? I would say most or close to all. They were used to their condition. They disliked it, but they didn't know of any way out, so they just continued in slavery.

All the while, God cared for them. When it was just the right time, God rescued His people through His miracles, signs, and wonders. The Israelites did nothing. God did it all.

Even after all of that, the Israelites made a promise to God that they would do all that the Lord commanded them. Did they fulfill that promise? No. They were weak. They were sinners.

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly”
(Romans 5:6).

This is love. God loved us while we still hated Him. When Christ came, it was just the right time. Humanity was weak, powerless, sick, feeble. Humanity didn't care at all about God. Despite that, God cared for humanity. When we were powerless to save ourselves at just the right time, Christ died for us.

Today, we may feel the same. How could God care about me? I am a poor, wretched human being. I can't do any good. I try to do good, but I mess it up. Why would God care about this country? We have turned from Him. We worship man rather than God. We worship nature rather than God.

Despite what we may think, God still cares for you, despite your unfaithfulness. So, just when we don't care at all about God, God shows His love for you ***“in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*** (Romans 5:8). God is not against you. He is for you. God is not out to get you, but to have you as His own. The cross reveals that He is your friend.

In our reading from Romans, we see God's grace beautifully explained. Despite all of our faults and being sworn enemies to God by doing what we want, when we want to do it, Christ came according to God's timetable, and not in response to any human choosing or planning.

Christ came when we were powerless. Even if we had wanted Him to come, which was not the case, we couldn't have done anything positive to bring it about. But the infinitely worse situation was that by nature we didn't want anything to do with God and His promised Savior, because we were “ungodly.” And yet, for such ungodly people as us, the Father sent His Son to die.

This is one-way love, the kind of love that is so hard to find in the human experience. It could happen. But it's so very rare. We hold our lives dear. We don't want to let our life go. If we would die for someone, we would like to first make sure they were worth the sacrifice of your life – a person we cared about so much to risk your life to save them. Think of those pregnant women who are struck with cancer and refuse cancer treatments in order to save their child. They risk their life, so their child could live.

We could have gone on in our weakness of sin, but God couldn't have that, He wants everyone to love Him and be with Him forever. So, at just the right time, when humanity would have nothing to do with God, God would have everything to do with us.

But what caused man to get this way? What caused man to turn away from God? Well, it was all through one single man named Adam. Adam is the earthly father of humanity. As the father of humanity, all of his descendants share his fallen human nature. So, as Adam sinned and turned aside from the good to which God called him, human nature became corrupt, despising God's righteousness, pursuing sin, and suffering shame. This is the experience of all mankind, since we are all descendants of Adam.

Due to Adam's fall, we became children of wrath. We would rather follow our depraved desires than what God has called us to do.

This is also why the birth of Jesus from the virgin Mary is so significant. Through the virgin birth, Adam's nature is bypassed by Jesus since Jesus is not begotten of a man, but of the Holy Spirit. Although Jesus receives human nature from Mary, He avoids the particular corruption of this human nature by being conceived not of Adam or of one of His descendants, but of God. Thus, Jesus is made like us in every way, even tempted as we are, yet without sin, without enmity toward God, without corruption of the human nature.

As sinners, death is our lot. Death enters the world through sin and spreads to all men because all sin. Thus, we are weak and have no power to keep ourselves alive. We are sinners with only one destination: eternal death.

Yet, the free gift of salvation is not like the trespass. When Adam sinned, he brought all into sin. But at just the right time, Jesus dies and rises on our behalf as He has no need to save Himself. All that He does is on our behalf. All that He does is for you!

The free gift is not like the trespass, imprisoning all in eternal death. No, this free gift releases all into the joyous, reconciled life with God in which Jesus already abides.

For sinful man, this seems so unnatural. After all, if we want to get paid, we must do the job. If we want someone to love you, we have to be loveable. If we want groceries, we have to pay for them. But with God, we don't buy our way to His love. We only receive. Jesus says salvation has been accomplished. It is not something that you do, because it is done. It is finished. It is finished for you.

There is nothing for us to do but to receive God's free gift. There is nothing we must earn. Everything is paid in full on the cross.

But how do we receive this free gift? Well, Jesus spreads His salvation through a spiritual and supernatural way. He spreads His free gift of salvation through Baptism. In Baptism, you are born again of water and of the Spirit. In Baptism, you become a child of God. You are begotten of God. He communicates to you His nature, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit. By God's Spirit, your old nature is put to death, and you are born again into the immortal nature of the Son.

All who believe and are baptized are begotten of God, receive His nature, and live eternally. In this way, just as the children of Adam all sin and all die, and all are enemies, so the children of God have sin put to death in them daily through repentance and faith and are restored to life and reconciled to God.

Christ's death shows us God's great love for us. Although we were enemies going against His will, at just the right time, Christ died for us.

So, if you ever wonder if God still loves you. Look at what He has been willing to do for you. When you were weak and powerless and totally opposed to Him, at just the right time, He reconciled you back to Him through Christ's death.

If God justified us by His grace when we were all against Him, just imagine how much He loves us now that we have been won by Him. So, let us all rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +