

Holy Trinity Sunday
May 22, 2016
Romans 5:1-5
The Triune God Presents Us with a Triple Crown
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Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

American Pharaoh. Do you recognize that name? He won horse racing's Triple Crown in 2015. As I write this, it remains to be seen if another horse can match that feat this year. If Nyquist won the Preakness there is a chance. If not, we'll have to wait until next year

Three is a number on our minds this Holy Trinity for a more majestic reason. We confessed in the Athanasian Creed our faith in God who is three separate and distinct persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is our God because he is the only true and living One.

The Apostle Paul describes to the Romans Christians three great blessings the triune, three in one, God grants through our faith that he has declared us not guilty of our sins for Jesus' sake. We might call those blessings our own triple crown.

The Triune God Presents Us with a Triple Crown. Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Hope of the glory of God, and in our suffering. Love from God in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' triumph over another trio, sin, death and the power of the devil, gives us peace with God. "Having been justified by faith 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."

The Holy Spirit's work of creating faith in our dead hearts through the Word of Christ gives us access to the grace God had for the entire world. We stand and continue to stand in that grace with the Father through the Son by the Spirit.

Recall that time you disobeyed your human father and stood before him tense and fearful. Peace swept over you like a giant wave when he said, "I already have forgiven you for what you did." Didn't his action give you the sense that you were always standing in peace secure of his ongoing forgiveness?

You have disobeyed your heavenly Father's will. You have failed to put God first in the stewardship of your lives and goods. You stand before your righteous God unrighteous and deserving of punishment. Coming to the Father in sorrow over that sin you hear him say, "In my son, Jesus Christ, I already have forgiven you all your sins." That word works an ongoing security, an ongoing peace with God. It is through faith in Christ we ever stand in that security with our heavenly Father.

In a world that offers little or no peace, what a blessing we have in Christ to have the peace the world cannot give. The peace of God surpasses all human understanding. That peace guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The second jewel in the triune God's gift of our triple crown is hope; hope of the glory of God, and in our suffering. Hope is the certain expectation of something coming. We hope one day to have the glory of God.

This is not the glory that makes God, God. That is his alone. It is the glory that will be our lack of a sinful nature. We will be like Adam and Eve before the Fall into sin. We will be completely renewed in God's image. We will have perfect knowledge of God and be in perfect harmony with his will. We all have sinned and fall short of that glory in this life. We hope for better in the life to come in heaven.

That hope is not without benefit in this life of suffering. Under the crosses God places on us, God works perseverance. That perseverance works character under those crosses. Character is accepting God's will in humble submission. I know it will work out. Character keeps us going in spite of the burdens. That character works hope that will not disappoint us. Consider this in connection with Jesus' character in being our Savior in his submission. Our Savior trusted his Father for victory, all in good time.

Closely tied to peace and hope is the final jewel in our spiritual triple crown, love from God. "Because God has poured out his love into hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Is there much worse for a child than having expectations that do not happen? Most parents and grandparents do not want to disappoint their children or grandchildren. God our Father does not disappoint us through unfulfilled expectations. We might think he has failed due to our unrealistic and even sinful expectations of him but that is our fault.

God has poured out his love for us into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Pouring involves amount and distribution. A watering can has a spout with many holes. All the water comes out but is distributed so it does not crush the fragile plant. It gently spreads the life giving liquid all around.

Through the gospel, God continually and gently pours into our hearts the life giving forgiveness of our sins. We live under the shower of God's grace. The Holy Spirit endows the Father's love in his Son, Jesus, to nourish our spirits. Peace in Christ, hope of the glory of God, and in suffering are two jewels on the same crown. The third jewel is God's love.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. God graciously has given us faith in that love by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. St. John in his first epistle wrote a wonderful confession of our faith in God's love that has made us the children of God. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are." [3:1]

Whether any horse will win the triple crown of racing is an unknown, an uncertainty from year to year. The Triune God presents us with a triple crown that is known and certain every minute of every hour, of every day, and even through timeless eternity. That Triple Crown has three jewels-peace, hope and love. Wearing it, we all stand in the winner's circle. Amen.
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