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1796
SERMON: June 13, 199- Pentecost 3 - (Proper 6)

TEXT: Romans 5:1-8

TITLE:

Objective: Every Christian can have access to God's grace
because Christ DIES for us

Christ dies for sinners - before we deserve it

Christ dies for you - personally

Christ dies - so that now we can labor in vineyard

Dear friends in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wow! It is good to be here. I am humbled, I am excited, I am honored to be
called to share in ministry with you.

Over the coming years and decades you will come to learn more about me, and I
will learn your life stories and faith stories. Ahead of us I know God is preparing a
glorious future for St. John's. Just as God has faithfully been leading this congregation
in bold acts of witness and ministry, God will continue to guide us.

In time, we will learn plenty about each other. And there will be many
opportunities for such sharing. But today, I would rather speak about something else,
something much more interesting than me, today (and for years and years to come) I
have the privilege to speak with you about my first love — our Savior Jesus Christ.

St. Paul writes to the church at Rome and says:

"Since we are justified by faith,"

Since WE ARE justified by faith.

Since we are JUSTIFIED by faith.

Since we are justified by FAITH, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's it, my friends! That is what it is all about. A rich history and a promising future are all about the God proclaimed fact that we are JUSTIFIED BY FAITH. Everything we do, every worship service or committee meeting, every Bible study or fellowship dinner, every youth trip or Sunday School class, every Art Festival or Vacation Bible School, everything we do is because WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH!

"For while we are still weak," Paul says, "Christ died for the ungodly. God PROVES his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

We are justified by faith. And while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

That is truly it, isn't it?! It is the heart and core of the Gospel message. God comes to us, in our sinfulness, in our weakness, in our pride — God comes to us and, PROVES the ultimate act of love.

The point is clear, that God intends for all people to have access to God grace

Luther's suspicion was that given the chance, humans would always try to save themselves — through self-righteousness, pious works, penance, or any number of schemes. But the revelation of Scripture, through the work of Christ and the testimony of the apostles is explicitly clear - While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

If we for but a fleeting moment come to the conclusion that we must do something to earn God's love and favor, we are doomed and we call God a liar. God knows us, and knows that we could never live in the glorious abundance God intends for us, IF we somehow thought we had to earn God's love. If we had to somehow, measure up in order for God to love us.

While we were still weak, Christ died for the Ungodly! While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!

WHY? — so that we can be God's children.

— so that we do not need to live our life in fear

(The sad commentary on Christians is that too often we live our lives like ill-taught piano students. Afraid of every hitting a wrong note, and in so doing have managed to take all of the life out of the music and reduce is a soaring melody to black spots on a page. That's living a life of fear. But, we are called to freed. We are called, as children of God into a life of abundance: abundant love, abundant joy, abundant hope.)

Why has Christ died for us?

- so that we can be his own, live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness" (Luther's Small Catechism - Second Article)

Why?

- because the harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few.