

Pastor Jordan Gades Sermon 5.19.2019 Romans 1:1 -17

Good morning! Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ Amen.

I wanted to start today with a question. And of course if it's going to last an entire sermon, which will hopefully be under 20 minutes, it's gotta be a big one. Why are we here today?

Pic – “uhh... bro, I'm not here for the coffee.”

Got this sent as part of some advertisement scheme a few years ago but it's been this constant reminder of me. It's on the bulletin board in my office right now. Why are we here? It's about God. It's about this faith. It's about this belief that we hold central to our lives. This faith that shines out of us for the whole world.

I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.

We are here in worship to our God because of that faith. To renew our relationship with our God. To help us to frame our relationship with our Creator as creation. We desire to be filled because we are empty. We want to feel again the joy of true freedom. The joy of worship. For that perfect moment with our God in this sacred space where we can find the holy in our lives. These are why we are here. That's why I'm here. To experience the love of God. To feel the presence of God in silence, and in praise, in meditation and in hearing the word. It this focused space where the distractions of the world outside are dampened just a little bit.

All those distractions are not so little when we leave this space. But think back over your life and how you have been taught to live out your faith? Have you been going to a church every week for your entire life or is this your first time, or are you somewhere in the middle? Were you taught about the faith or were you shown the faith? Has God seemed to be this ever present Savior in your life or does it more seem like God's been sitting back and doing a little too much watching rather than doing?

The answers to all of those are a part of why you are here today. But maybe the simplest and best answers to that deep question of why are we here today might point back to some of our richest and deepest beliefs, back to our simple and profound baptisms. Our Baptism, this Act of God, coming to us and abiding and resting with in us. This Act of God claiming us. This promise that God will never leave or forsake us. That God will always work for our good in every way through all of our lives. Why are we here today? God has brought us here.

Now we are going to meet up with what Paul is talking about in his letter to the Christians in Rome. Paul is writing to this church, this small community of the faithful, who need to hear those same words of hope. They are faithful but they are spiritually drained and Paul writes to them it's not about us.

It's about **Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith**

Yes, you are tired and afraid and anxious about the future but it's Jesus in whom we hold faith because it's Jesus who gives us hope and Grace through faith. Faith that moves us, faith that

guides us, even when we are blinded by grief and deafened by pain we can feel that pull of our faith. We are here because God is doing to us here. We are receiving life here.

What a beautiful reason to gather and remind each other of that. But Paul goes on. That not the only reason that we gather, that we are here today. For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine

I wish I had this type of enthusiasm every day. I'm going to make an assumption here that most of you don't just jump out of bed saying. "Oh boy, I get to go out to today and use the gifts God has blessed me with to strengthen and serve others! Yay!"

But Paul is excited by this, and what excites me is that is what can happen when we are here today. We pray for one another, we strengthen one another in hope and joy, in hugs and handshakes, in serious conversations and also in jokes abounding. It's more than just the coffee. God has given us the gift and blessing of the church so that we can bless each other. That is something to be excited about today. Today, here where we worship a living and moving God.

All of this makes sense to so many of us here today but there is more. There is always more, isn't there. Our God is bigger than us, bigger than this church. We are here today to fulfill ourselves, we are here to strengthen and care for the ones who are here as well but we are here for all the people who are not. Paul isn't with the Christians in Rome. But he's writing them about being the hands and feet, the face of Christ to the world. To those people that can so often be forgotten. To those people whom we negate to the shadows or far too often just don't want to see. But Paul, he knows of sin and shame and pride and he says this I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you. Those barbarians those were the people that no one was supposed to go to, talk to, be around. Those fools were the one that you were supposed to ignore. Yet Paul says it is our duty to serve them as debtors, serve them as Christ serves the church, serves us. We owe these people life because that is what we have been given. Food shelf, community meals, summer stretch, confirmation soup kitchen and road clean up, Last summer some 30 of our high schoolers got on a bus and drove 30 hours to Galveston and Houston, in July. Called to open our doors and go out of them.

So there you are. What are we doing here? WE are being filled up by the Holy Spirit. We were lead here by the Holy Spirit. And we are here being sent out to serve. And all in joy and praise and in knowledge of things to come. This Gospel brings life. This good news of God's love for all creation; brings life. We have been given new life now let us go and spread new life. Amen.