

JESUS IS A DARING FRIEND
FIFTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT

ROM 5:2-8
MARCH 9, 2016

² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

On the funnies page in this morning's paper, in Zits cartoon, Jeremy says to friend Pierce, "You know that railing by the library that's covered with ice? I had the stupid idea that we could... Next frame show the friend, Pierce, on the railing with his skateboard saying, "You had me at 'stupid.'" Sometimes friends encourage or even dare friends to take risks with each other.

But there is another kind of daring friend, not one who makes dares but one who dares to help. even though it involves personal risk. It is said that in hard times you find out who real friends are. It may be putting oneself in danger to rescue a friend in an emergency, risking injury or death to help them. It may be bravely going with them into a frightening or uncomfortable situation, like hospital or courtroom. It may be taking risk of sharing who you truly are or a truth they need to know but may not like, taking the risk of rejection or anger.

That is what real friends do.

In passion history we see people being daring, sometimes encouraged by friends, but Jesus is most daring of all.

JESUS ENEMIES ARE DARING AVOIDERS.
but WE CAN BE DARING ENDURERS.
because JESUS DARES TO DIE FOR SINNERS.

JESUS ENEMIES ARE DARING AVOIDERS.

Matthew tells us ^{27:15} Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶ And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ...²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

Why do people accept dares to do dangerous things?

Usually because they want to avoid something
even more frightening to them: what others may think.

It was daring thing for crowd to ask for release of murderer.

Why did they do it? Because they were encouraged
by seeming friends, the religious leaders.

Religious leaders themselves were being pretty daring
in pressuring and threatening Roman governor himself.

but actually they were trying to avoid something
they feared even more - popular opinion
which would turn against them if they
tried to kill Jesus themselves.

But Pilate also wanted to avoid killing Jesus, an innocent man,
especially when he was encouraged by his wife.

He realized he could be in trouble for injustice.

So he responded with a dare of his own
a risky offer to release Barabbas in place of Jesus.

Surely he was surprised when they took his dare.

Again he dared to risk injustice by daring them
to take Jesus and kill him themselves.

That was more than they dared do, and they revealed why.
He claimed to be the Son of God.

They feared not only the wrath of the people
but wrath of God himself for what they knew was wrong.

Finally Pilate himself is faced with a dare he will not take.

If he doesn't do this, they will complain to Caesar,
and he has already been in trouble with Caesar
because of their complaints.

So he would rather dare to do what he knew was wrong.

These were daring people because of strong desire to avoid
responsibility, shame, disapproval of others,
but in end they gave in to fear of punishment.

Paul writes text to people who also lived in fear,
fear of backlash for living out their faith,
rejection, persecution or even government punishment.

But he says...WE CAN BE DARING ENDURERS.

² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

In times of suffering or danger we need friends
who stick with us

Peter and disciples thought they were this kind of friends,
but when they faced danger and suffering themselves,
found out that they were not.

Later John and the women who stood at Jesus cross
were daring friends, unafraid to be associated with him

It takes courage to stay at a friend's side even when
there is nothing we can do that helps.

It takes also courage to say what one doesn't want to hear
or is hard to believe.

We may not want to believe that we can rejoice in our suffering.

How can it be true there is any good in our suffering?

But Paul says we can not only endure suffering
but that it can produce endurance and character.

Suffering by itself does not do this,
but only having one standing beside us through it.

Paul says we have this when God stands beside us with grace.

Therefore we can dare to endure suffering.

We don't have to do all we can to avoid it
out of fear of shame or rejection or punishment
because we know God's love is poured out for us.

And we can stand beside others in their suffering
even that also may be hard for us to endure

We can do this when we know that even in suffering
we can have hope. It does not mean God is against us
but God sticks with us through it
and brings something good out of it
because of the good that came out of Jesus' suffering for us.

JESUS DARES TO DIE FOR SINNERS

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus is the most daring friend of all.

He not only goes with us to face great fears, including death,
but goes for us, in our place.

he did not come to the point where he gave up
and said this I don't dare to do.

He dared to stand before the screaming crowds
without shouting back

He dared to face Pilate the judge without defending himself.

He dared to face gauntlet of soldiers without turning away.

He dared to step into Barabbas' place without objection.

He dared to hang on the cross without wine to numb pain.

Most of all, he was daring to take all the punishment for our sin.

He did it not because we were friends who were worth it
or were good enough to deserve it,

but even though on our own we are unrighteous.

This means he had no guarantee that we would even
believe it happened, or accept the benefit,
or be willing to be changed by it.

But he did it because he, for one, had no doubt we need it
and he is a friend in need.

He continues to boldly offer his forgiveness in his word
to all who will believe it.

and with his body and blood in Holy Communion
to all who will receive it.

Now he is a friend who dares us, not to do what is dangerous
but to do what is difficult, to face our fears and our sins
and to boldly trust in him alone to save us.

JESUS ENEMIES ARE DARING AVOIDERS,

taking great risks to avoid consequences of their behavior.

but WE CAN BE DARING ENDURERS

enduring suffering with each other with hope in God's grace

because JESUS DARES TO DIE FOR SINNERS,

confident in his righteousness and resurrection

which alone can give us righteousness and resurrection.