

February 20, 2021

Saturday

Romans 5:3-5 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 disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

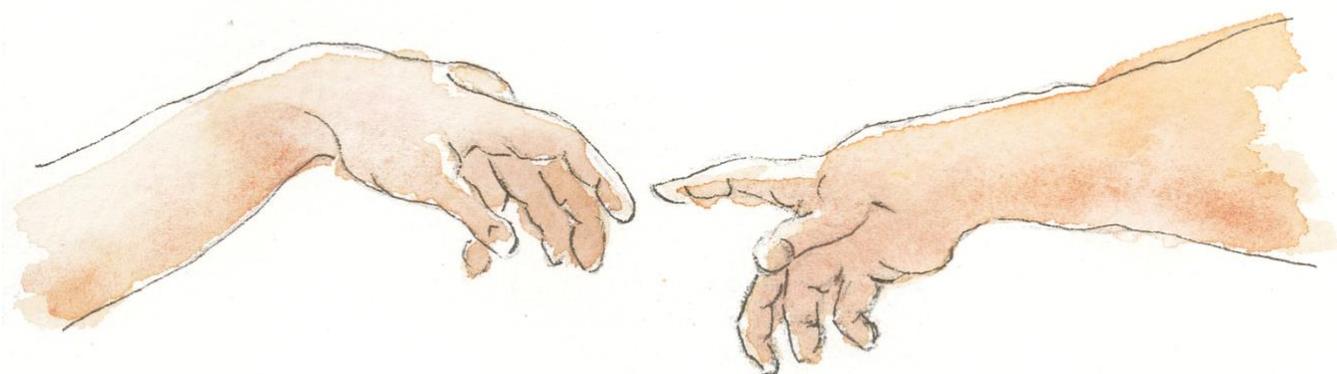
March 2020 brought the modern day "plague" to the forefront of US culture. As everything around us started to close, we were asked to wear masks and stay away from each other in isolation. As the season of Lent of 2021 is now upon us, we are still seeing many sickened and many die of COVID. Although healthy, in regards to the virus, many others are suffering from loneliness and sadness caused by the long-term isolation and separation from their loved ones. For others, COVID was just one of many problems they suffered in the last year. For those people, other health, monetary, family and other serious problems prevailed throughout the year. There are not many who would say that they spent the last year rejoicing.

Yet, that is what these verses are telling us we should be trying to do. We should be rejoicing. For, our suffering produces the endurance to get through the suffering. The endurance to get through the suffering produces an incredible character. That incredible character produces hope. Hope does not disappoint. Through that hope, we see God's love being poured into our hearts. Throughout it all, the Holy Spirit is with us and continues to pour God's love into our hearts. Let us learn to concentrate on God's love though all our sufferings and learn to rejoice in it.

Let me be clear though. It says we are to rejoice in our sufferings. These verses do not say to rejoice because of our sufferings. In other words, we are to rejoice for the blessings in our lives and for God's love in our lives, while the suffering is going on. This keeps us Kingdom focused. This keeps us Jesus focused. This keeps us focused on the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. Let us rejoice during our sufferings because God has already won the eternal war, even as we are still encountering the battles.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, hear our words this day as we seek to make our lives resemble your heart. Help us to endure in our sufferings, and to learn to rejoice in the midst of them. Help us to learn to focus on You and Your blessings instead of our suffering. Help us to regain our focus on rejoicing when the sufferings of this world get us down. Thank you for Your salvation and blessings in our lives. Amen.

Psalm 46:1



God is our refuge and strength,
ever-present to us in times of hardship.

Artwork by Karen Constan