

Sermon Draft

Text: Romans 5:1–8

Sermon: “Justified and Changed”

We are always comparing and contrasting. We need something from the store. What’s the best product? What’s the best brand? What’s the best value? Our minds are constantly evaluating different ideas, putting them side by side, seeking to determine the better of the two. Although we may not like to admit it, we are always comparing ourselves to others, comparing how we look, where we work, and what we have.

Our text this morning invites us to compare and contrast. In verse 8, we read: *“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* God shows his love, the apostle Paul says, when we stand next to the cross of Christ and we are compared to Jesus. In light of such love, where do we stand by comparison?

Standing next to Jesus, how do we measure up? How do we compare? When we stand with Jesus, what does it reveal about us? What does it reveal about Jesus? Obviously, standing next to Jesus, there is no comparison.

Jesus is the Son of God, true God and true man. He is righteous, knowing no sin. As God, he has all power and might.

We, by comparison, stand in sharp contrast to Jesus. Next to the Righteous One, our unrighteousness is painfully obvious. Standing next to God Incarnate, our ungodliness becomes all the more evident. Standing next to the almighty God, our sinful weakness is crystal clear. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they fell into sin, we may try to hide from our Lord, we may attempt to hide from our sin, we may foolishly seek to cover our sin with a few fig leaves. But standing next to Jesus, who we are and who he is are clearly shown, demonstrated, and proven. By nature, we are weak, we are unrighteous, we are ungodly, we are all sinners.

In our Gospel, when we place the Samaritan woman next to Jesus and compare the two, the contrast and differences could not be greater. The difference in their ethnicity, Jew and Samaritan pales in comparison to every other difference: righteous beside unrighteous, saint next to sinner, the All-Knowing One speaking to the woman who doesn't know and

understand. She tries to hide from her sin: ***“I have no husband”*** (John 4:17), when in fact there have been five husbands and now a man who is not her husband. She then changes the subject to debate the proper place for worship, but the contrast remains painfully obvious: This woman is in the presence of one sent from God who knows her past and present.

When we are standing next to Jesus, it shows the obvious. It proves who we are, weak, unrighteous, ungodly, a sinner. However, our text today draws a different comparison than us to Jesus. The point of comparison in Romans 5:8 is us to the cross of Christ. When we are placed next to the cross of Jesus, what does it show? What does it reveal? What does it prove? The answer: God’s love. ***“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*** (v 8). When the point of comparison is us and the cross of Jesus, God’s love for us is revealed, proven, and demonstrated. Listen to this glorious contrast and comparison:

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

(vs 6–8).

God’s Word invites us to make another comparison: Who would need to be standing next to us for us to say, “My life for his.” “Put me to death so she can live.” You might offer your life to save the life of a family member. Possibly if it was a child, we might be more inclined to give the ultimate sacrifice. The reality is, very few would give their lives to save another. Paul writes that someone might do this for a righteous or a good person, but laying down our life for one who’s ungodly, unrighteous, a sinner? That’s unheard of! Except on Good Friday. There’s Jesus, our Savior, and there we are standing with him, with all our sin, our evil desires, our ungodly words, our unrighteous deeds.

And Jesus says, *“My life for yours. I will endure the punishment you rightly deserve for your sin. I am your Good Shepherd, and I will willingly lay down my life for you, even though you are a sheep that loves to wander. I will pay the debt of your sin, a debt you could never repay. I, the sinless Son of God, will suffer in sadness, so that you, the sinful child of man, may live in gladness”* (cf LSB 439:3–5).

As we stand with Jesus, as he offers his life for ours, God’s love is revealed. By the death of his Son, God shows, demonstrates, and proves his love for us. Because of Jesus, our standing before God now has changed. Paul writes: *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 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”* (Romans 5:1–2, italics added).

Since Jesus offered his life for us, in the eyes of God we are no longer unjust but justified, no longer unrighteous but clothed in the righteousness of Christ, no longer a sinner but a saint, no longer an

enemy of God because of our sinful rebellion against him and his commands but at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider this comparison and rejoice in your present as compared to your past: who you were by nature to who you are now in Christ, what you justly deserved because of your sin compared to what your God in Christ has freely given to you. We were once standing in the muck and mire of our sin, but now we stand in the grace of God.

By Christ's death, our standing before God has changed. We are justified, declared not guilty, through the blood of Jesus. With sin forgiven, we have peace with our Creator. By the faith we have been given, we now stand in God's grace and will remain in God's grace through all eternity, for our hope is a sure and certain hope, firmly founded in God's love shown to us through the death of his Son.

Since our standing before God has changed, even our suffering takes on a whole different purpose. As one justified, our suffering is not God's wrath over our sin. Christ endured God's righteous wrath in our place on the cross.

Thus, by God's grace, even the believer's suffering in this fallen world is sanctified. God is at work in all things in our lives, including suffering.

Paul writes: *“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 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”* (Romans 5:3–5).

The love of God shown, proven, and demonstrated for us in the cross of Christ is now abundantly poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It's happening today. We come to this place with our sin, and God's love is poured into our hearts: “I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” He says: “Take, eat; this is my body. Take, drink; this is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.” We come to this place with all our suffering, trials, afflictions, burdens, and cares, and God's love is poured into our hearts to strengthen us, to comfort us, to produce in us endurance, character, and a hope that will never disappoint.

Thus, there's even joy in suffering, for we face suffering with the confidence that nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (cf Rom 8:39).

If it were not for the grace of God, we would not be able to stand. But through Jesus, our standing before God has changed. The proof is the cross of Christ. When we're standing next to the cross of Christ, God's love is revealed. We, poor miserable sinners, are forgiven. We, the one unworthy of love, are loved abundantly, unconditionally, eternally. We, the suffering, are given peace, endurance, and hope in trial and sorrow.

Do not doubt it. Instead, as you stand next to Jesus, stand next to his cross, God your Father will again and again show, prove, and demonstrate his love for you, for while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you.

Amen