

Sermon: Life is a Sine Curve
Romans 5:1-5, John 16:12-15

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Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

John 16:12-15

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. he will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Sermon

I want to take you back for a bit, back to the days of Trigonometry. Many, hopefully most of you have a vague memory of the concepts of Sine, Cosine, and Tangent, these wavy curves on a graph that have something to do with circles. Well, as I was reading Paul's words to the church in Rome, it was this concept that came to my head.

The church in Rome was first a gentile church that was formed while the Jewish Synagogue began to push out those Jews who wanted to follow Jesus. Because of this divide, it would seem that this Roman congregation was struggling with the question if the Hebrew faith, that of the Old Testament, even mattered. And Paul walks a line between the one need to follow Christ that did not require kosher eating or circumcision, and the value of knowing and believing that Jesus is the Son of the God that is spoken of and worshiped by the Jews. That there is something to learn from the Jewish faith even as the leaders of that faith were persecuting and seeking to stamp out the followers of Christ.

It is in this context that Paul identifies the theme of suffering. "...we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us..."

Boosting in suffering, being thankful for our challenges and our pains and our setbacks. I'm not sure how many of us would want to stand up and boost in the midst of our low places. I'm not sure how many of the Christians in Rome wanted to boost about their struggles to stay formed while suffering persecution from Jerusalem and within the Roman society as well. Yet Paul's words remind them and remind us that even in the midst of the low places of our life, in the troughs of our curves where it feels like we are as low and empty as we can be, that even there in our sufferings God's grace is abundant.

As a high schooler I ran Cross Country and one of the lessons I learned from my coach was the importance of keeping my head up and looking forward. He told us, "When you are in a race, running up a hill, always keep your eyes on the top, don't get caught looking down or back. And if you see another racer looking at their steps, it is a sign of tiredness, a sign that you can pass them and just keep going." His point was that where we look, where our eyes are pointed makes all the difference.

Paul want's the church to keep its eyes on hope, on the top of the mountain, at the top of the curve. That is not to say that we live as if we are always at the high point, as if there is no challenges or struggles or suffering. But if we keep our eyes on hope, we can pass through the suffering with endurance and character.

Life is full of ups and downs, like a wave that flows forward, cresting and falling. Not just human life, but all life. In fact creation itself seems to flow like a Sine curve. Imagine the

waters of the ocean and the life cycle of a forest. Rains fall and then the sun comes out, causing water to rise up in the air again. Season continue to cycle from one to another. The circle of life can be thought of as a curve of creation.

And we have discovered that even the unseen or lesser understood things of creation move up and down. The sound that you are hearing from my voice moves out of my body and into your ears and it is the different sizes and stretches of the wave that allow us to distinguish pitch so we know a soprano from an alto from a base. And this green stole and yellow tie and blue shirt I have one can be seen because of the light that is emitted at different wave lengths that allows our eyes to distinguish color and brightness. Light and sound travel in the form of a wave, and our bodies are designed to interpret those waves so that we can hear and see all the colors of the rainbow.

And though Paul didn't understand the science of light or sound, I think he did understand that people were watching and listening to one another, and when they saw hope in the way someone lived, when they heard good news from the voices of those who suffered as they did, people take notice. The very way we live out our faith, looking to the next mountain, the hope of what is to come - our hope becomes a light to the nations and a message of Good News to all who suffer. May we live into our light and into the Good News of God's amazing grace this day and every day. Amen