

# Sermon - 5 October 2025

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[0:00] The invitation of all our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and redeemer. Amen. To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

In today's epistles, St. Paul seems almost overwhelmed as he reflects on the greatness of the church and the immeasurable love of Christ.

He says, I ask you not to lose heart over my sufferings for you, which are your glory. His own troubles felt light to him.

His concern was only that others might stumble at his hardship. He doesn't want them to stumble at his hardships. Just as many once stumbled at the cross of Christ.

And yet the cross, once a symbol of shame, has become the glory of all believers. And in the same way, the suffering of Christ's servants, who share in his cup, can also become glorious.

[1:47] So moved by this thought, Paul bursts into prayer. And he says, as he writes to the Ephesians church, For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

Paul prays that God, out of the riches of his glory, not according to human measure or human treasure, But according to his boundless goodness, That God, out of the riches of his glory, will strengthen believers inwardly through the Spirit.

This strengthening, Paul explains, comes through Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. He prays that they may be rooted and grounded in love.

Not as if faith were the root in love, merely the fruit of it. But as if love itself, the very love of God itself, is both the foundation and the growth from which our love comes from.

As if God's love infuses every part of the Christian life, stretches in every direction beyond measure, As we do the work of God, and as we interact as a family of God.

[3:11] God's love infuses and stretches from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Into our own hearts, as people who belong to God, in the family of God.

And that same love emanates in ourselves, in our Christian journey, in our Christian life together, And even to the wider world.

So that's Paul's, the heart of Paul's prayer. And he says, rooted in that love, Paul says, We may begin to grasp with all the sins, not only us, but we may grasp with all the sins, What is the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love.

The love that is wider than the heavens, deeper than our sins, greater than anything we can imagine. The love that is wider than anything we can imagine. The love that is wider than anything we can imagine. The love that is wider than anything we can imagine. And to know this love, know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

At first, you read that, to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. And that may seem like a contradiction. What is it to know what cannot be known?

[4:23] To know something which surpasses knowledge. But Paul means, what he means is that, The human mind cannot comprehend this love.

Left to ourselves. We cannot grasp it. We cannot comprehend it. We cannot understand it. We cannot live by it. Only the Spirit of God can reveal this kind of love to the human heart.

And as he says elsewhere, What no eye has seen, He says this in 1 Corinthians 2, Where no eye has seen, Nor hear, Heard, Nor the heart of man imagined. God has prepared for those who love him.

Brothers and sisters, That's you. God has prepared for you, Who love him. These God has revealed to us. This great love, That cannot be grasped, By human faculties.

God has revealed to us, Through the Spirit. And so Paul concludes, With a breathtaking phrase, That you, May be filled, With all the fullness, Of God.

[5 : 39] That you may be filled, With all the fullness of God. Think about that for a second. This of course, Is what we most need.

And what we most desire. Being filled with the fullness of God. That, I hope, Is our desire here at Holy Trinity. That we may be filled with Christ, Who is all in all.

That is, That is at the center of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He repeats that phrase, Being filled with the fullness of God, Or going back to that theme, Of the fullness of Christ.

Throughout this letter of Ephesians, In chapter 1 verse 28, He refers, He talks about Christ, As head of all things. And being, He is the one who fills, All in all.

Later in chapter 4 verse 10, He writes about Jesus, It is He who descended, The same one who descended, Is the one who has ascended, Far above all the heavens.

[6 : 39] That He might fill, All things. In the same chapter verse 13, He writes, Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, And of the knowledge of the Son of God, To mature manhood.

And how do we do that? To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. That's the measure of mature manhood, According to Paul. To the stature of the fullness of Christ.

So this is at the heart of his prayer, And his wish and his hope, For himself, And for the church in Ephesus, And for us, The church here in Syracuse. That we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

And carried away by this vision, That Paul has. Paul ends, Is this section of his prayer, In the doxology, In worship. He says, Now to him, To who?

To this God, Who fills all in all. To him, Be, Who is able to do, Far more abundantly, Than we can ask, Or imagine. What is it that you ask?

[7 : 47] What is it that you imagine? Poor things that, Again, As he says in 1 Corinthians, No eye is seen, No hear heard. No heart of man is imagined.

Keep imagining, But what God asks for you, Is even beyond your imagining. And so Paul says, Now to him, Who is able to do, Far more abundantly, Than all we ask or imagine, According to the power, At work, Within, Who?

Us. Isn't that a remarkable statement to say? As you are being filled with Christ, According to the power, At work within us, To him, Be glory, In the church, And in Christ Jesus, Throughout all generations, Forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. One truth, Runs through this passage. One truth, Runs through this passage, That we just read, In Ephesians.

It's the love of Christ, That is greater than we can ever fully understand. We know what love is, To a certain extent, Don't we? A parent for a child, You understand that kind of love?

[9 : 02] A bride for her bridegroom, And vice versa, A groom for his bride, The love between a friend to a friend, Or the compassion of a kind heart, Towards just someone, Someone, A fellow human, In the human family.

These different kinds of love, Gives us a glimpse, Just only a glimpse, Of God's love. Which is most fully revealed, In Christ's incarnation.

Yet Paul insists, That though we know it, This approximately, To a little extent, This love that he talks about, We do not truly comprehend it.

Not because it is different in kind, But because it is infinitely greater, Than any kind of love that we have, Or we can imagine, Or we can conjure up, That we can feel in our hearts, In our emotions. God's love, Is infinitely greater. Imagination, Emotions, Or intellect, Cannot measure, The love of Christ.

[10 : 21] No eye is seen, No hear heard, No heart of man, Is imagined. No matter how wide, Or deep our understanding may be, Left to ourselves, We cannot measure, The love of Christ.

This love of Christ, Can only be grasped, Through faith. It is not unlike, What we ask or think, But it is beyond, What we ask or think.

And the way to know it, More deeply, To grow in this love, More deeply, More intimately, The way, Is through word, And prayer. This is God's love letter, To us.

As Ken reminded us, When he began, In God's Sunday school, As he begins his series, Through the Bible. This is God's love letter, To us.

How do we know this love, More intimately? Through reading, And meditating on it. How do we grow in it? Through prayer. Do you want to know, Whether God is love?

[11 : 30] Meditate on his word, And pray. Do you want to know, How great his love is? Pray more. Pray humbly. And you will see, More of it's height, And more of it's depth.

Pray earnestly, And you will know, More of it's intensity. Pray with perseverance. Perseverance. What is perseverance? Don't stop praying.

Continue to pray. And you will learn, The steadfastness, Of God's love for you. Pray constantly, And you will realize, How completely, You are surrounded, By his love.

Pray with self-denial, And you will understand, How his love is bound, To the cross of Christ. And how that love, Infuses you, Who have come to faith, In Christ Jesus.

And how that love, Is the power, By which you yourself, Stand, Secure. It is in that spirit, Of faith and prayer, That I ask you now, To turn with me, To today's gospel reading, Which shows us, This love and power, Of Christ in action.

[12 : 43] May God grant us, Hives to see, And hears to hear, As we behold Christ, Through God, Though true God he is, Though clothed in human flesh, As he's revealed, In Luke chapter 7, In our gospel reading, This morning, It's on page 1026, Of your church bible, You may turn there as well, As we go on.

So the gospel tells us, In this story, That we have in our gospel, Reading, That it's the day after, It's the transition point, In Jesus' journey, Jesus went into a city, Called name, And many of his disciples, Went with him, And in this city, There's a large crowd, Notice first, How Jesus went about, Among the people, Not like, A man of great, Pomp and circumstance, Like men of great, Pomp and circumstance, Goes about, Go about in the world today, No, Jesus went in and out, Among the people, If he was a man of, If he was a man of, Of the circumstances, The crowd would be at a distance, And they would stand at a distance, In reverence, And awe, And respect, But at a distance, But not so, With our Lord, There was no outward show, Of power, Or dignity, With Christ, Instead,

The crowd pressed in, Close to him, His manner, Was lowly, So much so, That he appeared, Not just as one of them, But as the poorest, Among them, A man of no renown, And more than that, Our Lord's gentleness, And his attention, To the weak, As seen in this reading, Of the gospel reading, This morning, His attention, To the suffering, To those who suffer, To the women, And the children, Made him seem, Even lower in spirit, Than in outward appearance, This is why, His disciples were astonished, If you remember, That gospel passage, When Jesus, On his way, To Jairus' house, To heal his daughter, And he says, Who touched me?

This is why, His disciples were astonished, Because, It is their custom, When they accompany Jesus, For the crowd, To always press in on Jesus, Touching him, Everyone presses around him, On another occasion, He was so surrounded, That he had to even get into a boat, To speak to people, Christ carried no mark, Upon him, Of worldly greatness, What marked him, What made him great, Was his holiness, What made our Lord great, Was the power of his words, What made him great, Was the divine love, That love, Which surpasses all understanding, That radiated from him, A compassion, That wrapped itself, All around, Those who came near him, If you are in Christ, You know, A sense of that love, Don't you?

That love, That radiates from him, Into your own hearts, And brings you, From death to life, Now picture this story, That we have, Now picture Christ, In the midst of this large crowd, The large crowd at his side, As he approaches the city gate, Of name, And as they approach, They met, A funeral procession, A young man, Carried out, Great tragedy, Great sorrow, The great enemy, Death, Seems to have won, This young man, Is the only son, Of his mother, And she, A widow, And the crowd, Accompanied her, Was large, Not merely, Funeral attendants, As is the custom, In those days, But imagine that, Even the townspeople, Followed this funeral procession, Out of great pity, For this woman, Who is now left destitute, With her husband, Or son, And they gathered,

[16 : 59] The townspeople, In grief, To support her, And the gospel says, When the Lord, Saw her, He had compassion, On her, And said to her, Do not weep, When I first saw her, Through the sympathy, Of all her neighbors, How much more, Would it have stirred, The heart of Christ, Again, And again, He is shown to us, As the son of man, Deeply moved, By human grief, Remember that, At Lazarus tomb, Our Lord cried, And it wasn't death, It's not the sight, That made him weep, That made him weep, But it's the sight, Of Mary, Lazarus sister, And the sorrow, That he was feeling, That moved our Lord, To tears, Here too, We see, As Luke, The evangelist, He tells us, He

emphasizes, Jesus' compassion, For this mother, It was a sorrow, That moved him, Her loss, Was at the center, Of his attention, And his words, To her was, Do not weep, Those words, Do not weep, Were not empty comfort, At least spoken, By our Lord, It's not empty comfort, His words, Carry power in them, And even as he spoke it, He began to remove, A course of grief, He touched the buyer, The casket, That was carrying, The young man, And they stopped, And not as any funeral, Procession has ever stopped before, But they halted, Out of fear, And awe, Before the one, Whose compassion, Hinted at a greater power, And then Jesus spoke, Young man, I say to you, Arise, And notice that, Whenever Christ raised the dead, He spoke directly, To the person, What did he say, To Lazarus,

Directly, Lazarus, Come out, What does he say, To Jairus' daughter, Little girl, Arise, To lead the coom, His action, Always matched, His word, Because his word, Is power in itself, And taking a hand, Jesus opened, Taking a hand, In the case of, Of Jairus' daughter, Opening the tomb, In the case of Lazarus, Touching the casket, In the case of this young man, Jesus' action, Matched his word, And so it will be, On that last day, When all who are in the grave, Shall hear his voice, Even now, Jesus speaks, He speaks to each soul, As though, It is to that soul alone, And he says to each soul, Awake sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you, As he's spoken those words to you, If you've come to faith in Jesus Christ,

It's because his word, Of power, And life, Has been spoken, To you, And brought you, From death to life, It is nothing less than that, And so the dead man, Upon hearing, The word of life, From the author of life, Sat up, And began to speak, And Jesus gave him back, To his mother, Jesus gave him back, To his mother, Just a, Point of tangent, Departing from my God, My preparation this morning, Jesus gave him back, To his mother, Jesus, This same Lord of life, Will go, And confront death, And his mother, Will be there, Witnessing, Bearing,

Even to a greater degree, The agony, Than this widow of name, And because, He comes to save, And to redeem, And to rescue, There will be no one, To give him back, To his mother, But he will, Rise, After conquering death, And the grave, It will be restored, He will be given back, Not just to his mother, But he will be given back, To all of us, In resurrection power, It just occurs to me, That this same Christ, Who has given a son, Back to his mother, Will be the same one, Who will go, Through the valley, Of the shadow of death, For you and me, And what did the people do, What did they see, How did they feel, When they saw this, Luke tells us, They were filled with fear, With awe, That's the kind of fear, That it is, And they glorified God,

[22:06] And they say, A great prophet, Has arisen among us, And they said to themselves, God has visited his people, How little did they know, What a true statement, They were making, And word of, This great miracle, Spread, Throughout the land, But imagine for a moment, What the mother, Would have felt, Receiving our son again, Who, Must have been, Swallowed, By every other feeling, As she realized, That, Not only is, A son restored to her, But she is just, Seeing God, Face to face, The gift of a son, Of course, Is precious, But it, Ultimately, Is temporary, Because death, Will come one day again, To visit this son, What mattered infinitely more, Was that she, The widow,

Of name, Had seen in Christ, Both the power of her death, And the will, And the longing, To use that power, In love, To rescue people, From death to life, And so it must be, For you and me, As well, As we look at this story, Do not simply, See this, As a touching, Beautiful, Lovely story, It is that, But it is more than that, It is a testament, To Christ's divinity, It is the proof, Of his power, Over life and death, Not only, In this story, But in your life, And in the world, Today, So, When the minister, Meets a funeral procession, At the entrance, To the church, Or at the graveyard, And the minister says, I am the resurrection, And the life, Speaking Jesus' word, It is good to remember, This story, But it means far more, It shows us, That Christ is the one, Who raises, Not only the physically dead, But he is the one, Who raises, Those who are dead in sin, Bringing them, Into the life, Of righteousness, This is the same Christ, Who is able to do, Far more abundantly, Than all we can ask, Or imagine, According to the power, At work within us, So to read this story, In faith, Is as real, As if we have stood there, Ourselves, On that, On that afternoon, Watching, As his hand, Touch the casket, Hearing his voice, Called the young man, From death to life, So I invite you, Brothers and sisters, From here, I want you to go, From here today, As though you have seen, This great miracle, As though you were there, On that afternoon, In the city of Nain, With your own eyes, Because you have, Seen a greater miracle,

Than even the raising, Of this dead man, As though Christ, Himself, Admet you, And caught you,  
From death to life, Because he has, Let our repentance, Be as deep, Let our awe, Be as great, Let  
our faith, Be as living, As if we had stood, In the crowd, With the widow of Nain, That day, If you had  
been there, Do you imagine, You would be quiet about it, Do you imagine, That you would be quiet,  
About what you have seen, And just go, Go to your home, As if nothing has happened, Or would  
you go, And tell as many people, As you can, That they may also hear, Of this compassionate man,  
With the power, To raise the dead to life, Well then, Go and tell, Do not hide such good news,  
Which you have, Known, Which is alive, In your heart, The love of Christ, That it surpasses, All  
understanding, That you know, By which you live, And move, Do not hide, That truth, That good  
news, That great gospel, Under a bushel, Rather proclaim it, For all to hear, And go, And live it out,  
Live with the assurance, And desire, That your Lord, Your Savior, Your Redeemer, The one with  
the all-surpassing power, Is filling you, With his fullness, Be assured of that, And it is, It is in his  
resurrection power, That you, You will belong to Christ, It is in his resurrection power, That you live,  
It is in his resurrection power, That you move, It is in his resurrection power,  
[27 : 11] That you have your being, So live each moment, By God's enabling power, One step  
closer to knowing, That love, Of Christ, That surpasses all knowledge, Let us pray, Oh Lord, We  
beseech thee, Let thy continual pity, Cleanse, And defend, Your church, And because we confess,  
We cannot continue in safety, Without your help, Preserve us evermore, With thy great help, And  
goodness, Let your love, Continue, To overwhelm, And infill us, To our fullness, So that, Among us,  
In each of our hearts, In our interactions, As your family, As your people, In this church, Christ may  
be all in all,

We pray this, In his most precious name, Amen.