**Sermon 5/12/19**

**2nd Corinthians**

**1:1-14; 4:7-9; 5:7**

Four preachers were discussing their favorite translations of the Bible.

The first one said, "I like the King James Version because of its beautiful English."

Another said, "I like the New American Standard version

             because it is closer to the original Greek and Hebrew."

The third one replied, "I like the Good News version because it's so easy to read.”

The fourth minister was silent for a moment then said,

            “I like my mother's translation best.”

The other three men were surprised.

They said, "I didn't know your mother made a translation of the Bible."

"Yes," he replied. "She translated it into everyday life.

                And it was the most beautiful and convincing translation I ever saw."

Today is Mother's Day. It is a day to remember all the things our Mother's did for us,

          from raising us, to teaching us, and leading us to God.

Being a mother is one of the most difficult jobs, and one of the most important jobs.

An experienced mother was chatting with a friend:

Before becoming a mother, I had no children,

and a hundred theories on how to bring up children.

Now I have seven children and only one theory:

Love them, especially when they least deserve to be loved.

God and mothers both have a nearly impossible task:

            to love us anyway, especially when we least deserve to be loved,

            and point us in the right direction.

Today is a day to remember and to cherish the memories of our mothers.

We often believe family life should always be happy and exciting. The real truth is

there are often many disagreements, problems, and difficulties, along the way.

Our life of faith is similar.

We think Christians should never be sad or depressed.

Christians should live problem free lives.

Christians should have no failures, or difficulties, or problems.

One look at the Corinthians ought to remind us of what life is really like.

This is not a perfect world. This is a broken, corrupted, hurting world.

Jesus made that very clear, when He said, "In this godless world you will continue

           to experience difficulties. But I am with you always.

A church sign read:

           Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle.

We fight battles every day, facing one problem or another,

          in family life, and in our life of faith.

People face the problems of grief, joblessness, barrenness, sickness, pain, marital

          turbulence, financial problems, business failures, doubts and fear, each day.

Problems will come, and battles will have to be fought.

As Paul said: We are

        hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;

        perplexed, but not in despair;

        persecuted, but not abandoned;

        struck down, but not destroyed.

Because God is with us – always.

We often believe we could face all the difficulties better

         if we could only see how it will all turn out.

We tend to want to see God's direction clearly.

Sometimes he grants this, but usually, he doesn't.

What he wants from us is the faith to continue on with him,

          even when we don't see where we're going.

John Kavanaugh went to Calcutta, India to work at "the house for the dying"

             with Mother Teresa.

He was in the middle of a sincere search for personal direction in his life.

On the first morning there he met Mother Teresa

             and she asked him what she could do for him.

Kavanaugh asked her to pray for him.

"What do you want me to pray for?" She asked.

He responded by explaining that he had traveled thousands of miles from the US

          to find direction. He said, "Pray that I have clarity."

She responded firmly to his request, "No, I will not do that.

           Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of."

Kavanaugh replied that she appeared to always have clarity

           about what she was doing, and he longed for that kind of clarity in his life.

She laughed and said, "I have never had clarity.

          What I have always had is trust. So, I will pray that you trust God."

How often we want to understand what God is doing in our lives.

Walking with God is not knowing where we are going, or how we will get there.

It is a journey of faith and trust.

It is holding on to faith in the middle of trials and difficulties we cannot understand.

We humans tend to ask: why are you putting me through this? Don't you care, God?

Yet He walks with us through our hardships, through troubles, tribulations,

             difficult times, and even through the valley of death.

But instead of thanking him for being there,

           we fret, and worry, and complain, and demand to know where we are going.

No matter what may happen to us, or whatever disaster may strike,

               God's grace is sufficient and will carry us through.

Paul wrote about the trials and tribulations in his own life,

              often believing death was near.

But the Lord made it clear that His grace was sufficient

               for whatever difficulty, trial, or tribulation Paul was experiencing.

We live by faith, not by sight.

God wants us to trust him, to hold on to our faith in him.

He wants us to go where he sends us, when we have no clue what our destination is.

He invites us to perform whatever task he gives us,

                even when we doubt that we can do it.

He urges us to live by faith, not by sight each day.

God does care, He cares very much, even more than we can imagine.

God is present with us.

God will see us through our trials and difficulties.

God will never leave us or forsake us.

Nothing, nothing at all, in heaven or on earth can separate us from God's love.

God cares, and God comforts us in all our troubles.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

            I do not write you anything you cannot read or understand.

The Bible is meant to be read, and to be understood, and to be followed.

           God comforts us so that we can comfort others to trust God.

Because we have received this comfort from God,

          we can share his comfort with others who are facing difficulties and problems.

We are meant to help one another.

God puts his great treasure,

             his unbelievable, inconceivable, unthinkable, unimaginable,

             Treasure of the Universe, in simple clay jars, in ordinary, fragile people.

He puts his wonderful gifts of love, forgiveness, strength, in us flawed humans,

             so we can share, and help others experience God in their lives.

God puts "the very presence of the almighty God of the universe" in us!

All of this comes from God.

It does not come from us.

Yet when we walk with him, we discover joy, hope, and peace, in the journey.

We are simply jars of clay, but in the hands of a mighty God,

amazing things are accomplished.

We read the Bible and say,

            "When I understand, I will obey.

             Show me and I will believe."

God says, "Believe and I will show you."

Faith gives strength and courage to face life's severest trials.

It brings us joy when we think there can be no joy.

It lets us see the light in the darkness.

When we are overworked and exhausted, faith gives us fresh energy.

When we are discouraged, faith lifts our spirits.

When we are tempted to quit, faith keeps us going.

When we fear the worst, faith reminds us, God is still in control.

When we feel rejected and abandoned,

             faith reminds us we're not alone, we'll make it through.

As they did for the Corinthians,

           Paul’s words can change our lives, if we will listen.

AMEN