

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 9) – July 3, 2022

“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

– Galatians 6:14 –

“You’re a grand old flag, you’re a high flying flag...Ev’ry heart beats true ‘neath the Red, White, and Blue, where there’s never a boast or brag.” Those are lyrics from George M. Cohen’s beloved patriotic song known as “You’re a Grand Old Flag.” I learned this song when I was in Kindergarten. There’s never a boast or brag...As I grew, I found the phrase to be troubling because it seemed as though everywhere I looked, humanity enjoyed boasting and bragging. Our sinful nature loves to boast about the latest possessions we’ve acquired or brag about our children making the honor roll or being selected for the team. As parents, certainly we’re proud of our children. We love them and we want others to know about their achievements.

St. Paul knows how we love to boast and brag. He wrote this letter to the people in Galatia as a way to warn the Galatian Christians about false teachers, who were teaching “different gospels” from the one, true Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the earlier chapters of his letter, Paul reminds the believers that Jewish laws (such as circumcision, diet, Sabbath, etc.) are not what leads to salvation. As we come to chapter 6, Paul is wrapping up his correspondence. And so, he encourages the Galatian Christians to hold on to what is true: Christ crucified and risen for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Far be it from me to boast... (v. 14a). To paraphrase, Paul says, “I’m not going to boast because why should I? I am a weak and poor, wretched sinner.” But Paul continues, and in so doing, he contradicts himself. “But wait a second! I WILL boast! I will boast ‘in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ’” (v. 14a). The only thing we can and should boast about is regarding the saving grace of our God. Because Jesus Christ suffered and died for all sinners and all sin. Because Jesus Christ was crucified, so that I would never have to suffer and die to my sin, that’s reason to brag about our Heavenly Father’s love! Paul was reminding the Christians (past and present) to be called to a place of humility, to be humbled by the lengths that our God was willing to go to save us from death, the devil, and sin. May we, too, boast in the cross of Jesus Christ, our savior and Lord!

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