

02.08.2026 - Christ Church Vienna

Romans 8:18-25

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight oh lord our strength and our Redeemer! Amen.

*“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.”*

(Romans 8:18)

St Paul is not naïve.

That is worth saying at the outset, because Romans 8 can sometimes sound almost irresponsibly optimistic. Glory. Freedom. Redemption. Hope. Creation itself waiting with eager longing. It can feel—if we are honest—slightly out of step with the world as we experience it.

But Paul is not writing from a place of comfort. He is not sheltered from pain, injustice, or uncertainty. By the time he writes this letter, he knows imprisonment, rejection, danger, and loss. He knows what it is to suffer in his body and in his spirit. And he knows what it is to live in a world that feels profoundly unfinished.

So when Paul speaks about suffering, he does so without sentimentality. He does not minimise it. He does not explain it away. He does not say, “It’s not really that bad,” or “Everything happens for a reason.” He simply acknowledges it as real—and then places it within a much larger horizon.

“I consider,” he says. This is not a slogan. It is a hard-won judgment. A theological reckoning. *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed.*

That word *comparing* matters. Paul is not denying suffering; he is weighing it. And the scales, he says, tip decisively—not because suffering is light, but because glory is unimaginably heavy.

But then Paul does something unexpected. He widens the frame.

This is not only about human suffering. It is about *creation itself*.

“The whole creation,” he says, “has been groaning in labour pains until now.”

Not groaning in death throes—but in labour pains.

That is a crucial distinction.

Paul looks at the brokenness of the world—not only moral brokenness, but physical decay, frustration, futility, death—and he refuses to see it as meaningless. He sees it as painful, yes; tragic, certainly; but also as *pregnant*.

Creation is not dying, he says. Creation is giving birth.

And yet—anyone who has witnessed childbirth knows this is no gentle metaphor. Labour pains are not symbolic discomfort. They are real, visceral, exhausting, and frightening. They involve risk. They involve waiting without control. They involve pain that cannot be hurried away.

Paul’s image is strikingly honest: the world is in pain, and it has been so for a long time. Wars, ecological breakdown, pandemics, political instability, personal loss, mental anguish—all of this belongs to the groaning of creation. And Paul does not spiritualise it away.

What he insists on is this: the pain is not the final word.

The world, he says, is *waiting*. And waiting not passively, but with “eager longing.”

That phrase in Greek is vivid. It suggests someone craning their neck, straining forward, standing on tiptoe. Creation is leaning toward something. It is oriented toward a future it does not yet possess.

And what is it waiting for?

“For the revealing of the children of God.”

In other words, the destiny of the world is mysteriously bound up with the destiny of God’s people.

This is a deeply Anglican—and deeply biblical—vision. Salvation is not an escape from the world. It is not a flight from matter into spirit, from earth into heaven. It is the renewal of the whole creation, beginning with human beings, but never stopping there.

Paul is very clear: the problem is not creation itself. The problem is that creation has been subjected to *futility*. To frustration. To not quite being what it was meant to be.

And this frustration, Paul says, is not arbitrary. It is bound up with human sin, human freedom, human alienation from God. When humanity turns away from its vocation—to reflect God’s glory into the world and the world’s praise back to God—creation itself suffers the consequences.

This is why environmental concern is not a fashionable add-on to Christian faith. It is a deeply theological matter. Creation is not merely the stage on which salvation happens. It is a participant in the drama. It groans. It waits. It hopes.

And Paul dares to say: *creation hopes*.

Not because it is optimistic by nature, but because God is faithful.

And yet—Paul is careful. Hope, he reminds us, is not the same as sight.

“Hope that is seen is not hope,” he says. “For who hopes for what is seen?”

Christian hope is not wishful thinking. It is not denial. It is not pretending that everything is already fine. It is the discipline of trusting God *in the meantime*.

And the meantime matters.

Because Paul does not say that glory replaces suffering instantly. He says we wait for it. And waiting, in Scripture, is never easy. Waiting involves patience. Endurance. Faithfulness without immediate reward.

“We wait for it with patience,” Paul says.

That word can sound passive to modern ears, but in the biblical sense it is anything but. Patience here means steadfastness. Remaining oriented toward God even when resolution is delayed. Refusing despair even when evidence is thin.

And Paul includes himself in this waiting.

“Not only the creation,” he says, “but we ourselves... groan inwardly while we wait.”

Christians groan too.

That is important to hear—especially in a church setting. Faith does not exempt us from frustration, grief, or longing. Baptism does not insulate us from pain. Even those who know Christ, who have received the Spirit, who live within God’s promises—still groan.

We groan because we know there is more. Because we have tasted something of God’s goodness and therefore feel more sharply the world’s brokenness. Because we live between promise and fulfilment.

And Paul names that tension clearly: we have the *first fruits* of the Spirit.

Not the harvest. The first fruits.

Enough to know what is coming. Not enough to possess it fully.

Because Paul does not command us to stop groaning. He does not shame us for our longing. He does not accuse us of weak faith when we feel the weight of the world.

He simply tells the truth: Christian life is lived in hope, not in completion.

And that hope is not rooted in our emotional state, our moral progress, or our ability to fix the world. It is rooted in God’s promise to redeem—to bring to completion what has begun.

The image Paul uses at the end is adoption.

“We wait for adoption,” he says, “the redemption of our bodies.”

Notice: not the escape from our bodies, but their redemption.

This is one of the most counter-cultural claims of Christianity. God does not abandon the physical. God does not discard creation as a failed project. God redeems it—from the inside out.

And that means our bodies matter. Our suffering matters. Our lives matter. Nothing is wasted.

So what does this mean for us, here, now - at Christ Church Vienna?

It means we are called to be a *people of hope* not shallow optimism, but resilient hope.

Hope that can look suffering in the eye and refuse to grant it ultimate authority.

Hope that can lament honestly without collapsing into despair.

Hope that can wait, patiently and faithfully, trusting that God is at work even when we cannot yet see the outcome.

And perhaps most importantly: hope that takes responsibility.

Because if creation waits for the revealing of the children of God, then our lives matter not only for our own salvation, but for the world's healing. The church is not a refuge from the world's pain; it is meant to be a sign—however fragile—of the world's future.

Every act of mercy, every gesture of reconciliation, every commitment to justice, every prayer offered in faith—these are not futile. They are foretastes. First fruits. Small anticipations of the glory to come.

Paul does not promise that the groaning will end quickly.

But he promises that it is not in vain.

And so we wait.

We wait with creation, with one another and we wait with the Spirit, who even now prays within us with sighs too deep for words.

And we wait not, because we have nothing else to do, but because we trust that the God who began this work will bring it to completion.

To him be glory, now and forever.

Amen.