

**SUNDAY DEVOTIONS**  
**12 July 2020 – Pentecost 6**

OPENING PRAYER

Wonderful God - you who send the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous and make the sun to rise upon the just and the unjust - we give you thanks and praise for the abundance of your love. Refresh us today with your Spirit. Pour out upon us your grace and your truth and help us to receive it with joy and to heed your instruction and obey your commandments so that in us and through us there may be an abundant harvest. May your Word live and grow in us and bear much fruit - even as we praise your everlasting name through Christ Jesus your Son and our Lord, our brother, and our friend. Amen.

SONG\*     [WayMaker](#)     CCLI # 7115744

PSALM 119:105-112

Your word is a lamp to my feet,  
**a light to my path.**  
I have sworn an oath and confirmed it;  
**to keep your just rulings.**  
I'm bent over with suffering;  
**O LORD, give me life, according to your word.**  
Please hear my praise offerings, O LORD;  
**and instil me with your rulings.**  
Continually, I put my life in my hands;  
**but I do not forget your way for living.**  
The wicked set a trap for me;  
**but I do not wander from your directions.**  
Your terms for living are my heritage for ever;  
**they are indeed the joy of my heart.**  
I turn my heart to live out your precepts;  
**they are my reward for ever.**

PRAYER OF ADORATION

When we wonder why life is the way it seems to be,  
you teach us how to live for others.  
When we would sell our birthgift of grace for a bowl of sin's stew,  
you nourish us with a serving of hope.  
Holy God, listen to our hearts and words.

When we are convinced we are only barren soil,  
you plant seeds of grace deep within us.  
When our souls are as parched as arid deserts,  
you refresh us with the waters of goodness and mercy.  
Jesus Christ, fill our hearts with your words.

You come into our hearts, to remove the bricks and mortar  
from that great wall of hostility we have built over the years,  
setting us free to play in the kingdom of peace.  
You help us to let go of our focus on ourselves,  
so we may reach out to share with others.  
Holy Spirit, send us forth to live your words.

God in Community, Holy in One,  
with our hearts and with our words,  
we lift our prayers to you. Amen.

#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy Spirit, we confess that we have been caught up in the movements of this world, that cause us to seek our own gain, our own worldly success above the needs of others. We confess that we often judge others by our own lives - that others have not worked hard enough or lived the right way.

Forgive us for our short-sightedness, our selfish smugness that asserts we are right and others are wrong. Forgive us for not living as if we are last of all and servant of all, as Christ has taught us.

Lead us into the way of life, to seek the well-being of others, lifting up those who are in need, and loving our neighbours as ourselves. In the name of Christ, our Teacher, our Redeemer and Friend, we pray. Amen.

#### DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus  
has set us free from the law of sin and death.  
Therefore there is now no condemnation  
for you who are in Christ Jesus.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Be at peace.  
Your sins are forgiven.  
**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

SONG     [Thy Word](#)             CCLI # 14301

#### BIBLE READINGS

[Genesis 25:19-34](#)

[Romans 8:1-11](#)

[Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

SONG     [Amazing Love \(And I'm Forgiven\)](#)             CCLI# 2456623

SERMON [Therefore...](#)             [sermon.mp3](#)

SONG     [Amazing Grace \(My chains are gone\)](#)             CCLI# 4768151

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Loving God, Father and Mother of all - we praise you for being such an awesome farmer - for casting your seed far and wide without regard to where it might land or how it might be received. We praise you for your indiscriminate love - your willingness to forgive - your desire to see all people made whole. Oh God, we pray that in us, instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.

Lord Jesus - we praise you for being such powerful seed - for growing and producing such abundant fruit among those who not only receive you with joy - but who in faithfulness continue to listen to you once you have taken root in them. We thank you for offering to take our burdens – those burdens that might choke out the good news of the Kingdom of God - and for offering to us your yoke and your burden - the yoke of being a sower of your love - the burden of caring for those you care for. Help us Lord to have the ears to hear and the will to do what you want us to hear and do.

Holy Spirit - wind of God - divine comforter - strength of the strong and solace of the needy - we invoke you in the name of the Father and of The Son upon our concerns here in this world - upon our own thirsty hearts and upon the needs of others. As you hovered and brooded over the waters of creation - so be present for those we lift before you now who need to be re-created or made new. We pray for those in grief -and for those who hunger and thirst in body or in soul. We pray for those whose who are vulnerable to having all that is good snatched away from them - and for those who find themselves in the thickets and thistles and who seek a way out. O Lord, we pray that in the lives of those about us, instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.

Lord God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - hear our prayers for those of our family - our church - our community - and our world - that you have put upon our hearts this past week - and this day.

This morning, we pray especially for...

Most loving God, we thank you and we praise you for growing such a wonderful crop. From humble beginnings in the most unlikely of places you have raised up through your Son and the people who bear his name a harvest of souls beyond counting. We pray that we might hear and in hearing - become sowers of your word - a people who produce abundant fruit - both now - and forever. Amen.

SONG     [The Blessing Australia](#)     CCLI# 7147007

#### WORD OF MISSION AND BLESSING

Go now into the world in the light of Christ.  
Do not let the fear of troubles  
or the lures of comfort and honour  
prevent God's word taking root deep in your heart and mind.  
Walk according to the ways of the Spirit  
for the ways of the Spirit are life and peace.

And may God sow in you the seeds of an abundant harvest;  
May Christ the Word be a lamp for your steps;  
And may the Holy Spirit give life to you - body and soul.

\*Songs chosen by Tony

## THEREFORE...

Pentecost 6 Year A

Gn. 25:19-34; Ps. 119:105-112; Rom. 8:1-11; Mt. 13:31-33, 44-52

12/07/2020

---

Last week, as you will no doubt recall, we focused on what would appear to be for most of us, the “Normal Christian life”—that is the life that is characterized by Christians in the battle that goes on within oneself between what we know we should do and want to do and our seeming inability to do it. Rather we constantly do those things that we do not want to do. This is, for Paul, the plight of every human.

We heard at the end of last week’s passage, those echoing words from Paul’s lips, *“Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* And heard the definitive answer to that plight, *“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Jesus Christ is the only one who can set us free from the burden of guilt and shame that comes from our sin.

As we continue through to our passage for today in Romans chapter 8, verses 1-11, we find that there is a slight change in the tone of Paul’s letter. There’s a different atmosphere from that of chapter 7. As we go on to read through chapter 8, we note that there is still this opposition between good and evil—between the flesh and the spirit—but the dominant note is not one of failure but of victory. Paul’s letter to the Romans has turned a corner.

Throughout his letter, right up until the end of chapter seven, Paul has been focusing on the sinful nature—the sinful plight—of humanity—and our attempt to live a life that is pleasing to God through our own strength—in the power of the flesh, as Paul puts it. As we all found out, if we didn’t know it already, it doesn’t work. Now in chapter 8 he changes his focus from this failure to the victory we have over the human condition through Jesus Christ.

There is little doubt that Romans chapter 8 is the high-water mark of the New Testament. One commentator is reported to have said that, “If Holy Scripture was a ring, and the Epistle to the Romans its precious stone, chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel.”<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 8 deals with the result of our being saved by Christ and concludes with a victorious shout of praise and confidence, for the apostle has proclaimed the sovereignty of God, not only in his salvation, but in his sanctification. It begins with the words, “no condemnation” and it concludes with “no separation.” The victory of the Christian is absolutely certain, for the matter is in God’s hands.

What do we find in Romans 8 that transformed Paul’s outlook from despair to joy?

This morning I want to do this in a slightly different way. When a preacher or Bible scholar sets out to study the text he or she would normally focus on the active words, the main thoughts of the passage. I am going to do much the same but I want to do it from a slightly different standpoint. This morning I want to focus on some of the transitional words and phrases that connect the thoughts that Paul is trying to express. Doing this, will, hopefully, highlight the progression of Paul’s thought as he composes his letter.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), p. 295.

The transitional words or phrases I want to focus on are: “therefore,” “because,” “for” and “in order that”—and I’ll briefly touch on each one.

The first line of chapter 8 begins with the words, **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation.”** These are words that ought to be written in large letters and placed on our fridges or somewhere else where we will see them often. Between the end of chapter 7 and the beginning of his declaration in chapter 8 is the word “Therefore.” And as we all know, when you see the word, “therefore” you have to take a close look at what it’s there for.

Paul here is referring to the whole preceding argument—not just the passage we looked at last week but everything in his letter up until this point. Paul has taken several chapters to bring out the way in which God saves us in Christ, and in the light of the whole of that massive argument he can say: “There is now no condemnation.” Once we were slaves to sin but *now* we are free—once we were bowed down with guilt and shame but *now* we are free from condemnation.

The trouble for many Christians is that although they know it up here (in the head) it still hasn’t clicked here (in the heart). We often still act like condemned criminals instead of freed slaves.

The second important word here is the word: “because,” found in verse 2. Why? Because it gives the reason for what Paul has just said. **“Because, through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin.”**

There is no condemnation because of what Christ has done for us—what Christ has done in freeing people from the law that condemns—the law of sin and death. We are free because of what Christ has achieved for us on the cross—through his obedience and sacrifice. The law of sin and death no longer has power over us. Rather it is the law of the Spirit—the Spirit of life—that characterizes (or, at least ought to characterize) our Christian lives, through its presence within us.

The third important word here is the word, “for” in verse 3. Again, this introduces the reason for the preceding argument. **“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son...”**

It is what God did in Christ that brings about the liberation of which Paul has just been speaking. The reason for the Law’s failure was not that it was bad or deficient but that it was weak in the flesh. That is, in our own flesh we are unable to fulfill the Law. This is something that we all know all too well. Ever since the fall in the Garden of Eden, there is no way—nor has there ever been a way—that humankind could ever meet the perfect requirements of the Law. The weakness is not in the Law, it is in us. Paul then goes on to tell us that that God has condemned sin, and did so by sending his own Son to take on our sin and guilt and shame and to die in our place, leaving us the Holy Spirit to indwell us.

Why? Well that leads us to the final transitional phrase I want to look at this morning: “In order that” found in verse 4. **“...in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us...”**

This verse points us to both God’s purpose, which never fails of fulfillment and the result as well. Note that Paul does not say that “we fulfill the law’s righteous requirement,” but that “the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us.” This is a really important distinction. If we walk according to the Spirit, which lives in us, and not according to the

flesh—that is, our sinful nature—which is at war with the Spirit—then the law will be fulfilled in us. It will be fulfilled in us through the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

So, if we were to summarize what Paul is saying in verses 1-11, it would go something like this: What the Lord Jesus Christ acquired by His death, burial and resurrection, the Holy Spirit applies through his indwelling ministry in the life of the Christian.

There is no condemnation to be dreaded by the Christian. Why? Because all of our sins, past, present, and future, have been dealt with on the cross of Calvary. But more than the fact that we have been delivered from the penalty of sin, we have also been delivered from its power. Since the Law was incapable of producing righteousness due to the weakness of our flesh, Christ redeemed us from bondage to the Law by His death. The claims of the Law and of sin on the Christian have been fully met in the sacrificial death of Christ.

Furthermore, God has made provision for the Christian to fulfill the requirements of the Law through the power of the Holy Spirit. What we could never accomplish in the power of the flesh can now be achieved in the power of the Spirit. The Christian now has an alternative, for God has placed His Spirit within every Christian, and this Spirit is the source of liberty and of life.

So far as our flesh is concerned, it is dead in its ability to produce the fruit of righteousness. But the Holy Spirit has power over death and is able to give life to our mortal bodies. He can produce in us the righteousness that God requires of us.

This is a mind-bending declaration. For Paul, freedom doesn't come from legislation, a social program or a better moral instruction kit. Freedom is achieved by the saving act of God in Christ, who dealt with sin by taking on human flesh. This is an act that has brought about liberty for all who are in Christ. It is only living *in Christ*, says Paul, that we can experience freedom from that which ails humanity. It is this freedom that brings about a new relationship with God—a relationship that enables us to live lives according to his will and purpose.

To him be all the glory, honour, majesty and praise. Amen.