

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 28, 2020

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



PRELUDE *These Are the Holy Ten Commands* Setting: Wolfgang Carl Briegel

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #581 sts. 1-4, 11-12 *These Are the Holy Ten Commands*

- 1 **These are the holy Ten Commands
God gave to us by Moses' hands
When high on Sinai's mount he stood,
Receiving them for our good.
Have mercy, Lord!**

- 2 **"I am alone your God, the Lord;
No other gods shall be adored.
But you shall fully trust in Me
And love Me wholeheartedly."
Have mercy, Lord!**

- 3 **"Do not My holy name disgrace,
Do not My Word of truth debase.
Praise only that as good and true
Which I Myself say and do."
Have mercy, Lord!**

- 4 **"You shall observe the worship day
That peace may fill your home, and pray,
And put aside the work you do,
So that God may work in you."
Have mercy, Lord!**

- 11 **You have this Law to see therein
That you have not been free from sin
But also that you clearly see
How pure toward God life should be.
Have mercy, Lord!**

- 12 **Our works cannot salvation gain;
They merit only endless pain.
Forgive us, Lord! To Christ we flee,
Who pleads for us endlessly.
Have mercy, Lord!**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that, attentive to your Word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

(Silence for reflection and self-examination)

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the gift of divine peace and of pardon, with all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the holy Christian church, here and scattered throughout the world, and for the proclamation of the Gospel and the calling of all to faith, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

HYMN OF PRAISE

**To you on high be glory and peace to all the earth;
Goodwill from God in heaven proclaimed at Jesus' birth!
We praise and bless You, Father; Your holy name, we sing –
Our thanks for Your great glory, Lord God our heavenly King.**

**To you, O sole begotten, the Father's Son, we pray;
O Lamb of God, our Savior, You take our sins away.
Have mercy on us, Jesus; receive our heartfelt cry,
Where You in power are seated at God's right hand on high.**

**For You alone are holy; You only are the Lord.
Forever and forever, be worshiped and adored;
You with the Holy Spirit alone are Lord Most High,
In God the Father's glory. "Amen!" our glad reply.**

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty God,

by the working of Your Holy Spirit, grant that we may gladly hear Your Word proclaimed among us and follow its directing; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



FIRST LESSON Jeremiah 28:5–9

Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD, and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 119:153–160

Look on my affliction and deliver me,
for I do not forget your law.
Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise!
Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
Great is your mercy, O LORD;
give me life according to your just decrees.
Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
but I do not swerve from your testimonies.
I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.
Consider how I love your precepts!
Give me life according to your steadfast love.
The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your just and righteous decrees endures forever.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON Matthew 10:34-42

[Jesus said:] “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

SERMON TEXT Romans 7:1-13

Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.
Dear friends in Christ:

The text for today's sermon is the lesson just read from the book of Romans. The church has assigned us seventeen weeks in a row to read from this same book. So, there must be good material here, right? Yes, of course. We know that.

Of Romans, our beloved Dr. Luther wrote: "This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and is truly the purest gospel. It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. We can never read or ponder it too much; for the more we deal with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes."

Our reading of Romans this year began two Sundays ago. We started there with chapter five, because the earlier chapters get read only in those years when Easter is early and we have more Sundays after Pentecost to fill. This year we'll have fourteen weeks of readings from Romans.

To get us started today, let me just give a little summary of those earlier chapters to catch us up. One of nice things about Romans is that its teachings are so well organized. The first chapter introduces the theme of the letter – the righteous shall live by faith. The chapter then commences to show – and it does this through the middle of chapter three – that there is much unrighteousness in the world, and, in fact, there is no one who is righteous enough in the sight of God.

But then in that third chapter we hear about a righteousness that comes from God – one which is given to us through faith. This righteousness comes as we are justified by God's grace, as a gift. It comes through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation for our sins.

Furthermore, this righteousness comes apart from works of the Law. Chapter four demonstrates this fact in the life of Abraham.

Chapters five through eight then teach how those who have been declared righteous in Christ are to live. Chapter five says they should live at peace with God, and gives further explanation about how that peace was and is made possible. Chapter six urges the righteous to put away sin. And chapter seven, where we pick up today, urges the righteous to understand the place of the Law in their life.

Today is the first of two Sundays devoted to chapter seven. Interestingly, not too many years ago we would only read the second part of the chapter – the part we will read next Sunday. That second part is very well known and gives a very powerful lesson. By contrast, there are aspects of the first part of the chapter that are a little confusing. But Paul wrote both parts to fit together, and we're blessed to be able to hear them both.

Paul begins chapter seven by using an analogy to help explain his argument. He reminds his readers that according to the law, a married woman is bound to her husband until he dies. Until that time, she cannot be with another man, even if she and her husband are separated. If the husband dies, then she is free to marry another. That was the Old Testament law.

Paul uses the idea of death here in order to teach about freedom. In chapter six he had also told his hearers: "Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Now, in chapter seven, Paul tells his hearers to think of themselves as dead to the law. When one has died to the law, they are free to live as God's children, just as a woman is free to remarry when her first husband dies.

Paul even extends the marriage analogy, saying we now "belong to another – to him who has been raised from the dead." These words echo other statements of Paul where he refers to the church as the bride of Christ.

Then Paul says more. And here's where his thoughts get extra interesting. Paul claims that our sinful passions were aroused by the law. He says this very directly in v.5 and repeats the assertion in v. 8. In this claim, Paul is no doubt referring to the fact that when there is a law, people start to resent it,

and the resentment leads to more sin. One has only to think of Adam and Eve in the garden. The Devil knew that he could tempt them by playing on their resentment, so he made a series of statements – filled with half-truths – that led them to start resenting God’s rule and authority. And, of course, his strategy worked. Adam and Eve sinned.

It’s interesting to me to think about how the law still moves us in this way today. And I’ll share some thoughts on this at the end of the sermon. But for now, let’s keep going with the text.

Yes, the law can cause sin to increase. But Paul immediately counterbalances this sad state of affairs by reminding us that we are now released from the law, having died to that which held us captive.

Paul then addresses a question which naturally arises from all which he has just shared. And he introduces the question by repeating the language he used a chapter earlier, asking: “What then shall we say?” There in chapter six the question was about whether we should go on sinning. Here the question is about whether we should get rid of the law because the law can lead to sin.

Paul answers the question by again using a phrase from the previous chapter. “By no means,” he says. He then explains how the law, even if it might produce more sin, also makes us aware of our sin. And we need this. He goes on to use the example of his own coveting to make the point.

Paul says that it is sin that produces the covetousness, which is a little bit confusing because we then wonder how can sin produce sin. But Paul is using the word sin here as shorthand for our sinful nature. It’s our sinful nature which produces the sin of coveting. Paul will use the word this way a few verses later too.

While we’re at it, we should also note that in these verses Paul uses the word “death” in two different ways as well. Earlier he used the word to refer to something good – our death to the law and our resulting freedom. Here in these later verses he uses the word to refer to something bad – our physical death. Paul tells us that our physical death comes about because of our sin, not the law.

These different uses of the same word make Paul’s teaching here a little difficult. Next week we will see him use the word “law” in two different ways. Still, Paul’s logic is sound. He clearly teaches that followers of Christ still need the law of God. “The law is holy,” he ends up saying. And he adds that the commandment – the word he uses for a specific part of the law – is also “holy and righteous and good.”

These teachings of Paul may seem very theoretical, and perhaps even unimportant. But their importance becomes obvious when we do more thinking.

In our country right now, there are big debates going on that pertain to the law. Actually, there are always debates going on about the law. Right now, these just seem to be magnified... because we’re living with a pandemic and need new laws (or at least new orders), and because there have been many very visible protests taking place concerning how our laws are enforced.

There have always been some people – Christians included – that feel we don’t really need the law. Some think the law is unnecessary because they believe people will basically do the right thing if you just treat them right. Others don’t want the law because they feel they are strong and smart enough to survive just fine without it – and they want their freedoms.

And then there are those who place too much emphasis on the law... believing that the best way to manage humanity is by finding the right laws, instead of caring for people’s needs.

The Christian consensus is that there needs to be law. The fact that God gives laws is evidence that people need them – to not only order their personal lives but also their society.

Those laws which God gives are to be followed by believers and commended to society. Those laws which man creates can be debated but are to be followed by the believer too – as long as they don’t force a believer to break a law of God.

In these days of enduring a difficult pandemic, I will use this opportunity to simply implore you to follow the laws which our leaders have put in place to protect us. We can debate them, but let’s also

follow them. These are difficult times, with some unclear paths forward, so let's help to maintain the order.

And let me also suggest a thought for you based on what Paul said about the law arousing our sinful passions. It occurs to me that some people might hear this and conclude that the law, in effect, also then "causes" our sin. And if it does, they could suggest that since the law causes sin people should not be held responsible for breaking it.

There has always been a part of us that wants to say, "the devil made me do it." And we're also very ready to place blame on our fellow man, as Adam did with Eve. Paul's words remind us that we can even blame the law itself too, which, since God gave the law, is really blaming God.

In our day and age, blaming others is as much the thing to do as it has ever been. We even have new terms that can be used for our blaming – such as claiming that we were triggered or justly outraged.

Sometimes blame needs to be assigned. But other times blame is simply an excuse we use – something we throw out to cover our own resentment. We need to be very careful with blame.

Notice that Paul, even though he observes that the law increases our sin, doesn't use this as an excuse. He doesn't blame the law. The law is good.

Paul takes responsibility for his own sin. And this causes him some real struggle, as we will see in the next verses. This struggle of Paul's, which is ours too, will be our subject for next week.

Today, let me conclude by lifting up one more phrase from today's text. Paul teaches us to rejoice that we "serve in the new way of the Spirit." Knowing that the Holy Spirit is with us as we go about our work each day is certainly something to celebrate. Paul will say much more about the Spirit in chapter eight, which we will examine in two weeks.

For now, let us simply give thanks for the Spirit's presence in our lives and for the Spirit's renewal as we have heard God's Word. God pours out his Holy Spirit on those who turn their hearts and minds to him. God gives his Spirit in abundance. Through the Spirit, God gives great power.

May the Spirit then lead us in all things – and especially in honoring the Law of God and keeping it.

Peace to you all through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #579 The Law of God Is Good and Wise

- 1 The Law of God is good and wise
And sets His will before our eyes,
Shows us the way of righteousness,
And dooms to death when we transgress.**

- 2 Its light of holiness imparts
The knowledge of our sinful hearts
That we may see our lost estate
And turn from sin before too late.**

- 5 The Law is good; but since the fall
Its holiness condemns us all;
It dooms us for our sin to die
And has no pow'r to justify.**

- 1 The Gospel shows the Father's grace,
Who sent His Son to save our race,
Proclaims how Jesus lived and died
That we might thus be justified.**

- 2 It sets the Lamb before our eyes,
Who made the atoning sacrifice,
And calls the souls with guilt oppressed
To come and find eternal rest.**

- 3 It brings the Savior's righteousness
To robe our souls in royal dress;
From all our guilt it brings release
And gives the troubled conscience peace.**

- 6 May we in faith its message learn
Nor thanklessly its blessings spurn;
May we in faith its truth confess
And praise the Lord, our righteousness.**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERING *The Law of God Is Good and Wise* Setting: Scott Hyslop

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near to the Lord's throne of grace and pray as He has commanded us, trusting in the Lord to hear the prayers of His people and answer our petitions according to His mercy.

Brief silence

O most merciful God, Lord of heaven and earth, we pray You to so rule and govern Your Church and all her pastors and ministers that she may be preserved in the pure doctrine of Your saving Word, defended against all adversity, and protected from all who seek her harm, that thereby faith may be strengthened and love increased in us.

Grant health, wisdom and integrity to all in authority over us, especially to the president of the United States, the governor of this commonwealth, the Congress, all legislative bodies, and all judges and magistrates. Endow them with Your Spirit and with respect for Your Word, that they would serve Your

good pleasure for the maintenance of righteousness and the punishment of wickedness so that all may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.

Grant to those in trouble, want, sickness, anguish of labor, peril of death or any other adversity the healthful Spirit of Your grace for healing, strength, comfort and relief. Bless especially those who suffer for the sake of Your name and Your Word. Hear us on behalf of _____ and those we name in our hearts. Give them courage to stand firm in their time of affliction and patience until the day of Your deliverance.

Preserve us from pestilence and every evil. Give to us favorable weather and cause the fruits of the earth to prosper, that we may enjoy them in due season and offer You praise and thanksgiving for all Your goodness to us. Lend Your blessing to all honorable vocations and honest industry, that we may serve where our skills and abilities may be of good use. Bless the arts and music, that we may please You and be encouraged by all that is good, right, true and beautiful.

Give to all husbands and wives grace to live together in love and faithfulness. Bless the homes and families of Your people, that they may be places where Your name is honored, and love is nurtured. Give Your special grace to the widowed, the orphan, all mothers with child, the aged and the infirm, that we may grant them comfort, aid and protection.

All these things for which You would have us ask of You, we pray You to grant to us for the sake of the bitter sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we are bold to call You Father and in whose name we pray, trusting in Your mercy and confident that You will give answer to our prayers; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless us and keep us.
The Lord make His face shine on us
and be gracious to us.
The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

- 1 Let us ever walk with Jesus,
Follow His example pure,
Through a world that would deceive us
And to sin our spirits lure.
Onward in His footsteps treading,
Pilgrims here, our home above,
Full of faith and hope and love,
Let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, with me abide;
I shall follow where You guide.

- 2 Let us suffer here with Jesus
And with patience bear our cross.
Joy will follow all our sadness;
Where He is, there is no loss.
Though today we sow no laughter,
We shall reap celestial joy;
All discomforts that annoy
Shall give way to mirth hereafter.
Jesus, here I share Your woe;
Help me there Your joy to know.

- 3 Let us gladly die with Jesus.
Since by death He conquered death,
He will free us from destruction,
Give to us immortal breath.
Let us mortify all passion
That would lead us into sin;
And the grave that shuts us in
Shall but prove the gate to heaven.
Jesus, here with You I die,
There to live with You on high.

- 4 Let us also live with Jesus.
He has risen from the dead
That to life we may awaken.
Jesus, You are now our head.
We are Your own living members;
Where You live, there we shall be
In Your presence constantly,
Living there with You forever.
Jesus, let me faithful be,
Life eternal grant to me.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus Setting: Paul Manz

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