

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 5, 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 Stz 1, 5-7, 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!**
  
- 5 **"You are to honor and obey  
Your father, mother, ev'ry day,  
Serve them each way that comes to hand;  
You'll then live long in the land."  
Have mercy, Lord!**
  
- 6 **"You shall not murder, hurt, nor hate;  
Your anger dare not dominate.  
Be kind and patient; help, defend,  
And treat your foe as your friend."  
Have mercy, Lord!**
  
- 7 **"Be faithful to your marriage vow;  
No lust or impure thoughts allow.  
Keep all your conduct free from sin  
By self-controlled discipline."  
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. Gracious God, our heavenly Father,

**Your mercy attends us all our days. Be our strength and support amid the wearisome changes of this world, and at life's end grant us Your promised rest and the full joys of Your salvation; 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* Zechariah 9:9–12

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
behold, your king is coming to you;  
righteous and having salvation is he,  
humble and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
and the war horse from Jerusalem;  
and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
and he shall speak peace to the nations;  
his rule shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.  
As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,  
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.  
Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;  
today I declare that I will restore to you double.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*PSALM 145:1–14*

I will extol you, my God and King,  
and bless your name forever and ever.  
Every day I will bless you  
and praise your name forever and ever.  
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,  
and his greatness is unsearchable.  
One generation shall commend your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.  
On the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.  
They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,  
and I will declare your greatness.  
They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness

and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.  
The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
The LORD is good to all,  
and his mercy is over all that he has made.  
All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,  
and all your saints shall bless you!  
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom  
and tell of your power,  
to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,  
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.  
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.  
The LORD is faithful in all his words  
and kind in all his works.  
The LORD upholds all who are falling  
and raises up all who are bowed down.

**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 11:25-30

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

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 7:14-25a

We know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is

right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

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:

Our text for consideration today is the lesson from Romans chapter seven, just read. This text constitutes the second half of the chapter. Last week we read the first.

I will begin by reminding you that in the Book of Romans Paul is giving a very thorough and systematic presentation of the Gospel of Jesus – highlighting in particular the ways this Gospel impacts us as individuals. This focus on the individual is a contrast to other letters of his, such as the two letters to the Corinthians which immediately follow Romans, where he spends more time addressing topics pertaining to the gathered church.

In Romans, Paul lifts up as central the very important teaching of justification – the understanding that individual people are saved by being justified in the sight of God by Jesus Christ. People can't save themselves; they need a Savior. Jesus is that Savior. People simply accept his salvation by their faith.

As the Book of Romans progresses, Paul addresses questions which arise from this understanding. In chapter six he addresses the question of whether Christians should go on sinning so that grace may abound. His answer is a definite "no." "By no means!" he says.

In chapter seven, Paul teaches on the Christian's relationship to the law. In the verses we covered last week we heard him describe how the law is still relevant to us, for not only does the law show us our sin, but it also describes to us how we are to live. The law is "holy," says Paul, given to us by God.

The second half of chapter seven, where we pick up today, begins by repeating the fact of the law's holiness – this time saying the law is "spiritual." Paul then notes that in contrast to the law, he, himself, is "of the flesh, sold under sin." He says this to bring up another question which naturally arises out of our justification. Paul had earlier told us that we shouldn't continue to sin. Now he has us think about the very uncomfortable reality that we continue to do so anyway.

In teaching on this subject, Paul switches from the past tense to the present. Jesus may have justified us in the past, but what about our present sin? And Paul makes his teaching very personal. He shares what is going on with him in his own life. He makes it clear that he is troubled by his actions – he doesn't understand them. "I do not do what I want," he says. Instead, "I do the very thing I hate." Paul hates sin, but he continues to commit sin anyway.

Unlike the earlier part of the chapter when he mentioned his coveting, Paul doesn't mention here what kind of sin he's currently committing. He just says that he continues to sin. And that he's frustrated by this.

As a first step in explaining this reality, Paul then says: "it is no longer I who do it (meaning the committing of sin), but sin that dwells within me." Now this is an interesting statement! It may at first sound like Paul is making an excuse for his sin. But as we heard last week, Paul knows there is no excuse for sinning.

What Paul is referring to here is what we typically call the sinful human nature – the Biblical teaching that our human nature has been corrupted, ever since humanity's first fall into sin. Our

corrupted nature leaves us with an innate inclination to rebel against God and his laws. Sin now “dwells within us” – meaning it has a home in our hearts.

The sinful human nature is a well-established Biblical teaching. But does the sinful nature persist after our salvation? Isn't God now helping us? Isn't he dwelling in our hearts too?

Paul just told us in chapter six that our “old self was crucified with Jesus” and “we were joined to his resurrection” (6:5,6). In chapter five he told us that we were “made righteous” (5:19), not just “declared righteous” as he had earlier said. These phrases imply a change for the Christian.

And we know, too, that a Christian has received the Holy Spirit. In chapter five Paul says that “God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Earlier in chapter seven Paul tells us that we “serve in the new way of the Spirit.” Certainly, the Holy Spirit makes a difference in the life of a Christian.

Reading on, we see how Paul understands this seeming contradiction. He describes a scenario, again in his own life, where he is like two different people at the same time, or as one person with two personalities. In verses 22 and 23 he uses the language of “inner being” and “my members” to distinguish between the two. In the last verse of the chapter he describes them as “my mind” and “my flesh.” His reference in chapter six to the “old self” implies that there is also now a “new self” – an implication said explicitly to the Corinthians when he says: “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”

Luther, reflecting this teaching of Paul, has us use the language of the “old Adam and the new self.” In the Baptismal section of his catechism, we're taught that the “Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and a new man daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity.”

As Christian people, saved by Jesus, we are both new and old at the same time. We are both changed and the same. We are, according to another well-known theological description of this reality, simultaneously both saint and sinner.

We usually refer to this reality as a paradox. Paul refers to it here as a “law,” which is a little confusing since he's used the word law in its more direct sense earlier in the chapter. But we can understand the two senses. His use here simply describes a reality. He says: “I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.”

And here we note another reality. A sad reality. Paul explains that this condition of ours leads to a battle between our two selves. War is being waged. This war results in loss... the loss of freedom, for we find that we are in fact captive to the law of sin.

War. Battle. Captivity. Paul has now described for us in detail a hard reality which Christians face. It is a reality of two opposing forces struggling within. It is also a reality of failure, which is why Paul is so frustrated.

Paul acknowledges his sad reality by crying out: “Wretched man that I am!” To this he adds the plea: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” It seems at this point that the matter is concluded.

And yet, Paul has one more thing to say... and he's going to say it right away, not linger in his wretchedness. For Paul also knows of another reality – the reality of his justification. God has justified him through the salvation given by Jesus.

“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” he says. Paul knows that his sins are covered, and the battle is ultimately won. Paul knows that in the end, he is not captive but free. And so are we.

As we today think about these teachings of the scriptures, especially as they are presented to us by Paul in Romans seven, what are some lessons that we should be gleaning from them for our own lives?

First, we should know that struggling with sin is normal. If Paul struggled with sin – despite his great faith and commitment – then why wouldn't we? Paul's explanation of the struggle, in fact, rings very true for us. There is, certainly, an old and new self in us. We see this every day. Some days the new self seems to be winning, while other days the old is prevailing. This reality describes us well.

Second, these teachings of scripture free us from the notion – promoted by so many – that we must overcome our sin if we are to please God. God is pleased with us through the sacrifice of his Son on our behalf. We live in that grace and can now “sin boldly” as Dr. Luther taught us – which is not intentionally sinning or celebrating our sin but simply knowing that it is no longer a death sentence.

Third, as we think about this text in its broader context, we should also hear Paul’s words of struggle here as not simply a description of reality, but also a prescription on how to live. In other words, we should hear Paul telling us to continue the struggle against our sin and not give up. Paul had earlier asked: “Shall we go on sinning that grace may abound?” His answer was: “By no means!”

In his commentary on the Book of Romans, Martin Franzmann suggests that Paul’s description of his struggle with sin is quickly dismissed by most people in the modern age. He says: “To many, Paul’s acute consciousness of the sin that dogs the Christian even in his new, free life seems over-wrought, and his picture of the perpetual failure of the new man in his confrontation with the law of God seems overdrawn. Is there not something morbid about this hypersensitivity to sin, this grim introspection, this unsparing castigation of oneself?”

The simple way of expressing this thought – and a phrase we hear often – is “what’s the big deal with sin?” Why should we knock ourselves out with a struggle? Let’s just forget about it and enjoy. Who needs the fuss? The judgement? The guilt?

But the Scriptures call us to the struggle. We’re to do this for our own good and that of others. Franzmann addresses criticisms of the struggle by saying: “But it is not Paul who is morbid. Rather, it is the [modern] man who is diseased with a sickly secularity. Modern man calls ‘natural’ that which a healthy judgment, made whole by the Spirit of God, can only call in the highest degree unnatural, namely, withdrawal from God.”

In the *Short Form of Confession* that Luther wrote for his catechism, the penitent is led to conclude their confession by saying: “I am sorry for all of this and I ask for grace. I want to do better.” That language – of wanting to do better – has been added to the *Rite of Individual Confession and Absolution* in our new hymnal. The statement becomes our pledge to stay in the struggle.

Thinking about this in the context of the whole book, we see that Romans urges the Christian to find a balance. The Christian is to both struggle against their sin and accept the reality of who they are – a sinner who is forgiven. The Christian wants to do better but doesn’t beat themselves up when they fail at this. They’ve been accepted by God – who loves them despite their sin.

As Christian people, we do not fall into despair because of our sin. Our sin may frustrate us. It may humble us. But it should not defeat us.

We don’t need to cower in shame because of our sin, we just don’t become comfortable with it. We want to do better.

As always, our liturgy guides us well. It leads us to confess our sins – calling them to mind and reinforcing their seriousness. But then it immediately declares God’s forgiveness – assuring us of his grace.

When you place your faith in Jesus Christ, you have been forgiven, strengthened and kept in God’s grace. That old self of yours may still rear its ugly head – more than you would like – but your new self has arisen to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. You have been delivered from this body of death.

With Paul and with all the saints, we therefore go forward boldly with our lives, declaring with them: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Amen.

*HYMN OF THE DAY #579 sts. 1, 3, 6 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.**
  
- 3 To those who help in Christ have found  
And would in works of love abound  
It shows what deeds are His delight  
And should be done as good and right.**
  
- 6 To Jesus we for refuge flee,  
Who from the curse has set us free,  
And humbly worship at His throne,  
Saved by His grace through faith alone.**

*HYMN OF THE DAY (2) #580 sts. 1, 4, 6 The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace*

- 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.**
  
- 4 It is the pow'r of God to save  
From sin and Satan and the grave;  
It works the faith which firmly clings  
To all the treasures which it brings.**
  
- 5 It bears to all the tidings glad  
And bids their hearts no more be sad;  
The weary, burdened souls it cheers  
And banishes their guilty fears.**
  
- 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.**

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Merciful Lord, hear the prayers of Your people and grant to us grace sufficient for our needs and all those for whom we pray.

*Brief silence*

Our God and King, as once Your people received You in joy, open our hearts to rejoice in Your coming so that we may meet You in Your Word and Sacrament, for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. Help us to bless and extol Your name before the nations and to declare Your salvation to the generations to come, proclaiming that You are merciful and gracious and abounding in steadfast love. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our wise and giving God, You are the God of truth and in You is no falsehood or deception. Help us to delight in Your Law, to love what is good and true and right, and to seek after these things. Help us to wage war against the old Adam within us, restore us when we stray from Your Word, and forgive us when we give into the devil's temptations. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our merciful God and Lord, You are good to all Your creation. Continue to bless Your Church and to provide for her those who will serve in Your name. Make bold our witness before the nations and help us to act in love toward our neighbors. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our Creator and Lord, from You all things come and to You are all things directed. On this anniversary of our nation, bless us with all things needful for our prosperity and for an honorable way of life. Give us faithful leaders, responsible citizens and a right use of our liberties. Save us from violence, discord and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and every evil course of action. Make us mindful of the heritage our forebears have given to this land and guide us to be faithful in our stewardship of all its resources. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our compassionate Lord, we do not suffer alone the pain and afflictions of this life, but we live them out within Your grace and are sustained by Your mercy. We ask that you end the pestilence among us and protect us and give us patience while we wait. Hear us also on behalf of the sick, the grieving and all those who suffer, [*especially \_\_\_\_\_*]. According to Your will, deliver them from their afflictions and give to all Your strength, patience and hope, that they may endure to eternal life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things, blessed Lord, we pray You to grant us according to Your merciful goodness and for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **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.

*SENDING HYMN #501LW God Of Our Fathers*

- 1. God of our fathers, whose almighty hand  
Leads forth in beauty all the starry band  
Of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,  
Our grateful songs before Thy throne arise.**
- 2. Thy love divine hath led us in the past,  
In this free land by Thee our lot is cast;  
Be Thou our ruler, guardian, guide and stay,  
Thy Word our law, Thy paths our chosen way.**
- 3. From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence,  
Be Thy strong arm our ever sure defense;  
Thy true religion in our hearts increase,  
Thy bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.**
- 4. Refresh Thy people on their toilsome way,  
Lead us from night to never-ending day;  
Fill all our lives with love and grace divine,  
And glory, laud, and praise be ever Thine.**

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

*DISMISSAL*

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*POSTLUDE*    *God Bless Our Native Land*    Setting: Sondra K. Tucker

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