

## You Are Alive! - Part Two

I preach this morning in the name of God, the Father, the + Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today is the fourth Sunday after Pentecost and we continue in the Days following Pentecost. And in these Days following Pentecost, we are reminded of the person, of the power, and of the presence of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the early Church. But not only upon the early Church, but upon our lives, too. For in the holy waters of Baptism, Jesus calls you to Himself. He claims your life as His very own and He redeems your life from the depths of Sheol and forgives you all your sin.

Last week, we kicked off a sermon series - a two week sermon series called "I Am Alive!" And last week, Paul defended the great Doctrine of Justification by Faith that says we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, all of which is revealed in the words of Holy Scripture alone. Paul was defending that great Doctrine of the Faith, but of course, we know that those words and that doctrine was not penned until the latter part of the Middle Ages. And history suggests to us that there is really no clear linear movement from the early apostles and to that of Martin Luther in the Protestant Reformation. But nonetheless, no doubt, Paul is defending this pure Doctrine of the Faith, the way in which we are saved, because Paul goes on to say in Galatians chapter 1, the 6th verse, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all."

You see the church here in Galatia believed in the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ. They put their confidence and their trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but then they turned to another gospel - that is the way of men by way of meriting one's salvation, the way of accomplishing what Jesus Christ has already

done. And Jesus Christ has finished the work, but yet, Paul says, they have “turned to another gospel, which is no gospel at all” (Gal. 1:7).

You see, if grace is what justifies a person in the presence of a holy and righteous God, then it is grace that also sanctifies a person to live out their vocational call into this world. In other words, if it's grace that calls you to the redeeming love of Jesus Christ, if it is grace that puts you back in right alignment with a Holy and a righteous Father, then it is also grace that sends you out in the power and the person and the work of the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's call upon your life: to let the light of Jesus Christ shine in this dark world.

You see, that's what our lesson is about today. Our lesson today is about living out your faith. Living out your faith is living a life of obedience to God. Living out your faith is living a life of love to your neighbor. And living out your faith is living a life of total and complete submission to the person, to the work, and to the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within you. So, let's take a look. It's Romans chapter 6, verses 12 through 23. Grab your Bibles and let's dig in here this morning. Now, the first point is that living out our faith is living a life of obedience to God. You cannot obey God until you are crucified in your flesh. And you cannot be crucified in your flesh until you are united with the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's what we talked about last week in Part 1.

But in grace, you are dead to your sin and you rise to new life in Jesus' name and it's all because of grace. Grace gives you the ability to choose whom you shall serve, verse 15, “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obey the form of teaching to which you were

entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

You see, before grace found you, before Jesus Christ found you in your sin, the choice had already been made for you. This is precisely what the Doctrine of Original Sin is all about - birth into this world is birth into sin, and birth into sin is birth into death. Apart from a living relationship with Jesus Christ, the choice has already been made for you. You are dead in your sin and there is no hope for a future. But in grace, and the love and mercy and the grace of Jesus Christ, grace gives you the ability to choose whom you shall serve. No longer are you confined to your sinful way of life because now you are a new creation. God has redeemed you; God's love has poured out upon you. Newness of life is now your trajectory for the way in which God will use you in His Kingdom. No longer does sin confine you, now you are a new creation.

This is why Paul praises, for he says in verse 17, “But thanks be to God...” This is a hymn of praise! “But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and you have become slaves to righteousness.” That is, you have become a servant to righteousness.

Grace gives you the ability to choose whom you will serve and grace gives you the opportunity to love your neighbor as yourself. And that leads us to our second point - living out your faith is living a life of love to your neighbor.

In answering the question in the synagogue of “Which of these commandments, Jesus, is the most important, is the greatest?” (Mark 12:28), Jesus said, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all your soul and with all of your strength and all of your mind. And the second is like it: to love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:29-31).

You see, when you are set free from something, you are always set free to something. That is to say, because you have been set free from your sin, you have been set free in order to serve your neighbor in love.

And who is your neighbor? Well, Jesus answers this question as He teaches the Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Holy Gospel of Luke the tenth chapter when He says, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. When he went to him, he bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' And which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." And Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:30-37).

Who is our neighbor? Our neighbor, like *Horton Hears A Who*, is the one who is hurting most. I heard a story of a man who was on his deathbed. He was upstairs in his room and he thought he smelled some great cooking from the kitchen. His favorite were those homemade chocolate chip cookies. He was laying there, ready to go and be with Jesus, and he thought he smelled those wonderful homemade cookies from his wife in the kitchen. So he mustered up all the strength that he could get and he crawled on the floor over to the stairwell. He got a little bit more strength and hoisted himself up so he could slide down the banister, all the way down into the living room. He then crawled into the kitchen, his wife's back was turned against him so she couldn't tell that he was in

the kitchen. He can smell it - he thought he almost died and went to heaven or perhaps his wife was loving him one last time before he went to go see Jesus. He got to the kitchen table, you know, and peeked up over the top and all these newspapers were filled with his favorite homemade chocolate chip cookies. He mustered up a little bit more strength and lifted up his hand to grab a cookie and begin to eat one. One turned into two, two turned into three, three turned into four. And at last, his wife turned around, met him with a spatula, and said to him, "Get out of those! Those aren't for you! Those are for your funeral!"  
Loving your neighbor - to each his own.

See, it's all because of God's grace that we can live out a life of faith. And living a life of faith is obeying the Lord. It's obeying what God has commanded you to do in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Living a life of faith is living a life of love to your neighbor - to the person who is hurting most. Who is hurting most in your life? They are all around us and they are crying out as loud as they ever have been before.

Living out your faith is living a life of total submission to the person, to the power, and to the presence of the Holy Spirit. You see, you are no longer defined by your sin. This makes me want to shout! You are no longer defined by your sin! Yes, though you sin in this world because we live in a broken reality, we live our existence in these days of darkness, yes, we will sin. We will open our mouths when we should keep them shut. We will do things that we wish we could take back. We will sin - that's why we come to worship and we confess our sins. That's why in Matthew chapter 18, Jesus tells us to go to your brother with whom you have fought and confess your sin. James says it's healing, "Confess your sins one to another that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

We are going to sin in this life, but grace now defines you and grace is unmerited favor of God in your life. You don't have to work for it, you are justified by grace and you are sanctified by grace. That is, He empowers you with His

love, with His peace, because your life has been changed. He commands you and He charges you to go into all the nations and make disciples of all nations. “Know that I am with you as you go, because it’s going to be a tough journey. It’s going to be a difficult one, but I am with you. What are you to do? Baptize in the name of the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and teach them everything that I have commanded you” (interpretation of Matt. 28:19-20). You see, living out your faith is a joy. And now sin no longer defines you, grace defines you. You are a Son of Grace; You are a Daughter of Grace. And if this doesn’t make you want to shout, I don’t know what will.

This is why Paul says to offer your bodies as an instrument of praise. Verse 12, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the part of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”

Because you are dead to your sin and because you are alive in Jesus Christ, He calls you to live a life of praise to Him. That’s what my wife and I are going to do now as we sing for you a song that speaks of God’s call over each and every one of us here to live out our vocational call of new life in Jesus’ name. We pray you’re blessed.

*[Singing of “I Will Rise” by Chris Tomlin]*

Life and death is on the line this morning. That is why Paul says in verse 23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Before grace found you, the choice had already been made for you - dead in your sin, no hope, no future. But today, everything changes for you.

You may have slid away in your relationship with God. Maybe one time you were walking with Jesus, but now you have backslidden in your faith; you have

turned away from the Lord. But today, by the Holy Spirit, by the presence of God, He is calling you back home.

If you do not know the Lord, or maybe you knew the Lord at one time, but you have backslidden in your faith, today is the day of salvation for you because today is the day that you see grace for what it really is. His name is Jesus, and He forgives you all of your sin. He gives you a hope, He gives you a future, and He says, "You are mine. My child. My daughter."

If that's you today and you put your faith and your trust and your confidence in Jesus, with all the angels of glory in heaven, you too can join their voice and say, "I am alive!"

Amen