
Sunday 28th June 2020 – The Third Sunday after Trinity

Readings: Romans 6:12-23 & Matthew 10:40-42

Romans 6:12-23

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one 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 have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 10:40-42

'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.'

Reflection

In this Lectionary Reflection we are focussing on the passage in Romans 6:12-23. We begin with sin and end with grace!

American church leader and author Louie Giglio writes, “Sin doesn’t make you bad, it makes you dead.”

He is right. But there is some good news...

Sin’s power is broken

In chapter 6 Paul tackles some serious questions. If God loves to forgive, why not give him more to forgive by continuing to sin? If forgiveness is guaranteed, don’t we have the freedom to do whatever we want?

Paul’s answer is an unequivocal NO!

He reminds us that because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, sin’s power over us is broken. Our old fallen nature was put to death when Jesus was crucified – we are no longer slaves to sin.

But we do have daily choices to make. Old habits and ways of thinking still press in. Three times in verses 12 and 13 Paul says, “Do not...”

“Do not let sin control the way you live.”

“Do not give in to sinful desires.”

“Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin.”

We need to take sin seriously. We have been forgiven and sin no longer has power over us. We need to live in the truth of this!

Slaves again?

If we continue to make wrong choices and ignore the need to turn from sin then we become captives of sin again, living in fear not freedom. We can either be enslaved by sin or choose to obey God and serve him. As verse 22 says, *“You are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God.”*

Some may struggle with the idea of being a ‘slave’ of God. But it’s not about punishment or imprisonment. It’s about obedience and submission.

It’s all about grace

I have got in trouble in the past for my insistence that God’s grace is the key to understanding the Good News of Jesus. I’ve been accused of ignoring God’s judgement and minimising the significance of sin.

But I am in good company. When once asked what was unique about the Christian faith, C S Lewis replied, “Oh that’s easy. It’s grace.”

God's grace has set us free from the law. It is more powerful than sin. Romans 5:20 reminds us that *"as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant."*

Paul writes in verse 14, *"Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace."* This freedom came at a high price. Jesus dying on the cross confirmed that grace is free – we cannot earn or maintain our salvation by ourselves. We need to live in this freedom, not in the slavery of sin.

We end with words from American singer/songwriter Ricardo Sanchez:

"The devil knows your name, but calls you by your sin.

God knows your sin, but calls you by your name."

Peter Sanderson