**Spiritual Restoration**

**Galatians 5:25-6:10**

15th Sunday after Trinity

09.12.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father an our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

My friends, these are dark days indeed. It is like a line has been drawn in the sand.

On one side, there are people who believe there is right and wrong, black and white. They claim they hold the high moral ground on which we should stand. After all, doesn't it clearly state in the Bible what is right and what is wrong? In the Bible, some actions are specifically called a sin. Some even claim they are better than others because they are following those rules.

Others say that since so many people are doing things, they must be OK. They claim that everybody’s morality is their own choice to make, nobody should force their morality on another. Furthermore, who are we to judge another? After all, God said we are to love one another – and forgive. Some people misuse the Scripture, taking Jesus’ words out of context, and throw some things He said around, “Jesus said, judge not lest ye be judged,” He also said, “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.”

Both sides in the argument try to use the Bible. Both sides claim God is on their side. Since there are such differing opinions, both sides cannot be correct.

Our text for today seems to give us the same conflicting argument. On the one hand, it tells us not to be judgmental. On the other hand, it tells us to restore anyone caught in any transgression. How can we sort this all out?

Actually, if we are willing to open our minds – if we are willing to be less in love with mammon and be willing to serve God – the answer is very simple.

All this has to do with you. What do you do when you are confronted with the knowledge of your brother's or sister's sinfulness? Do you lovingly point it out to them, calling them back in repentance? Or do you say nothing, taking the stand of judge not, lest ye be judged? If it is your children who are violating a clear teaching of Scripture, something in their life is a particular sin, do you lead them to repentance for the forgiveness of sins? Or, avoiding the confrontation, you just let it slide, it is their life after all?

How would you respond if I declared, “We deny God when we do not call others to repentance.”? Some would claim that I am wrong, that I am telling people to be judgmental. Actually, nothing could be further from the case!

I bring this up because it is the constant struggle of the Christian in the world. We do not want to appear judgmental. We do not want to come off holier-than-thou. We do not want any divisiveness in our lives.

You remember Jesus words in what people call ‘The Great Commission.’ Just before His ascension, He declared to His disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Mt.28:19-20)

Did He say to teach them to observe ALL that I have commanded you”? Or, did He tell them to teach “only those things that are appealing.”?

Christians are called by God to point out sin in the lives of others in an effort to lead them to repentance. Why? In order that they might bask in God's forgiveness. Of course, there is a Christian way and a Pharisaical way of doing this.

This is what Paul declares in our text. Let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 5:26-6:2)

Dearly beloved of God, there are two traps you can fall into when you see the sins of others. You can fall into the sinful trap of conceit, pride, and judgmentalism. Or you can fall into the sin of avoidance, the “live-and-let-live-by-ignoring-it” syndrome. Both of these actions deny Christ.

On the one hand, if you are judgmental, you think yourself better than those who have done wrong. You condemn them in their sins as if you are somehow better. You look down your nose at them. Their sin is obvious, so you speak about what they have done as if it is the worst evil, and as if you have no sin in yourself. You stand over them as judge, jury and executioner. To do this is to join the Pharisees of Jesus' day in their self-righteous judgmentalism. This is what Jesus was condemning when He declared “judge not lest you be judged.”

Of course, you can sin by claiming you “love” too. It is not your place to judge anybody. God is the judge, not you. You do not want to be judged. So, you turn a blind eye. In the meantime, your brothers and sisters, those in God’s image like you, continue blissfully in their sinfulness. They may even be unaware that their actions are sinful, leading to possible eternal punishment if they do not repent.

So, my friends, where do you stand. Are you a self-righteous Pharisee? Or are you turning a blind eye?

God declares through Paul pen exactly what you are to do. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:1-2)

My friends, you are called by your heavenly Father to lovingly point out the sins of those around you. You are to restore them. And now, you are probably thinking, “how do I do that?” What is the point of Jesus taking on human flesh? To die for sinners!

With that in mind, it is actually a simple recipe. Without repentance for the forgiveness of sins, impenitent sinners are not a part of the family of faith, they are outside that Christianity. Some may come to church, claiming to be believers, but their impenitence means they are not trusting Christ. In their sinful impenitence, they have broken their relationship with God. Where there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness. Where there is no forgiveness, there is no heaven and eternal life – no eternity with God.

To restore someone in the spirit of gentleness is to show them their need for the gift of God's forgiveness which Christ Jesus purchased with His innocent life given unto death upon the cross. Just like you and I, they need to confess their sinfulness in repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Do you want an example of how to do that? You are hearing an example right now. Every sermon is an example of lovingly telling God's children of their sinfulness, calling them to repentance, and proclaiming to them the good news of God's forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

My friends, the spirit of gentleness is first remembering your own need for the love, mercy, grace and peace God has to offer for you – that you are sinners in need of God's forgiveness. In your own shame, you know only too well that you have fallen far short of the perfect righteousness God requires. You and I are unworthy to be called children of the Most High God. Yet, we are! But not because of anything that we have done.

In fact, we are called God's most Holy children in spite of what we have done to ruin the relationship. We are called God's children because we have been united to Christ in the waters of baptism.

Paul warns us, Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (6:7-10)

My dear Christian friends, we have been called to live according to the Spirit. We have been called to do good to all, especially those of the household of faith. Sometimes “doing good” means we point out to them their sinfulness, calling them to repentance, bringing them back to the loving, merciful, gracious goodness of their heavenly Father.

Without repentance, those who are wandering in the sinfulness of their flesh may reap the ultimate goal of their corruption. That, my friends, is not a pretty picture. It is an eternal thing, of pain and torment. That, my friends, is something we should not wish on anybody, even our enemies.

I remember a boy running around our home, and even outside. He liked to run around with a slide whistle in his mouth, blowing it as he ran. He also liked to fall down. Well, maybe he didn't like to fall down, but he was really, really good at it. In the name of loving him, not wanting to have a big row, I could have said nothing and just let him run around like that. But, mean ole daddy that I am, I told him not to do it anymore. In fact, I told him more than once. At one point I may even have disciplined him severely. Why? Out of love for him.

Of course, this is only an illustration. But how many people would have been upset with me had I not disciplined him, telling him to stop? It was dangerous to him!

Likewise we are to call one another to cease and desist in our sins. It may happen that disciplining is in order, to lead them to see the seriousness if they continue in their path of self-destruction. By the way, stitches in the roof of the mouth is nothing compared to the eternal consequences of sin.

Today, I call you back in repentance – for your self-righteous judgmentalism.

I call you back in repentance – for turning a blind eye, your live-and-let-live attitude.

I call you back from your sinfulness – out of the great love I have for you.

I do this because I have good news for you. You are just like me, a sinner. But it was for sinners that God sent His only begotten Son into the world. It was for sinners like you and me that Jesus allowed His perfect life to be taken from Him by death on the cross. He laid down His life, only to take it up again three days later, to rise and proclaim His death as a victory over sin and death.

Christ did this because God desires to forgive you for your sins. What Christ accomplished He desires to deliver to you. It is why He called me to this place. I am here, by Christ’s authority, just as He sent His disciples, to proclaim to you repentance for the forgiveness of your sins. He has called me to deliver to you His body and blood, shed upon the cross, to purchase your forgiveness.

In your baptism, you were united to Christ’s death. You live in that baptism by daily contrition and repentance. You turn from your sins, drowning them in contrition and repentance, and are raised with Christ to new life, trusting in the promise and gift of baptism - that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, you too live a new life. Live in the faith of your baptism. Live in the confident hope that God has given you His name, forgiven you all your sins, and made you His own.

You are again restored to a right relationship with God this day. This is the day the Lord has made you new again in His name. Rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.