**Desires of the Flesh**

**Galatians 5:16-24**

Trinity 14 – 09.18.2022

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

I’d like to again read to you our text:

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

What are the desires of the flesh? In fact, what is this distinction between flesh and Spirit? How does it apply to me and my Christian faith and life? That is it exactly! What is your Christian faith and life? What defines it?

Your walk of faith is to be something very specific, and that specificity is laid out for us in this text. It is all about the differences between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit.

Furthermore, ***those who do the works of the flesh*** – ***WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD!*** By the way, that is not Todd Jerabek’s interpretation, those are **the exact words** of our text. Either we believe them or we do not.

I know this will sound harsh, but it is the truth. If you do not believe this passage of Scripture, then you have succumbed to the desires of your flesh!

My flesh, Todd Jerabek’s flesh, wants to do those things that make me feel good, the things that satisfy my desires. If I fully give in, if I do all I can to gratify the desires of my flesh, I will also try and develop a belief system that fits the desires of my flesh. Amazingly, Scripture warns about this too.

In another of Paul’s letters, God warns through his pen.  *But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.* (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

Instead gratifying the desires of the flesh, they are lovers of self – synonymous thoughts – it means the same thing. Those who want to keep themselves happy, satisfying their own desires, will be the ones to do such things.

And shortly after that, we learn that: *the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.* (2 Tim. 4:1-2) Sounds a lot like people will gratify the desires of their flesh by church shopping to find a church that will not call them sinners for doing what their flesh wants to do.

Today’s world also appeals to the desires of the flesh, it agrees with it, claiming that the desires of our flesh are normal and acceptable. So there is this constant struggle going on – the devil and the world join up with the desires of our flesh – and they are arrayed against the Spirit.

God’s Law informs us of how we are to live. Our enemies tempt us, and we fall into sin because the desires of our flesh are compelling.

Yes, you and I struggle daily against the flesh, we know the guidelines for what our life should look like, Paul calls them the fruit of the Spirit. While these fruits don't help gain you salvation or a place in paradise¸ they expected of the baptized children of God. Your life will be fruitful evidence of God's Spirit in you.

Dearly beloved of God, as baptized Christians, you have crucified the flesh with all its passions and desires. Baptism isn’t your distant past, it is not, “I ***WAS*** baptized.” Too often it is seen as that, and baptism is forgotten. Baptism is not to be forgotten, nor does it lose value in your life. It is the formative definition of who you are as Christians.

The Small Catechism teaches: ***What does such baptizing with water indicate?*** *It indicates that the Old Adam in us (that is, the desires of our flesh) should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.* United to Christ in baptism, Christians daily live a new life of faith.

Paul speaks about walking in the Spirit – daily living in your baptism. God called you by name. He made you a member of His royal priesthood through His immeasurable grace. He called you ***out*** *of the world* to be His child, even as He has called you to live ***in*** *that same world*. This is your baptismal vocation. To live in your baptism means that your unity to Christ, colors every aspect of your life. In Christ, all you do is to the glory and praise of God.

However, you are still in the flesh even as you have been born again in the Spirit, *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.* (Gal. 5:17)

Even filled with the Spirit, you succumb to the desires of your flesh, a constant struggle against the Spirit God has given you. It is almost like cartoons with the devil sitting on one shoulder and the angel on the other – struggling for control of your actions.

Today you are here because you know that you have failed to live fully according to God's Spirit within you. The desires of your flesh have sometimes kicked out the Spirit. You have come in the hopes of hearing some good news, some come because they want some guidance on how they can do better.

I can tell you what you are supposed to do. I can tell you what you are not supposed to be doing. But do I really need to? You already know what you should and should not be doing – you know which desires of your flesh are against the Spirit. I could instruct you further, but you would still fail to do so and come up short – just as you already do! Just as I already do!

You cannot live up to that description yourself. You are to produce fruit of the Spirit, but you and I are a sick apple trees; the fruit that should be there, isn't always in evidence. And even when there appears to be good fruit, sometimes apples are full of worms.

Christ came to heal sick apple trees. He took upon Himself human flesh, and tempted by the Satan and the world, born of a virgin, He kept His perfect flesh from the desire to sin. In perfect human flesh, He paid for your sin with His own death upon the cross. He purchased your forgiveness, He comes to you to strengthen your faith to live a God-pleasing life.

Instead of giving you only instructions, Christ commands me to deliver something else to you – God has given me the authority to cure you by His Word. Christ has commanded me to speak on His behalf to you – your sins are forgiven you! Your submission to the desires of your flesh – your failures to live 100% according to the Spirit are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven before God in heaven as they are forgiven here today.

On this altar is a further prescription to cure you of your disease, the medicine of immortality. Take and eat, this is my body. Take drink, this is my blood. These are the gifts of the Lord's goodness to you – His body and blood, broken and shed for you – for the forgiveness of sins. He gives to you His body and blood given to nourish and strengthen your faith.

Jeremiah said it so well when he wrote, “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise.” (Jere. 17:14) Today we heard about lepers who came to Jesus, their sinful flesh was outward evidence of their sin sickness. Christ healed them!

Today, Christ has done just that for you. Today you your flesh with its desires by your contrite repentance. You have heard the Word of God and been united to Christ's crucifixion. You are healed from your sinfulness and given a new Spirit, Christ’s Spirit, the Spirit of forgiveness and life.

You belong to Christ Jesus.

You have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Walk in the Spirit! In the name of Jesus. Amen.