**Restored In Christ**

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

Trinity 15 – 09.25.2022

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

Dearly beloved of God, I am sure you have noticed a few things happenings that intersect Christian faith and life with the world. In fact, this is what prompted Pastor Christians and the folks at St. Paul, Wittenberg to beginning offering their “Christian Truth Events” to the members of their congregation, and to the community.

When I talk about certain things some people will say that a topic is political, scientific, social, cultural, or some such – but that religion has no place in the conversations. Indeed, some issues might find themselves squarely planted in one of those arenas. This does not however mean that it is not an issue outside of faith discussion.

As Christians, there is nowhere that our “religion” does not intersect with our life. We are Christians who believe in God, the One who created all that exists, everything we do is to abide by His Will. We believe in Jesus Christ, true God in our flesh. He was the Word which spoke everything into existence. He is God in whose image Adam was created. In that flesh, Jesus, True God incarnate, lived without sin – in accordance with the Father’s Will – and in that flesh He endured the punishment we deserve. He died in our stead.

How will you live? There should be a fear and love of Him who created us. Fear because He is the One – who, with but a thought could end our mortal existence, and who has promised eternal punishment to all who are disobedient to His will. Is there any fear in His creatures for their disobedience? Does it show in their lives?

Our God is also the One, who, out of His incredible love, gave His Son to redeem us from the wages we have earned for our disobedience to His Will – death. His innocent suffering and death brings us life. How do you repay such love? How do you respond to such love?

Everybody knows it is the pastor’s task to lead sinners back to repentance for the forgiveness of sin. It is his job to restore fallen believers back into the family of faith. It is the pastor’s job to make believers.

Everybody know this…except Paul? Have you read this letter, especially this portion of it? You hear it every 15th Sunday after Trinity, and read it when it comes up in your daily reading of the Scriptures. Have you paid attention to it?

Paul says, *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.* Notice this is not just to pastors.

***YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL*** are supposed to be doing something. Not just pastors, but all who are have the Holy Spirit. You are to restore them.

If you know someone who is sinning, you are to call them back in repentance.

Pastors do not know everything going on in the lives of everyone. We are our brothers’ keepers. If your friend was doing something by the side of the road, oblivious to a semi approaching which was going to run them over, would you do nothing? Would you run to push them out of the way? Would you at the very least holler at them warn them of the danger? Isn’t that what friends do?

Remember last week’s Epistle lesson saying that those who follow the desires of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God? We either believe that or we do not! Today’s Epistle begins with the last verse from last Sunday – “Let us also walk in the Spirit.” But it goes on: *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)

You and I are the body of Christ – along with all believers. We are responsible for one another. We are all family members – children of our heavenly Father – brothers and sisters of Christ. We are One body with Christ as our head. We care for one another! We love one another! This means we are responsible for one another.

We are not responsible for one another in a condescending way, but in a loving way. It is easy for us to fall into the sinful trap of conceit, pride, and judgmentalism. It is easy to think that you are better than others, less sinful – to look askance at vile sinners with that wagging finger, “Shame, shame.”

Do you believe that nobody knows your sinfulness? Or that your sinfulness isn’t as bad? Or that you have no sins? God knows the truth! And you already confessed your sinfulness earlier in this service – or were those just words you recite without believing they are the unvarnished truth?

Of course, maybe you fall into the worlds’ bigger problem of today’s “live and let live” commentary. “God’s the judge, not you. I have no right to interfere in someone else’s life.”

Consider it this way. What if you know that truck bearing down on your friend has the possibility of tormenting them for all eternity? That they would live forever in a body tormented by fire, causing them so much pain they will be grinding their teeth for eternity.

Yeah, I know the response of many, “While I would never choose to do that myself, who am I to interfere with the choices of others.” So, do we turn a blind eye? It isn't your place to judge them? Seriously? In the meantime, your brothers and sisters, those created in God’s image, continue blissfully in their sinfulness. They may be unaware that their actions are in danger of eternal torment if they do not repent.

What will you do? You want to be one of the monkeys? You know them – one covers his eyes, one covers his ears, the third covers his mouth.

You are not a monkey!. You are a Christian! You are united to Christ! You are family with Paul, your elder brother gives you God’s instructions. *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.*

“How,” you ask?

It is actually a simple recipe. It is about repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Impenitent sinners fall outside the family of faith. Impenitence breaks the relationship with God. Without repentance there is no forgiveness. Without forgiveness, there is no eternal life.

You restore someone in the spirit of gentleness by declaring God’s Word to them, leading them as you have been led – to know God’s forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

First, remember that you are sinners in need of God's forgiveness. In repentance, declare 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!

We are called God's most Holy children in spite of what we have done to spoil that relationship. We are called God's children! We have been united to Christ’s death and raised with Him – made one with Him. His righteousness is ours. Baptized into Christ we have forgiveness, our sins put to death in His death, and now live a new life in Him. His Spirit indwells us walks us in faith in this world.

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 – to do good to all, especially those of the household of faith. Sometimes “doing good” is pointing out sinfulness. Leading people to see their sinfulness is calling them to repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Repentance brings 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 wages of their corruption. That is something we should not wish on anybody, even our enemies.

If you are a parent – or ever had one – maybe you remember their mean-ness. Sometimes parents say no out of love. Parents want them to stop before they hurt themselves. Sometime disciplining is in order! Discipline may lead them to see the serious danger of continuing down a path that leads to destruction.

Today I call you back in repentance. Repent of your self-righteousness – thinking you need less repentance than others. Repent of your live-and-live attitude which allows others to continue their path to self-destruction. In my great love for you in Christ Jesus, I call you to repent!.

It was for sinners like you and me 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 proclaim His death as your victory over sin and death.

God desires to forgive you. What Christ accomplished He desires to deliver to you. It is why He has calls pastors to serve His congregation. They serve by Christ’s authority, just as He sent His disciples – to proclaim to you repentance for the forgiveness of your sins. Pastors are called 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. In daily contrition and repentance, you drown your sins, putting them to death in Christ, trusting His promised forgiveness. As Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, He lives in you a new life. Live in the faith of your baptism, in the confident hope that God has given you His name, forgiven you all your sins, and made you His own.

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