

5th Sunday after Pentecost

July 10, 2022

“You have been delivered by God!” (Colossians 1:13)

By Rev. Ed Weber

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today’s text for this 5th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Epistle reading Colossians 1:13-14.

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

Here ends our text.

“He has delivered us...” Paul writes these words to the Colossians from his captivity in Rome. He is so glad to hear of the faith which God has given to the people in the church at Colossae, their deliverance from power of darkness to the kingdom of the Son, Jesus and of what God is doing among them, the fruit of their faith. It causes Paul to give thanks to God and pray for them.

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit”

Paul hadn’t personally met them, but a minister named Epaphras delivers the news to Paul while he is imprisoned. And Epaphras delivers Paul’s letter to the Colossians.

Yes, we use the word “deliver” when we talk about messages, letters and packages. You send an email and you get a confirmation that your message has been delivered. When Amazon leaves a package on your front porch, they send you a text telling you that your package has been delivered. But people? It sounds a bit strange that a person has been delivered. But that’s exactly the good news that causes Paul to give thanks to God and rejoice with the Colossian believers!

Paul says that God has delivered us, himself included from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His Son! In the verse right before our text, Paul says, **“giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”**

Darkness to light. There is a deliverance from one kingdom to another. And it’s all God’s doing! We give thanks to God because He has qualified us to be partakers, members of His kingdom. God has delivered poor sinners as we all our from the imprisonment of the kingdom of Satan’s darkness and made us saints, forgave our sins, redeemed us by the blood of His Son. And in this new kingdom there is an inheritance, an eternal inheritance of heaven itself with all its blessings, joys and riches! What a change! What a deliverance!

As we studied last week in our Bible class, our text, Colossians 1:13 is used as a proof text of the Gospel. When describing the two main themes throughout the Bible, we learned from our catechism that the two themes are Law and Gospel. The Law shows us our sin and our inability to free ourselves from the kingdom of darkness. The Gospel shows us our Savior, Jesus, and what He has done by His death and resurrection to deliver us from sin, death and the devil!

“Qualify” is an important word that Paul uses. We know that to enter a sporting tournament like Wimbledon, the major tennis tournament that is happening right now as we speak...the men’s final game between Djokovic and Kyrgios, they had to first qualify to enter. Just like Golf majors or baseball playoffs, or getting into college. You have to qualify. You have to show that you are worthy and merit entrance.

In our Gospel reading from Luke 10, Jesus was asked a question that He was asked a lot of times. “What must I do to get into heaven, to inherit eternal life?”

Now in this particular case, a teacher of the law posed this question to test Jesus. A rich young man also asked this question in Matthew 19.

This rich young man didn’t understand his predicament. He trusted his riches and thought that since he had great control through his wealth, he could also control his future after death as well.

In both cases, the teacher of the law and the rich young man believed that they could do enough, keep the law well enough to qualify for heaven. Maybe this is a question that you’ve pondered also. What must I do to inherit eternal life?

Well, Jesus asks the teacher of the law to tell Him what God's Word says. And he replies,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’ ”28 And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”

Yes, if one could keep the law perfectly, one could qualify and one could live. Have at it! And you must keep it perfectly! One mistake and you are disqualified! The teacher realized this and so looked for a way out. He looked for a way to save face.

29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

So Jesus tells him and us a story. It's the story of the Good Samaritan. A man is beat up and robbed and left for dead. Who helps him? Not the priest, not the Levite. They passed by the other side. They didn't love their neighbor as themselves. For our neighbor includes all people. And none of us is perfect in doing this.

Paul quotes another important proof text of the Law in Romans 3, quoting Psalm 14.

**““There is none righteous, no, not one;
11 There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
12 They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.”**

We are all left unqualified, trapped in the kingdom of darkness, on the side of the road left to die. That is...until Jesus came.

For Paul continues in Romans 3...

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22

even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.”

Jesus alone is qualified! Jesus fulfilled the law by keeping it perfectly and never sinned. He loved all people as Himself perfectly. He is called the Son of His love. For God is love. And Jesus didn't pass us by who were left for dead because of our sin. The law had beat us up. We couldn't help ourselves.

And Jesus, the Good Samaritan, bandaged up the fallen man, and delivered him to an inn where he received continued care through the payment of the Good Samaritan. Jesus delivered us from the power of darkness into His Kingdom of grace!

Who can be saved?

“With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:25-36)

This is the Good News that Epaphras delivers to Paul. The Colossians have been saved by the grace of God. They have heard the Word of truth and believed. They are qualified saints!

“as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; 7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.”

...As it is among you also, believers in Christ, here at Immanuel. You have heard the Word of God. You have been rescued by the Gospel, the Good News in Jesus Christ. You have been delivered by God from eternal death on the side of the road in Satan's kingdom of power to God's kingdom of grace!

God has done this for all people by the death and resurrection of His Son...” in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

He has done this personally for each of you when you were baptized and He called you into His kingdom, washed you of your sins, and delivered you from darkness to light!

God has done this for you so that you would also grow in your faith by coming to church often and hearing His Word of the Gospel!

Yes, Paul prayed for the Colossians that they would grow in all knowledge and wisdom and spiritual understanding.

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

Wisdom is the application of knowledge. And spiritual understanding is the discernment in the problems that we face in life with much patience and longsuffering with joy.

We have been delivered into a new kingdom where God gives us patience and longsuffering and joy as we face problems in life.

As we continue through Colossians, we’ll hear that Paul warns them that there will be those who try to deceive them that we could qualify ourselves through our legalistic efforts. It is by grace alone that we are saved. And our deliverance by God gives us much zeal to bear fruits of His love!

“Signed, sealed, delivered, I’m yours”. Stevie Wonder wrote the lyrics to this song about a man who wanted to get back with his girlfriend. I’m ready to try again. I’m signed, sealed, delivered, I’m yours.

Well, we’ve learned from God’s word that we are His, not by anything we have done, but by His great love for us. Jesus indeed signed our freedom from captivity with His blood, sealed us with this love in our baptism, and delivered us into His kingdom eternal life! All glory to God! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)