

Sermon for The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: July 26, 2020

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Jeremiah 28:5-9

Epistle Reading: Romans 7:1-13

Gospel Reading: Matthew 10:34-42



Sermon Text: Romans 7:1-13

Sermon Title: The Resurrecting Christ (*GGs Series*)

Introit: Psalm 105:2-6; Antiphon: Psalm 105:1

Hymns:

- LSB 457 – Jesus Christ is Risen Today
- LSB 581 – These are the Holy Ten Commands
- LSB 776 – Comes Lord Jesus be our Guest
- LSB 685 – Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

Songs:

- Thy Word
- Humble Thyself In The Sight Of The Lord
- Indescribable
- Lord Reign in Me
- I Stand in Awe of You

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Romans 7:1–13

Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today we are going to continue to look at the book of Romans, a letter that we will see proclaims the power of the Resurrecting Christ. The power of Jesus is flowing throughout Paul's letter. Look at how he begins:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus... [*who*] was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead.¹

Paul introduces himself in language very similar to that used by servants writing to the Caesar of Rome, but the powerful ruler that Paul serves is not Caesar. Paul serves Jesus Christ, the ruler of all.² Paul then states the main reason for his letter:

I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.³

Paul's letter is all about power. The power of the Gospel to bring salvation to all people in all places throughout all the earth. He closes the letter with:

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.⁴

God's power is there at the beginning of Paul's letter, at the end of Paul's letter, and all the way through it. It is filled with the power of the resurrecting Christ, bringing life and salvation to all people.

Why wouldn't it be? Paul met the resurrected Jesus and, in that meeting on the Damascus road,⁵ Paul discovered Jesus to be more than the resurrected Christ. He was also the resurrecting Christ. When Jesus appeared after His resurrection, He changed lives. He changed the lives of:

Mary outside the tomb mourning.⁶
Thomas in the room doubting.⁷
Peter out on the lake fishing.⁸

All of these people were raised from sorrow, fear and discouragement to life. Then last but not least, the apostle Paul. Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to

1 Romans 1:1,4

2 Matthew 28:18

3 Romans 1:16

4 Romans 16:20 & Romans 15:18-19

5 Acts 9

6 John 20:11ff

7 John 20:24ff

8 John 21:15ff

Damascus and raised him to life. Life which Paul proclaims to all people. Paul turns our eyes to Jesus, because only Jesus raises us to new life. Understand here again Paul is using a double meaning. Life and death here are not just physical life and death, but eternal life and eternal death – Hell.

Though that is true, and we all know it is true, sometimes Jesus is hard to see. Like the people in an etching by Rembrandt. People are looking for answers everywhere except at Jesus. For the Church in Rome, Paul was concerned that people were looking to the Torah Law as a source of life instead of Jesus.

Israel believed in God's Law. God's Torah was good. It was a design for life and they couldn't imagine their relationship with God without it. They saw the Law as power for life. They turned to that Law, seeking to obey it, to be a part of God's work in the world. Unfortunately, they were so focused on the Law that they lost sight of the Savior.



*Rembrandt's
'Raising Lazarus'*

It's like a family that brings their child to Sunday School not because they want them to grow in relationship with Jesus, but simply because they want them to learn the Ten Commandments and get a good moral foundation. That family would see the Law as holy, righteous and good, but they would have lost sight of God and the relationship we are called to have with Him.

Paul writes this letter with the intent of ensuring no one sees the Law without seeing Jesus, because he knows the terrifying power of the Law. It has power to awaken our sin.⁹ Although the Roman Christian saw life in the Law, Paul knows that eventually they will only see death. God's Law is good and wise but our lives are not. The Law has a condemning power. Paul writes, it arouses "our sinful passions."¹⁰ When you hear what you are not supposed to do, you end up wanting to do it.

For that reason Paul points us to Jesus. The One who dies while holding on to us. We were sinners in the hands of an angry God, but now we are sinners in the nail pierced-hands of our gracious saving Savior. Jesus saw us in our sin¹¹ and offered His life for our salvation. He died under the condemning power of the Law for you. Through His dead body Jesus sets you free to live.

9 Romans 7:7-9

10 Romans 7:5

11 Matthew 9:36

Paul writes:

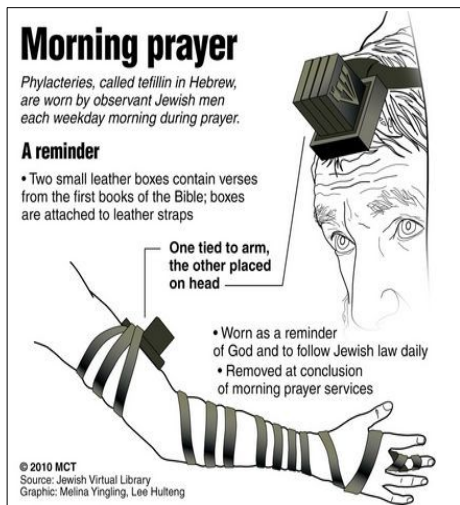
You have died to the Law through the body of Christ.¹²

In Jesus' death He puts the condemning power of the Law to death. By His death Jesus brings life, life eternal. Those who see the Law and hold on to it without Jesus can only find death eternal. The faithful who are Baptized in Christ Jesus, are Baptized into His death and resurrection. Jesus sets you free.

It might seem strange to be living in America and listening to Paul tell us about freedom. We pride ourselves on our freedom. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, academic freedom, the list goes on. In fact our infatuation with freedom has led some to believe that they have the freedom to rewrite the Law of God and create a different way of living in the world.

In Deuteronomy God commanded Israel to remember His commandments, to:

...tie them as symbols on your hands
and bind them on your foreheads.¹³



That is just what they did. God's people literally tied His Word to themselves, winding leather straps up their arms and around their heads.



For some that's how the Law of God feels. They see Christianity as binding, as being filled with rules, policies and regulations. They see it as judgmental and condemning. It constrains you, and drains you, of the joy

of life, and it does, but for good. You can't do what you want when Jesus calls you to love your neighbor. You can't follow others when Jesus calls you to follow Him.

So, some Christians celebrate a freedom from God's good design. A distinctly American freedom from the Law of God. Take God's good design of marriage. Some would proclaim it is our manifest destiny to redefine the ways of God for our 21st century. These redefinitions of God's Law stress that God is loving and good.

12 Romans 7:4

13 Deuteronomy 6:8

His love and His goodness set us free us to be whatever we want.¹⁴ Old notions of sin, its repercussions, and the Law of God are discarded so we can live in the freedom of the “American Dream” and claim that God is love and loves everyone.

That would be profoundly strange to Paul. The Law of God is not something you can rewrite or redefine. The Law is God’s Law. It is part of God’s design and it has been built into every aspect of creation. You can delude yourself that it doesn’t exist or that it doesn’t matter but in the end you will still be held accountable. A person can pretend that laws don’t exist. They could go into a store and walk out with merchandise taken from the shelves. They could go into a home they like and try to start living there. In the end they would discover that they are not alone. You do not make your own laws. You are part of a larger community and live under its laws.

Paul wants you to know that you are not alone in this world. God does exist and He rules over all creation. He has set His Law in place and everyone will be held accountable to it. He has claimed you in the death of Jesus, to free you from the condemning power of the Law; but He has also raised you in the life of Jesus to live and bear the fruits of the Spirit.¹⁵ Paul does not stop after writing about the death of Jesus. He also writes about the resurrection of Jesus because he knows that we have been raised to new life in Him. Paul writes:

You have died to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.¹⁶

With these words Paul turns our attention to the resurrecting Christ. He not only frees us from the condemning power of the Law but He forms us through the Holy Spirit to live as a people for God. In Him our lives are shaped by the Holy Spirit and reveal the goodness of God’s Law, God’s ways, God’s people in the world.

When Van Gogh looked at the etching by Rembrandt he painted his own picture of the Raising of Lazarus, based on a small detail in the etching. Van Gogh focused in the image of Lazarus rising from the grave. Martha is pulling the veil from his eyes and



14 Romans 6:1
15 Galatians 5:22-23
16 Romans 7:4

Lazarus is only beginning to see the world again. Jesus is not even in the painting. He stands as that ruling figure in the background, not seen by Lazarus, not seen by his sisters, not seen by the you viewer, but still known to be there, always.

What is seen, however, is amazing. If you look closely at the face of Lazarus you'll see that Van Gogh painted himself into Lazarus. There he is, a thin pale man rising from the grave. Not yet able to see all that God has done for him, not yet able to see Jesus ruling over all, only beginning to live, to taste the wonder of the Resurrecting Christ in this world.

In the same way, Paul's letter invites us to live in the power of the Resurrecting Christ. Though we do not see Him now, we know that He is risen and ruling over all things. His Law is holy. His commandments are holy and righteous and good. In Him, we have died to the curse of the Law, in His body crucified for us on the tree. In Him, we have been raised to a new life in the Spirit. We are only now beginning to experience the first fruits of faith in the kingdom of God.

Amen.



**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**