

WELCOME 25th April 2021 – 4 Easter '21 B

John 10:1-10, 27-30 & Romans 7:15-25a

Welcome! It's great to be together again. We are delighted you are here. As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources in your hands for you to use *over the course of the all-week. As God leads you into the fullness of His word & his work in your lives he will then introduce you to someone who needs to hear the good news from you. Also...somewhere along the way today you're likely to feel a tap on your shoulder or tug at your heart...song prayer word of scripture... Don't ignore it! That's probably the Holy Spirit prompting you some way. Let's talk about that after worship.*

As we move into this week... R U OK? It's always struck me...If we need a national campaign to teach us how to talk to one another...honestly...openly...we're in pretty bad shape. And we are...It's called **sin**...but sin **is a** condition long before it's misconduct. **We ARE** sinners **AND** we sin. We are addicted...to ourselves, our wants, our pet peeves, our prize purposes...our safety/privacy. We're slaves to the stuff that bugs us bothers us breaks our hearts or brings us happiness. We're in bondage to keeping our children happy, a small screen or substance, our work, our pride, our sense of entitlement or our feeling of being a victim.

Deep down, all of us desire to live. We crave freedom to be truly alive, truly known & loved, truly accepted, truly joyous & secure. Jesus knows that desire for life & freedom. He also knows how easily we give our lives over to things that steal, kill & destroy the very life we seek. But in Christ we are given a freedom & fullness of **life** beyond addiction that releases his best in us & releases us for his purposes in this world.

As followers of Jesus we never hide or deny the dead, stolen or broken bits of our lives, but we also know that in Jesus, the broken stolen & dead parts of us are brought back to life...made whole...& restored in a newness that nothing on earth can match & with an assurance that can't be taken away. Jesus said, **"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me..."**

We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Lord Jesus you are our Shepherd – we have everything we need our cup runs over with your blessing --- You bring us to the place of rest & strength finding our soul satisfaction in you alone --- You lead us in paths that bring glory to your name & drive back fear and evil by your powerful love --- You supply all our needs and our cup runs over with your blessing

We pray for your continued goodness today...not just for ourselves but for all who need to know you from your heart to theirs...grant not just to us but to all people a place in your presence forever...Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Let's hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Is there a habit you've tried to break or have broken?
2. On a scale of 1 – 10...How fully are you living life at the moment? Why?
 1. Good morning Lord!
 10. Good Lord, it's morning...

Now we'll sing...Give Us Hearts...

4 Easter – '21 B – LIFE PULSE: LIFE BEYOND...ADDICTION

I was maybe 16 years old when I encountered this Bible verse: **As a** dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. – Pr 26:11 When you're 16 & you discover **that** word is in the Bible it's...I don't know...I just thought vomit was a weird word to have in the Bible...but there it is 17x. In fact 2x: Peter quotes that & adds likely folk wisdom: **They** prove the truth of this proverb: "A dog returns to its vomit...A washed pig returns to the mud" – 2 Pt 2:22 The point the Bible & my HS Bible study leader make is that people are quite capable of making the same mistake more than once in their lives. We could each testify to some mistake we've made more than once...even when we know better. The old saying, "insanity is doing the same thing over & over again expecting different results" has been proved true more times than we can count.

We can politely argue about insanity...it's a pretty near description of human life. We just heard: **I don't** really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. One of the obvious things about Paul the apostle that I think is missing from many Xns today is that transparent self-awareness that refuses to hide from his own brokenness. Paul knows, & I hope we can be honest enough to say "yeah me too"...Paul knows there's a gap ^{b/i} **who** he is vs who he is supposed to be...disconnect ^{b/i} knowing/wanting/doing.

I remember as a kid I got sideways w/ one of the older girls who lived up the street. She had a bunch of her friends over & her mom didn't want me & her little brother making trouble for the bigger girls so he got sent off w/ his dad & I got sent home. So I got cranky & ^{b/4} I got out of the driveway I took a minute to throw 3-4 rocks over the roof of their house toward where the girls were out the back. By the time I got home my mother was at the door. "Why were you throwing rocks over their house?" My best answer, "**I don't** know." I knew better. I knew they'd know it was me. I knew someone could get hurt or something could get broken. Why? I don't know.

I have heard that same confession often...not just from my kids when they've done something uncharacteristically ridiculous...but from folks who've blown up their families, ruined their businesses, trashed their reputations, hurt people they say they love...& their very words to me as their pastor, "**I really** don't understand why..." made that promise, got involved in that deal, hung out w/ that crowd/person...I knew...

Paul tears away the blinders & says what's true for him is true for every soul on this earth...Simply knowing or being told DO THE RIGHT THING leads only in the opposite direction: **Am I** suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "You must not covet." But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me...So I discovered that the law's commands, which were supposed to bring

life, brought death instead. Sin took advantage of those commands & deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. – Rom 7:7, 10 & 13 Wiley Miller is one of those cartoonists who captures life as we know it in just a few strokes of his pen...Have you ever felt like **juggling** machetes? Like "wet paint" sign...you just have to...should/must/oughta -No I don't

When most people hear the word *sin* they think of individual sinful acts. The Bible **does** use the word that way but the basic understanding of sin is that it is a power... **When** Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. – Rom 5:12 Acc to the Bible, **sin** is a condition long before it's misconduct. **We** ARE sinners **AND** we sin. The law was always meant to show us the boundaries for our relationship w/ God & the world around us but sin as an insidious driving addicting power of self-over-all-else leads us to run through every boundary border or barrier in our will to self-rule. And in doing so it kills us... Sin is that thief that steals/kills/destroys the very life/freedom/joy/peace we all seek

We're addicted...to ourselves, our wants, our pet peeves & prize purposes...our safety/privacy. We're slaves to the stuff that bugs us bothers us breaks our hearts or brings us happiness. We're in bondage to keeping our children happy, small screen or substance, our work, our pride, our sense of entitlement or our feeling of being a victim. We allow ourselves to be addicted to other stuff...but our primary slavery is to sin which makes me seek self-over-all-else. Even as a follower of Jesus Christ, you're not as good as you think you are, & you're worse than you ever admit.

Paul knows there's a gap ^{b/i} who he is & who he is supposed to be. He also knows that in the process of being transformed by Jesus Christ the **process** doesn't always look like progress...the process of transformation – of growing more into the image of Jesus...sanctification...doesn't always look like progress. **3** steps forward 2 steps back is not just a dance move. **And** I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway."

Just like the process of pregnancy does not always look like progress toward parenthood...morning sickness nausea fatigue...don't look like progress. I've shared ^{b/4} I watched my dad quit smoking about 12X ^{b/4} he finally did. I don't care what the TV ads say it didn't get easier each time. Anyone who's been anywhere near rehab or a recovery program knows the process is littered w/ failure long ^{b/4} there's progress. I don't care who you are...if you read Paul's words there & think "Nope...Not me." You're either lying or dead already...ck pulse & church in your will

The deeper the Holy Spirit penetrates your heart & draws you closer to the Father the deeper you know the rot in your own soul & how much more deeply you've been

loved forgiven redeemed & saved by the death & resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just because you've been connected to Jesus since forever in your life, you are not immune to temptation or unaffected by the downward/backward pull of sin in your life. **"The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, & desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I, the Lord, search all hearts & examine secret motives."** – Jer 17:9-10 Jesus told a story about the religious guy who went to worship & prayed **"Thanks Lord that I'm not like those scoundrels..."** I challenge you: pray **Psalm 139:23-24** - Search me, O God, & know my heart; test me & know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, & lead me along the path of everlasting life. Just to see what happens...because you know what happens?

Healthy people don't go to doctors. Only sick people do. The people who are being healed & transformed by the power of God are those not ashamed to admit the weakness & failure & struggle they're undergoing in their personal lives. You don't have to convince me of the reality of indwelling sin (follower of Jesus or not) I didn't just fall off a turnip truck I've seen too much, heard too much, know more than I ever wanted, & when I stand in front of the mirror, I still see a man who struggles against sin EVERY. SINGLE. DAY.

Paul knows the gap ^{b/t} who he is & who he is supposed to be. He also knows that in the process of being transformed by Jesus Christ the process doesn't always look like progress...but most critically he knows **the** only place for hope & assurance is the crucified risen & ruling Jesus Christ -- **I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin & death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.**

This kind of transparency/honesty & this sort of humility can only lead you to one thing for hope assurance strength... **Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.** The only place for hope & assurance & strength & forgiveness & encouragement to stay in the battle & persevere is the crucified risen ruling Jesus Christ & day by day complete dependence on him. The on-going human struggle & war against our sinfulness is the manner in which you & I are stripped of our rock-headed self-reliance & independence & autonomy & I can do it myself-ishness.

The reason many of us never grow as Christians is because we hear the truth intellectually but we won't let it get close enough to change us. And if it doesn't get close enough to change us we never get close enough to feel the freedom Christ offers us & Paul declares in Rom 8:1-3 -**So now there is no condemnation for those who**

belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. In that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins - Rom 8:1-3

I've said it before...grace is not just pardon it is also power. Luther in his lectures on Romans wrote: **"To** progress is always to begin again. Real spiritual progress, in other words, requires a daily going backwards" You know to where Luther went backwards...baptism...To the victory in Christ won for me in his crucifixion & resurrection that becomes mine in baptism...Christian victory/growth doesn't occur by **behaving** better, but by **believing** bigger deeper higher wider more expansively & extensively that Christ has already secured for sinners the Father's pardon peace & provision for & over sin. That his cross & empty tomb & rule of grace breaks once & for all my slavery to me my addiction to all those things that steal, kill & destroy the very life we seek & he desires to give in abundance.

A word about addiction...I am less worried about generations younger than I am selling out their lives to drugs - booze - porn - tech devices as pervasive & destructive as those things are. I am more worried that we allow any generation to view faith in Jesus Christ as a mere **piece** of the puzzle of their lives instead of seeing faith in Christ as the **picture** on the box. A piece can be fitted in whenever it's convenient or you see a need...but the picture tells me the shape goal direction & destiny of everything I do. I worry about any generation settling for comfort & convenience even in matters of faith as opposed to striving for the character of Jesus Christ, & missing the genuine freedom & joy of abundant living in the way & will of Jesus

As followers of Jesus we never hide or deny the dead, stolen or broken bits of our lives, but we also know that in Jesus, the broken stolen & dead parts of us are brought back to life...made whole...& restored in a newness that nothing on earth can match & with an assurance that can't be taken away. Jesus said, **"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me..."**

Take it home...

What is one "new" habit you can start/resume, that enriches your life in Christ?

30 secs... **Go...Swap...**

I'll pray for us to close...