

## WELCOME 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2022 – 4 Pentecost '22 C

Romans 5:20-6:23

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! Can't tell you how excited I am to be moving through the book of Romans as a family of disciples... *Bible Study Qs are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups which are back Friday @ 1p.m.*

**As we move into this week...** I'm told if you **chain** an elephant to something it can't move, for long enough...it will "learn" that it can only go "so far" with something tied around its leg. Eventually, the chain can be replaced by a **rope** or smaller cord from which the elephant could easily break free...if it tried... but it won't because it has learned it can only go so far with something tied around its leg.

Animal researchers call **THAT** "learned helplessness" the ingrained sense that nothing you do can change your circumstances...It happens in humans too but the Bible **calls** it "slavery" that something outside of you has conquered the inside of you & now controls your behaviour...it owns you.

As Paul writes to the church in Rome he is aware that all people are slaves to something...we're either slaves to sin...or freed from that bondage by Jesus Christ we are slaves to Jesus Christ. There is no middle ground.

But it is only in being claimed by Jesus Christ...dying & rising with him in his life/death/resurrection/rule that we find true freedom from sin, death, & the forces of evil that seek to enslave & destroy us. **For** we died & were buried with Christ by baptism. *And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. (walk in newness of life)*

Not only when we die is Jesus Lord, but right now & when we wake up tomorrow Christ is Lord & lays claim to us so his life love joy peace freedom can be visible in all we are & do. That freedom is a life & a gift to be shared...especially with those chained to something so much stronger than they are...

Our guests from Destiny Rescue work to bring that freedom every day to young people trapped & trafficked in service to the very worst in our world. We'll hear about their ministry & offer our partnership as we explore & experience that together...

Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of grace, you have brought us from slavery to freedom, from despair to hope, from darkness to light & from death to life through the gift of your Son Jesus.

As we gather let thankfulness & praise shape all we do in response to all you have done. Send Your Holy Spirit to inspire our worship. Use our words and music, our thoughts and prayers, even our very lives to bring honour and glory to you. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection have brought us everlasting life. Amen.

Let's stand & sing...then we'll hear God's word

#### 4 PENTECOST '22 C – OPERATION GOSPEL: GOSPEL FREEDOM

In his incredible **book** *The Weight of Glory*, CS Lewis writes about the mundane boring nature of human sin...I'll paraphrase...**We** are half-hearted creatures, fooling about chasing ambitions, appetites & approval when **infinite joy is offered us**...like ignorant children who go on making mud pies in a ditch because we cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the coast. We are far too easily pleased. I would say like the elephant we are also far too easily enslaved. Given keys to infinite joy...we live small mud pie lives...captured by petty wants, fleeting desires, give in to grudges, surrender to anger & impatience, see the world through critical judgmental lenses, & justify it all because we can – who we are – who else will look out for me if I don't. And we hear the whisper...it's ok God forgives...it's ok grace pardons...and we tell ourselves it's ok we'll try harder next time...until we don't.

Then we know the story: Wounds aren't healed. Relationships aren't put right. Lives aren't transformed. Nothing changes. No one sees the Jesus we are supposed to represent <sup>b</sup>/<sub>4</sub> the world. We settle for "get out of jail free" & faith becomes just talk instead of "power righteousness peace & joy in the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor 4:20 Rom 14:17) Even if we fully grasp the magnitude of sin...the real depth of our slavery...we also see grace as the rip cord on the parachute...the safe exit from our well-earned crash landing...except it can't go on like that. Paul catches us mid-thought:

**Well** then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more & more of his wonderful grace? **Of course not!** Is it really ok, Paul asks, if I just use the cross like a borrowed credit card...running up a debt I'll never have to repay? Is it ok if no one can tell the difference <sup>b</sup>/<sub>t</sub> me & the un-disciplined world around me? **OF COURSE NOT!**

**Since** we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

Who we are is immersed in Jesus Christ crucified/risen/ruling. As a baptized child of God I am now inseparable from him. These are his eyes. These his hands. This his mouth. This is his wallet. We now re-present Christ to the world. We live his life in this time & place in everything we are & do. Sure...we can live less than that. We can absolutely resolve to make mud pies the rest of our lives...deny ourselves the life Jesus has given us. Resist fully enjoying every blessing of heaven laid in our hands. You can do whatever you want...

Or...we can hear God's clear **call**: Do not let sin control the way you live...Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil...Instead, give yourselves completely to God...for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an

instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Remember...This isn't simply a question of behave or be bad, do right vs do wrong, keeping or breaking rules. Ultimately, it's the path we walk every day that leads to life in its flourishing abundance or the one that leads to death...& 1000X1000 little deaths along the way...death of hope joy peace love contentment relationships integrity honour self-worth...when life is overwhelmed by anger worry sadness helplessness...

As Paul writes to the church in Rome he is aware that all people are slaves to something...we're either slaves to sin...or freed from that bondage by Jesus Christ we are slaves to Jesus Christ & free to live fully abundantly.

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**DESTINY RESCUE** - worldwide organisation dedicated to rescuing children from sexual exploitation and trafficking and helping them stay free.

Let's close in prayer

Gracious God, you have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You redeem us, protect us & provide for us. Now feed us & renew our strength for your service. As we are & also share Christ's body & receive his cup, create in us responsive obedient hearts to be faithful disciples so that our daily living gives witness to the life of your kingdom. Make our love an abundant spring of your love flowing through us to reach a world in need...freeing captives, breaking chains of slavery, & declaring that your favour has come through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.