

WELCOME 10th July 2022 – 5 Pentecost '22 C

Romans 8:1-6, 15-28 & 31-39

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... Jeopardy is a game show that works backwards by game show standards. Rather than answer a question from the host, in Jeopardy, the host supplies the answer & the contestants respond with the question...Let's try it. The answer is...Death & Taxes...And the question? (wait)...**What** are the only two things certain in this life?

Most of the world lives w/ a Death/Taxes mindset. We live certain only about having what we've lived/worked for taken away by the gov't or by the grave...We live confident we are going to lose...it...all.

Paul gives a different answer...Three things, he says, are certain in this life...
1st no condemnation - **So** now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.
2nd no separation - **I** am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love.
Romans 8 begins w/ "no condemnation," ends w/ "no separation," & in **it** overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us there is overwhelming victory for all who are "in Christ."

In being claimed by Jesus Christ...dying/rising w/ him by baptism into his life death resurrection & rule we are granted **a** gospel certainty that in Christ **if** God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? That is a certainty that in every circumstance of this life God at work in us by his Spirit will meet every need against every foe.

We'll explore & experience that together...Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

We'll read today where Paul assures us that when we are unsure of how or what to pray, the Spirit of God prays for us *"with groanings/sighs too deep for words"*.

Through the Life-Giving Spirit/Breath of God, we are given all we need. Let us breathe deeply — inhaling the good gifts that God provides, and exhaling all the things that we need to release.

Let's pray...

Let us breathe in strength. (Pause for breath...)
And, exhale exhaustion. (Pause for breath...)

Let us breathe in freedom. (Pause for breath...)
And, exhale every human or inhuman bondage. (Pause for breath...)

Let us breathe in a God's vision for our life & ministry. (Pause for breath...)
And, exhale the worn paths to nowhere. (Pause for breath...)

Let us breathe in hope. (Pause for breath...)
And, exhale fear uncertainty & doubt. (Pause for breath...)

Let us breathe in unconditional love. (Pause for breath...)
And, exhale distrust and hate. (Pause for breath...)

Holy Spirit, let us feel the mighty rush of your presence in this place. Blow away our fears and worries, and help us to breathe in your gifts of new life in the name of Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection have brought us everlasting life & granted us your presence power & provision within. Amen.

Let's hear God's word

FAITH CHAT:

1. What things in life make you feel secure?
2. Our world seems a pretty uncertain unsettled place. How does the assurance & certainty of the gospel give you something not only to hold on but also to share?

5 PENTECOST '22 C – OPERATION GOSPEL: GOSPEL CERTAINTY

A lot of Xns I know...& I plead guilty at times...a bunch of followers of Jesus live their faith like they drive their car...or use their phone...by **the** “full/empty” method. You’ll understand instantly. Worship is their petrol station...battery recharge dock...& they live from that “fullness” ‘til about Thurs/Fri or next crisis/struggle/trial/failure/disappointment & the little orange light goes on & they hunker down/hide until Sunday again. So life & faith for them is full – empty – full – empty over/over/over.

I get that. I’ve done it. It’s exhausting right? Like a **rat** on the wheel in their cage. Nothing ever seems to really change or improve...same old worn out trail day/day. Now you can do that your whole life & find no joy no power no provision no peace no transformation no victory at all in your life or your faith. Just keep swimmin’...wheel spinning...Or you just run out. You get off the wheel...Something happens & you quit refuelling/recharging. You find some other excitement...enjoyment...energy booster & you cut yourself off from the faith family. You view worship as a “sometimes/when it’s convenient” thing...when there’s time...it’s worth my while...There’s hurt that won’t go or a disappointment to great to overcome...frustrated w/ God...quit.

On the other hand...I know disciples who live their lives/faith like they are an electric **train**...light **rail**...& live by the “contact” method... You have the two rails for the train wheels & the electrified 3rd rail or wire conductor overhead & as long as the train stays in contact w/ that 3rd rail/overhead conductor, the “source” of its power...it keeps going...Paul tells us...that’s supposed to be us.

That’s how life in Christ, under the power of the Spirit is meant to be lived; & he points to the unceasing source of power that is freely given to each of us...Paul leads us to the gospel certainty of God’s power freely given & fully available every day in every circumstance...absolute assurance that our lives are intended to be filled by God’s presence power provision peace transformation victory not full/empty rat/wheel...“power righteousness peace & joy in the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor 4:20 Rom 14:17)

Three things, Paul says, are certain in this life...^{1st} no condemnation - **So** now (therefore) there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. “Therefore” – what’s it there for? In Rom 7 Paul admits the struggle each of us face: the on-going presence of sin that just seems to hang around & muck up the works. **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 and death? **Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.** – Rom 7:21-25

We know that struggle. The thing we said we were going to do, we didn’t. The thing we said we’d never do, we did. Some of us lived that experience this morning. I love his cry for help; *miserable person I am...who will free me from this life dominated by sin & death*...Notice he doesn’t say, “Doggone it! I’m a try harder!” The answer must come from outside & it’s Jesus. *Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.* If you feel like you don’t measure up, like you’re a disaster in the world’s eyes & probably God’s; the answer isn’t try harder, more resolve, better will power, or new technique. The answer is look beyond yourself to Jesus. **Trust** his supply for every need & his forgiveness for every failing. *Thank God! The answer is Jesus Christ our Lord. “So now (therefore) there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.”*

That means for every prodigal son/daughter (& I’m talking about each one of us) there is always a ring, a robe, new shoes, a fatted calf & a party ready to go. There is no rejection for those who are in Christ Jesus. Even those who wander, those who stray, those who live a long time in the far country & are embarrassed that they have squandered their spiritual inheritance...no condemnation means no condemnation. Three things, Paul says, are certain in this life...^{1st} no condemnation - Power peace transformation victory joy provision do not come by our behaving better, but when we believe better – trust bigger, trust more deeply, trust w/ our lives more wholeheartedly what Christ has already secured for sinners like us. Our debt was paid by Christ on the cross, it was paid obliterated cancelled. Further payment is not required...further guilt shame recompense self-loathing – out of the question.

^{2nd} no separation - **I** am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Earlier this morning we looked at this question: **Our** world seems a pretty uncertain unsettled place. How does the assurance & certainty of the gospel give you something not only to hold on but also to share? I’ve told some of you that while I was in the US...I got to talk to my extended family there & like I do w/ some folks I had never met before. You know me I talk to people...w/o exception fear uncertainty doubt unsettledness & anxiousness about the circumstances of the world were part of almost every conversation. Paul simply makes a list of the worst that can happen: **...trouble or calamity, persecution, hunger, poverty, danger, threatened with death...Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow – not even the powers of hell...No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.** He doesn’t list the Russians/Covid/\$\$ but fill in what you want

Paul says, I am so certain of God’s love/care/presence/power/provision in every circumstance in every moment I don’t need to see a mountain move a cancer cured a lion’s mouth shut an enemy thwarted or a mistake fixed ^{b/4} it’s discovered; I know

nothing can snatch me from my Saviour's hand nothing can turn him against me because he is for me & because he has declared it so & by his death/rez/rule/Spirit in me guarantees it more certain than any power lined up against me.

Power transformation victory peace joy provision do not come by our circumstances being made easy or pleasant by floods stopped fires extinguished marriages healed or children retrieved but by the Spirit transforming us to cling more doggedly live more boldly trust more fully those assurances of no condemnation & no separation as the power of the risen Christ & his Spirit at work w/in us. Because in that look what happens: God doesn't just free us from condemnation. He gives us everything we need to live from that point on.

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature **think** about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit **think** about things that please the Spirit. "Think" is a dodgy translation...it's stronger than that...It's a word that means "intent," locked in like a radar-guided missile...set your GPS to...prickle in your sock...you have to stop & pull it out...it's a constant focus of your attention. There are only 2 ways to see this world...the way of the Spirit/life or the way of the world/sin/death. Paul says when the Spirit of the risen Jesus takes hold the 1st thing it starts working on is to change your worldview...to help you see the world to organize your thoughts to shift your attitudes values hopes dreams & aspirations away from what the world values & pursues toward those which are pleasing to God...in line w/ Jesus.

And then...because we have been given the Spirit of the living risen Jesus to live w/in & shape us from inside out...**So** you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory.

1st century adoption was a very intentional specific process & we need to see what Paul means...In the 1st century, an adopted son was deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name & inherit his estate. He was in no way lesser in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature & may well enjoy the father's affection more fully & grow to reproduce the father's character more closely. Paul is loud & clear: If you are a follower of Christ, it's because God has deliberately chosen you. He has given you his name. He's committed to you the riches of his full inheritance & has brought you into his family. In other words, no condemnation & no separation open for us & equip us into a way of life in harmony w/ the Father's will & desires in anticipation of unfolding blessing & glory. We have yet to see the fullness of all God has in store...but it is certainly & assuredly ours in Jesus Christ.

Romans 8 begins w/ "no condemnation," ends w/ "no separation," & in **b/t** *overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us* there is overwhelming victory for all who are "in Christ." In being claimed by Jesus Christ...dying/rising by baptism w/ him in his life death resurrection & rule we are granted an assurance – a gospel certainty that in Christ not only is sin forgiven; it's defeated – not only is death beaten; it's conquered & every trick trap or trial of the evil one are not simply set aside; but crushed, conquered & vanquished now & forever – a certainty that in every circumstance of this life God at work in us by his Spirit will meet every need against every foe. **If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?**

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 certainty can be visible in all we are & do.

TAKE IT HOME -

Where in your life this week will you live & share the certainty you have in Jesus Christ?

Let's close in prayer

Blessed are you Lord our God for the love you have shown us through Jesus Christ. In him we receive overwhelming victory over hardship, distress, persecution, want, danger & threat. When we feel lost or alone in sickness or grief, pour out the riches of your peace that our trust in you never wanes & our joy is ever greater.

Send us into the world to carry out your will in witness to you, our only Saviour. By your Spirit unite our hearts as one & expand our generosity & hospitality so that we are known by your love made visible through all we do.

Lord, remove any heaviness of heart that might weigh upon us & deepen within us the assurance that ultimately all will be well because you are God & all we are is in your hands through Jesus Christ...Amen