

Fifth Sunday After Easter
May 14/15, 2022

To this day, one of the most difficult principles to understand is the reality of what Christ has accomplished from the cross and that top which He is calling us. Our misbehavior, sin, or whatever you wish to call it is what has gotten humanity into trouble. There is no excuse for sin. In fact, sin is deadly. So, for what I about to say, do not go to the unreasonable place some people go. Our salvation will bring us to the place where we are complete, holy, unified, perfect, or any other idea that conveys what salvation does. The obstacle that gets in the way *is* sin, so Jesus takes it away.

That simple concept gets lost in the constant going back to, “Yes, but this is what we must do, etc., etc.” The real basis of sin is being separated from our holy, perfect, just, and loving God. Anything that severs the relationship is sin. Where this ultimately leads is to the place of pride. We place ourselves above, before, or even beside God.

The idea of not eating red meat on Friday is a fine thing. It is a reminder that Christ died for our sins and that we are not to partake. But if you have a hamburger on Friday, does that mean you have disdain the Lord? I suppose there are some who do (and hamburgers have nothing to do with it). The Lord has told us that the breach has been repaired. Behold the Lamb who takes away our sin. Therefore, the law of liberty is not like the law which brings death. Rather than focusing upon the particulars of behavior, we are to focus on something completely different. And if you abstain from things for your relationship with the Lord, good for you. That is between you and the Lord.

We know that in eternity we shall be like Christ. If we are to become like Christ, then focus upon becoming like Christ. You do something or you do not do it, if you are being led by Christ, then it is noone else’s business. If you are not becoming like Christ, then you are still in your own sin. If you are in your own sin, your in condemnation. Either Christ takes away your sin or else you are doing the wrestling on your own. If you are doing the wrestling on your own, then there is no hope. But in Christ, we have hope upon hope. I realize that what I have just said sounds much like political stump speeches, which is why the Lord put the word picture of Peter before us. It is not what we eat, what we do, or even our attitudes that save us. In fact, we are unable to save ourselves which is why we have a Savior. Christ is the One who saves. This means that we would do well to put no impediments in front of anyone. But make no mistake, as some do, this does not mean that God does not care about your attitude or behavior. He does. For, if you are in Christ, the real work can begin. From every folk and nation He shall save those who will be with Him eternally.

Our Lord is preparing a new kind of people. This is not just a clean up operation, but a new creation. It begins at the cross. There, Jesus takes away our sin. For the rest of our lives, Jesus will be taking away that which causes us to sin. The new Jerusalem will be sin-free. If we are to be residents in the new Jerusalem, then we ought to begin the preparation.

So, how do we prepare? Jesus tells us that where He is going we cannot come. He is not being mean or effusive, but telling us reality. We may think to ourselves how wonderful it will be being united with all of those who have gone before. If we were to do so as we now are, with all of our self-doubts and self-centered thoughts, the weight of God’s glory would crush us. We, simply put, are not ready. This should not cause you to pause or wonder, but this is said in order to make clear what our Lord must and will do. He will conform us to His image. We may ask ourselves how this happens and He gives us the answer.

This world focuses upon what we do or do not do. This world focuses upon our accomplishments. This world leads us away from the simplicity of the truth that we are saved. If we are saved, then there is nothing we can do to get saved. Being saved itself tells us that another acts where we cannot.

So, how does the Christ life come into us? By what means. We say by faith through grace, but what does that mean? Listen to Jesus. He is giving an instruction whereby the ability to do what needs to be done is given, "Love one another." We do not even need to guess at how to do this, for He further says, "as I have loved you." We are to spend our time and energy on the reality of the golden rule, "Do as you would be done by." This is neither trite, nor simple, for it requires that we actually invest ourselves in the other. What is it that the other needs? First, to guess, or project upon them what we think is to go to the place of coming at this from pride. That won't work.

Christ, though in the very form of God did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped. He came to us humbly. We are to go to others humbly. He meets us where we are. We are to meet others where they are. He did not judge those who came to Him for help. He did judge those who came to ridicule or demean Him. He was led by the Holy Spirit and the will of the Father, He did as He was directed. Look at what Jesus showed us. Over and over again, He told us that He did only what the Father told Him to do. When you look at it this way, you can absolutely begin the journey of walking life as Jesus walked life. And this is the life to which He calls us.

Jesus told us to constantly be in prayer. "Father, what would You have me do?" We are to learn to listen. "The sheep know my voice." We are to be willing to jump in, invest ourselves in the lives of others. "Love your neighbor as yourself." We do not have to do all things for all people. "Do not cast your pearls before swine." Our Lord was balanced and do not do everything everyone asked of Him. Neither should we.

I think of the many times people have asked things of me and I have said, "No." I have been cursed because I would not do what they wanted. It is not about trying to make other people happy. If one is willing to take those first steps to live a life of faith, I not only will, but I am obligated to help out. This is where our relationship with the Lord is so important. In prayer, with much deliberation, we are to move forward as the Lord leads. Yes, because of sin, there are times when we will make mistakes, make the wrong choices, help some we should not and not help others that we should. This is where we hear the Lord say, "My grace is sufficient."

Remember that our Lord is after our attitude. He is creating the character of a child of God. This is our work. This is the work of the Christian. We are to leave behind the speculations of how all of this works. We are even not to focus upon whether or not the Lord will retire us from the age tomorrow or the day after. While it is day, we are called to work in the vineyard. "The work is plentiful, but the workers are few." Join the Lord of the harvest and hear His command.

"By this everyone will know that You are my disciples, if you have love for one another." We do not need to write mission statements, or be creative with plans of action. This is a call for us to go back to the beginning and share the good news we have received in Christ. The world is falling apart because they are living without hope. If there is no God, if there is no salvation, we should not know that we were hopeless. But that we become hopeless (without Christ) tells us that there is something else for which we were made. Come, drink the living water and live unto and into life eternal. Christ will make this happen. He is our Savior. Amen.

