

6th Sunday after Pentecost

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Putting To Death

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The text is Romans 8, verse 13.

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Rom 8:13 ESV)

In a recent sermon we agreed with the apostle Paul that the things we know we should not be doing we are doing and the things that our new man informs us to do we don't have the ability to do them. In light of that confession on our part, who among you would agree that you are putting to death the deeds of the body? However, according to our text from Romans 8 not putting to death the deeds of the body means that we are living according to the flesh and we will die. But who among us are able to put to death the deeds of the body in order that we may live?

Particularly when you hear of Jesus' parable of the sower who sowed on the path and the birds came and ate the seed or he sowed on rocky ground which scorched the seed when the sun came up or he sowed among thorns which choked the growing seed. One might not have understood what Jesus meant had He Himself not explained it later. We will examine what Jesus says and then apply it to our day.

The first thing to decide is what or who is the problem. Is it the farmer who is not careful enough to sow properly? No, unlike today's farmer with computerized machinery, the sowing of seed in Jesus' day could result in the seed being broadcast beyond the good ground due to wind conditions and the like. So the farmer is not at fault. Perhaps it is the seed. No, not only is the seed the same whether on the path or among thorns, the seed stands for the Word of God.

In this parable, then, the problem is the soil! The soil refers to the people who hear the proper Word of God and react differently. How so? The seed on the path refers to hearers of the Word who refuse to understand the Word and the devil snatches away from them true faith.

Who is that today? The people of the path are those who refuse to understand the truth of God's Word when it comes to the morality of our day whether we speak of abortion, same sex marriage, not paying taxes, unfaithful employees, selfish employers and the list goes on and on.

We provided a number of examples in which the Word of God appears to the world as foolishness. By the way, the Greek word for foolish is where we get the word moron. So when the path people hear the Word of God they conclude that not only the God of the Bible but also the people who believe in His holy Word and promises are morons.

The rocky people are those who appear at first to love to hear the Word of God but as soon as sufferings or persecution takes place they fall away. Many Reformed Jews have become atheists no longer believing in any god who would permit the holocaust to have occurred. Since they cannot understand why God would permit that to happen, they conclude that there is no true god.

How many of us Christians even question God as to why they deserved such and such a rocky suffering to occur in our lives? It's as though we have totally forgotten that God Himself experienced a far greater suffering in dying for the sins of another than we will ever experience. Who among us can overcome the rocks of life thrown our way?

Learn the difference between unbelievers and believers in regard to works, whether good or bad from the world's point of view. The unbeliever sees a work and then attempts to look through the work to decide whether the one doing the work is good or bad. If a good work is done, then the person doing it is considered to be a good person. If a bad work is done, then the person is bad.

The problem with that is the world can never discern whether a work is good or bad from God's point of view. Why? Because God can read the heart to discern the motivation. So what unbelievers conclude are good works are in reality sinful deeds because the motivation is one of self-interest. As though that were bad enough? No, when the unbelievers regards the works of God and sees some of them as bad, then they conclude that God is evil.

The splendid and good works of God are often regarded by unbelievers as bad and evil. For example, when bad things happen in an unbeliever's life, the conclusion is often that God is getting even with me. That is not fair from our point of view. So it is not unusual to find not just unbelievers but even at times believers not happy with the decisions that God has made and therefore we may conclude that He does not love us.

But the Christian who is immersed in a weekly meal of Word and Sacrament recognizes that what the world considers evil and bad suffering God often uses to increase our faith in Him and comfort us with His gracious promises. Who but Christians would refer to the greatest day of suffering and injustice as **Good** Friday?

We finally arrive at the thorny people who are so enamored by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches that God's Word is choked in their lives and they remain unfruitful. Recently a new series on TV called *Deadly Sin* is about true stories of betrayal and murder. The girl's name is Erin who began to cheat with a married man that led to her murder.

The narrator commenting on the crime ends the show with these words: “Erin thought she was just following her own heart but lust, betrayal and lies put her in an early grave. When you give in to deadly sin, they can be H E double L to pay.” I thought to myself it’s a rare program these days that presents such an accurate portrayal of how God deals with such sin.

Which leads us back to the question of this sermon. “Who among you would agree that you are putting to death the deeds of the body?” A question in light of Romans 8, verse 13: For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

We have agreed somewhat that none of us have the ability even with the help of the Holy Spirit to put to death the sinful deeds of the body if that means that we need to stop from sinning entirely. So how are we able to be saved? Note that the passage is clear that we put to death the deeds of the body and live by the Holy Spirit. That sounds like that we are able to stop from sinning through the Holy Spirit. That is untrue. Yes, the sinful deeds are put to death but that death is not one we accomplish. List to 1 Peter 3 (18-21):

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being **put to death in the flesh** but made alive in the spirit,

¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,

²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

²¹ **Baptism**, which corresponds to this, **now saves you**, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1Pe 3:18-21 ESV)

In the death of Christ your sinful deeds of the body have been put to death. Through faith in the promises of the Gospel you have not only received the gift of the forgiveness of sins which puts to death the sinful deeds you have committed but you have also received the gift of the robe of righteousness which puts to death the good works you have omitted to do. It’s what the Christian faith is all about. That by grace through faith in the promises of Jesus Christ God has considered that the deeds of the flesh have been put to death which means you will live forever and ever. Amen.

And may the peace of God that passes all understanding, sustain and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Church Sixth Sunday after Pentecost 12 July 2020

Since we are children and heirs of God, let us call upon Him with full confidence that we will be heard.

Brief silence

Almighty Father, the Word goes forth from Your mouth and does not return to You empty. Provide for the continued proclamation of Your Word, that those who do not yet know You may come to join us in the confession of Your name, so that together we may go out in joy and be led forth in peace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, You have planted Your Word within us, watered us with the promises of Baptism, and nourished us in the good soil of Your Church. Keep us ever faithful to that which You have given us, and let us never fall away from You. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, all the nations of the earth are Yours, and besides You there is no other God. Give those who lead the desire for peace and stability and a concern to govern wisely. Let them plead the cause of the widow and orphan and serve the needs of the least among them. Bring an end to war and strife, and allow all to live in peace and safety as we pray specifically for those who are in such vocations _____. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, look with mercy upon those who suffer from illness of body or mind. [*Be especially with the ongoing virus.*] Comfort them with Your presence. Give them healing if it be Your will; patience to endure suffering; and knowledge that no matter what they go through, they are Your dear children and that the glory of Christ awaits them. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, we gather again at the table of Your Son to receive His body and blood in the blessed Sacrament. May we eat and drink in faith, receiving that which was given and shed for us for our benefit. Let what we receive here strengthen us in our trust in You and our service toward others. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We join our prayer and praise with that of all generations of the faithful who have called You Father and are now before Your throne of grace. Bring us at last with them together into the life that awaits us at the coming of Your Son, Jesus, who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, life without end. **Amen.**