

Trinity 7, 2015
The Ultimate Choice
St. Andrew's Church, Jacksonville, OR
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Romans 6: 19-23

The last verse in Romans chapter 6 says, *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Comforting words...for us at least. This is nothing new to us...this is not our first time hearing these words. And it seems as though a choice is being offered. But, is there...really? What kind of choice is this? The correct answer seems so obvious...it's like being asked, "would you like me to comfort you in all your troubles or would you rather be set on fire?"

The answer is easy right?...eternal death – eternal life, eternal damnation – eternal bliss. Well, you would think the answer would be simple. But the evidence we see on our televisions, on the streets, on our bumper stickers, tells us just the opposite. In light of the recent Supreme Court decision on 'same sex marriage' many took to the streets in support of the Court. The imprint of one individual is burned into my mind; he was in one of the many parades of that day and he stood dressed as some kind of demon, barely clothed, holding a sign that read "I bet Hell will be fabulous." Well, I'm not a betting man...I'll take the sure thing any day. This man has no idea of the implication of his words as he stands in defilement of God. 'hey devil, here I am...where's the party?' Well, we know it won't be the kind of party he is thinking of.

And the Episcopal Church, in their most recent synod, has just approved the blessing of same sex couples in the sacrament of marriage. The world seems to be in a downward spiral. The church is continuing to divide, to accustom itself with secular society in such a way as to change the face of the Church. Gross biblical interpretation is the order of the day as is a denial of the faith once given to the Saints. It's a 'Who are we now' verses 'who did we used to be'. These changes to orthodoxy are viewed as new revelations...a new compassion that has come into the world. We must not waver if we are to remain a people who worships a

God who is the same Yesterday, Today and Forever! Two verses before the beginning of our Epistle reading today we hear these words from the Apostle Paul, *“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you”* (Romans 6:17). That form of doctrine? What doctrine is Paul talking about? Is he referring to the new and improved version of 21st century? Or, is Paul talking about the original version given through the Apostles by the Holy Spirit? Have we had it wrong for the last 2,000 years and are just now getting it right? Thankfully, we at St. Andrew’s are part of small minority in conjunction with our brothers and sisters in the other Continuing Churches, who remain steadfast in the biblical message.

The last time I preached I praised our ‘hindsight’ in being able to see the complete and comprehensive revelations of God 2,000 years after Jesus set out in Simon Peter’s boat...Today I praise the ‘foresight’ of those in the continuing churches, who have kept us on course, focused on the true path, and maintaining that which has been passed down by the saints before us. May we give glory to God for the strength of these individual’s.

In our Epistle today we can see Paul’s foresight as he preaches to us from the deep waters. Paul says, *“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh...”* Paul is telling us, then and now, that we are weak in that we have freely given ourselves over to sin. Properly articulated rhetoric can change minds and hearts influencing masses to leave the true path. Sin can be so alluring, can seem so politically correct and be so deceiving...it is good to have love and compassion as long as that love and compassion do not distort the truth of God’s Word. The more sin gets into our lives and dictates the future of the church, the further we descend from righteousness. *“For when ye were servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness”* Paul continues. Again, the analogy works...while your flesh burns you are free of all comfort! Righteousness is alien to the sinner who does not come to Christ for forgiveness.

And we are asked ‘what fruit is there in sin?’ We are all admittedly sinners right? But, the difference is we are washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ...God in the flesh. Our sins of the past will assist us in the

current turmoil of these days by illuminating the outgrowth of our former transgressions... we can see vividly the consequences of giving in to sin, we have been there. And we can see that the end of those things is death for we have come to understand that we cannot serve two masters.

The worldly state of affairs looks grim. But we should expect this. In 2 Timothy it is stated “...*that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...without natural affection...lovers of pleasure...having a form of godliness but, denying the power thereof*” (2 Timothy 3:1-5 excerpts). And Peter reminds us in his second epistle concerning patience “*that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts*” (2 Peter 3:3). And maybe the prophet Isaiah puts it best when he says “*Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness...*”(Isaiah 5:20).

Brothers and Sisters...we are in a fight for our very lives...our eternal lives. If you have not already done so it is time to put on the full armor of God and engage the battle; “*for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; EVEN SO now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*” ‘Here we are being told that with the same zeal you put into worldly affairs do so now with spiritual foresight. Stand against the worldly distortions of Biblical Truth. “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*”. (James 1:13-15) All temptation comes from the distortion of the truth. We look at the love that occurs between a man and a woman and through compassion, we equate that love as synonymous with same sex couples. We scream from the rooftops the importance of equality in life for all people as we abort those with no voice simply for convenience sake. We hail our first amendment rights of free speech as long as God is not brought into it. The world is so full of itself and...it will get what it is promised.

We are to yield ourselves as servants to righteousness unto holiness. This is progressive moral growth...this is the path of sanctification...the leading of the Holy Spirit. As Peter tells us in his first letter, “*gird up the*

loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13). In other words, trust Jesus and keep watch, stay aware and be strong.

And now brothers and sisters *“being made free from sin, and become servants to God, Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”* So there is good news for us in this wayward and troubled world, for we are ‘in’ the world but not ‘of’ the world. We are healed by the blood of the lamb!...we may take up our beds and walk! Through obedience to Christ we are committed to Him and we are formed into His character.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

We have sin on one side and God on the other...we have wages paid against a gift freely given...and in the end we have either eternal death or eternal life...

Those who choose to be servants to sin have their freedom from righteousness...the freedom to ‘party’ with the devil. And being made a slave to bondage their only fruit will be that which rots on the ground. The wages paid are a fools imagination for the devil is in bankruptcy. His only reward is eternal separation from God...no turning back...the gulf is just too wide.

But, if you choose righteousness...if you choose to follow Jesus, you are a slave to God and free from sin. This is true deliverance! And the Grace imparted to you will produce good works acceptable to God and your branches will bend low with abundant fruit. And if we have fruit unto holiness while in this world we can be assured that we will have everlasting life in the next. And your wages!...wages are earned, there are no wages paid to the children of God...eternal life is a gift, bought and paid for by Jesus Christ.

So, come to the table and receive the ultimate gift, freely given and be thankful.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.