

9.28.2025 Trinity 15 (Galatians 6:11-18)

Our bodies often become a telltale sign of the masters we serve. The calloused hands of a laborer tell of a life spent in the service of hard work and toil. A soldier's scars or broken body tell of sacrificial service to their country. The faces of addiction tell of a person whose master is alcohol or drugs. Whether it's calloused hands, a broken body, a face marked by addiction, or any number of physical signs, it's clear that we bear in our body the marks of the master we serve.

In our Epistle this morning, St. Paul stated, *"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"* (Galatians 6:17), and anyone who looked at Paul would've recognized that he was, to use his own words, *"a slave of Christ Jesus"* (Romans 1:1 NLT). Paul's body was a telltale sign of the Master he served. If you were to study his body, you would've seen the red lines that were left from the nearly 200 lashes he received from the Jews, you'd recognize the raised welts made by the Roman rods with which he was beaten, and the scars left by the stones that were thrown at him would've been obvious, because on that day they'd beaten him down so severely that St. Paul was left for dead. (2 Corinthians 11:24-25).

The marks in our bodies reveal the master to whom we belong. They reveal who we are, and whose we are, and with that thought in mind, the question I'd ask you to consider is this: What marks you, not only as a follower of Christ, but again, to use the words of St. Paul, what marks you as *a slave of Christ Jesus*? It's an important question, because in the Gospel lesson we read today Jesus said, *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"* (Matthew 6:24). Our service cannot be divided between God and the world. Notice, Jesus didn't say, "You should not serve God and mammon." He said, *"You cannot..."* At the end of the day, it's one or the other - not both, and therefore the question becomes: What marks you as a servant of God, and God alone?

In the Epistle, St. Paul spoke of physical marks, scars on his body that identified him as belonging, not to himself, nor to any other master, but to Christ, and to Christ alone. To use a thought from the poem *Invictus*, St. Paul

was not the “Master” of his fate, the “captain” of his soul. Paul was not his own, like you and I, he was “*bought at a price*” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and every mark on his body testified to that truth. In Paul’s day, and in his ministry, much of what marked him as *a slave of Christ Jesus* was physical, and still today, worldwide, many Christians are marked physically as belonging to Christ.

For example, in Nigeria alone, between January 1 and August 10 of this year, 7,087 Christians were martyred - killed for no other reason than their faith in Christ. These martyrs were marked in a physical manner as belonging entirely to our Lord, and according to saints and theologians such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, these martyrs who are now in the presence of God still bear in their bodies these scars, the marks of the Lord Jesus, not as blemishes or imperfections, but as marks of virtue and beauty that signify their love and faithfulness to Christ. Again, these marks reveal who they are, and whose they are.

For martyrs like St. Paul, those in Nigeria, or countless others around the world, physical marks identify these sons and daughters of God as belonging to one Master, to Christ and to Him alone, but in our culture for most Christians this won’t be the case. Those things that mark us as belonging to Christ most likely will not be physical, however, the signs that identify you and I as slaves of Christ Jesus are marks that are no less evident to the world, and according to Scripture, two of the *marks of the Lord Jesus* that identify every true Christian are *light* and *love*.

In a very familiar verse, Jesus said to His disciples, “*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden*” (Matthew 5:14). In this bold declaration, proclaimed by our Maker and Redeemer, the word *you* is clearly an address to every Christian. If you’ve accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, and made Him the Lord of your life, He’s speaking directly to you. The word *are* is present tense. It describes you as you are right now – not as you once were, not as you hope to be someday, but as you are now, and the word *the* marks every disciple as *the light* - *You are the light of the world*.

Light is a mark of the Lord Jesus. Light identifies every Christian as belonging to Christ. He is the Master we serve, and therefore we, as members

of His body, branches on the one true vine, are called to do what He did - to bring the light of God's truth, the light of God's Word, and the light of God's love into this dark world.

We bear the marks of the Master we serve. We are marked by His light, and we are known by His love. Jesus said, "*By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (John 13:35). All people will know the Master we serve by our love. Christians are marked, we are set apart to serve one Master by an attribute that set Jesus apart from the rest of the world: the depth of His self-sacrificial love for others. This truth was seen in His disciples in the days of the early Church, when a common statement often heard in the surrounding pagan culture was: "See the Christians and how they love one another."

Christian love stands in such sharp contrast to a world marked by selfishness and division that people can't help but notice, and are often baffled at the sight of such self-giving, sacrificial love, and yet this expression of love, love that is not based on emotion but love that wills the good of another, is simply what our Lord commanded. To all who seek to follow Him, Jesus said, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another*" (John 13:34). See the Christians and how they love one another, see the Christians following the example of their Lord by laying down their lives to love and care and minister to the sick, the suffering, and the sorrowful. To love in this manner is to bear the mark of the Lord Jesus, the only Master we were created to serve.

It's not only our bodies that through the course of time become telltale signs of the masters we serve. Our souls bear the mark of the master we serve, revealing to whom we belong, and Jesus said, "*No man can serve two masters...*" Our service cannot be divided between God and the world. Therefore, we must continually pray, as we prayed in our Collect this morning, that God would "keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful..." May God keep us from the temptation to serve any other master, and may He "lead us to all things profitable to our salvation." May God lead us to His kingdom, and His kingdom alone. May God the Father keep us, may God the Son lead us, and may the Holy Spirit mark us as God's own possession - as those who belong to Him, and to Him alone.