

The Federated Church of Hyannis

Sunday, March 21, 2021

Reverend Derek L. White ~ SERMON: Letting Go Part 5

Scripture: Romans 6: 1-10

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome again to part five of our series on "letting go" during the season of Lent. This is the last part of the series as we transition next Sunday to Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter. And it has been a fun series to be a part of over the last 5 weeks.

Week One: Letting Go of Things

Week Two: Letting Go of Misunderstandings

Week Three: Letting Go of Fear

Week Four: Letting Go of Burdens

There are many more things we could have explored letting go of. But this week we will look at the most important lesson Jesus taught which is **LETTING GO OF SIN**. We know the primary reason why Jesus came was to resolve the problem of sin. By letting go of sin and having it removed, it restores us to a righteous relationship with God.

Part 1: What is Sin?

Let us first begin with what sin is? Years ago, when I was in 9th grade, I had to memorize catechisms in my confirmation class. And whenever my classmates

didn't know the answer, they would look to me to bail them out when the Pastor asked a question. And that is how I began my calling in ministry. I still have the catechisms memorized to this day, "sin is everything that is contrary to the will of God".

Now sin is much more than just that. But in 9th grade that was the only answer one needed to know to pass confirmation. Sin is what breaks the relationship with God. Several years ago, a friend of mine shared this illustration with me about sin. It is like your child covered in puke. While you never stop loving your child, it is hard to even look at them when they are covered in puke. You kind of love them at an arm's distance. Imagine being in a beautiful white satin dress or suit and a child covered in puke comes running up to you. What is your first reaction? It is probably, I love you but don't come near me.

God is holy and righteous. God always is seen as that figure in white flowing robes. And we are covered in the filth of sin which is far worse than puke. God loves us, but God tells us to keep our distance when we are covered in sin. Remember how Jesus after the resurrection told the disciples not to touch him because he wasn't fully ascended yet. Sin is infectious filth that contaminates everything it touches. Sin is so bad that the only way to cure it is death and resurrection.

Part 2: Once we have sin is there any reason to stop?

Now in the book of Romans Paul warns early Christians to not continue sinning. Once a person is covered in the filth of sin, why should a person stop sinning? And the explanation that is laid out in Paul's teaching is that when we are resurrected from death, we take on the likeness of Christ. If we have the likeness of Christ after death and resurrection we ascend to heaven.

It is like this, if a person receives an organ transplant it could save their life. The body has decided to accept the new organ or reject the new organ. If the organ is accepted, it becomes part of the person and the reason for continued life. But sometimes an organ is rejected by the body because it is too incompatible to be grafted onto the body. For the transplant to be successful there needs to be some level of compatibility.

Paul is making a similar argument here in Romans. There needs to be some level of compatibility for the resurrection to be accepted by the host. A transformation can happen, but without change there is no way to know if the cure has taken hold. Paul didn't know about modern medicine or organ transplants. But what he is describing is similar to what medicine does today. If a doctor today said to us, if

we want to live longer it requires a serious commitment to eating right and exercising. Paul is saying, if you want eternal life it requires a serious commitment to stop sinning.

Part 3: Can we go cold turkey?

I know the question is coming. Can we just go cold turkey from sinning? And my response back is, how well does that usually work? It would be incredible if we all could just go cold turkey. But we are human, and that usually is not how it works for most people. Yes, God knows we will sin. We will sin, but that doesn't mean we will be covered in sin.

I like to think the armor of God comes with a sin repellent sealing. It has the non-stick sin coating. I suppose with some really heavy wear and tear it could possibly lose its coating. That is what Paul was hinting at when he said we should not continue to go on sinning. In some ways that is the unspoken idea behind baptism. Not only does it remove sin, but it prevents it from building up again. Baptism represents the death and resurrection of Christ as the cure to sin and the commitment to adopt a healthier lifestyle (i.e., holy living).

Baptism is kind of like the sealant that protects against the buildup of sin. While we may still be tempted into sin, we are protected from it sticking to us. However, this should not be an incentive to sin more. That is what Paul is warning about in Romans 6:1-10.

Conclusion

God loves us and desires to have a close relationship with us. But the only way to have that relationship requires the barrier of sin to be removed. Letting go of sin is the primary message Jesus came to teach. It is he who washes us so that we may be presented before God of the day of judgement as holy and blameless.

When we accept the death of Jesus as the cure for sin, we should make a serious commitment to let go of sinning. God wants to remove the sin from our life so that we can be close to God. It is only after we recognize how serious sin is that we can appreciate the importance of what Christ has done for us.

Let us pray: Loving God, forgive us of our sins and restore us to a righteous right relationship with you. When we sin do not allow it to stick to us but remove the barrier of sin so that we may receive life eternal. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.