

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2017

## Trinity 2

Proper 7 Green



### Collect

Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

### Romans 6:1-11 English Standard Version (ESV)

#### Dead to Sin, Alive to God

6<sup>1</sup> Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self<sup>[a]</sup> was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free<sup>[b]</sup> from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**Footnotes:** a. Greek *man*. b. Greek *has been justified*.

**COMMENT:** The passage presents Paul's definition of the benefits of baptism based on faith in God's free gift of forgiveness for human sin and our justification through the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The major problems raised by this new status we enjoy has to do with its ethical implications. Paul's answer is important in that all Christians obviously do "continue in sin" despite our claim to having been forgiven. To put it in Evangelical terms, our justification has been accomplished, but our sanctification is incomplete. Paul finds the solution to this dilemma in the symbolism of baptism, then normally carried out by means of immersion in a river or lake. He likens baptism to dying and being buried with Christ, and being raised to a new life in him. In other words, the baptised Christian shares the resurrection life of Christ himself. Having died to and being freed from sin, it is no longer possible for us to live as before. The reign of sin over Christ has been completely conquered by his death and resurrection (verses 9-11). The life we are now to live is nothing short of the life of Christ in us. Paul made this inference on two fundamental

premises: First, baptism was invariably connected with each individual's confession of faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. Whether candidates were Jewish or pagan, it marked a complete change from everything associated with their previous faith and life. This meant more than a change of clothes – a metaphor which Paul used elsewhere in his letters. Secondly, converts, both Jews and Gentiles would understand exactly what Paul meant. When a Gentile became a Jew, he had to be instructed in the Torah, offer the prescribed sacrifices, be circumcised and then ritually cleansed by being immersed in a ritual bath similar to baptism. When people converted to the Christian faith, they spent a long, pre-baptismal period as catechumens. Also initiation into the church acquired the same symbolism of identification with Christ, and an emotional and spiritual experience akin to voluntary death. The new life which followed required exemplary ethical behaviour following the rigorous practices set forth in the teachings of Jesus. The uniqueness of Christian baptism was its inclusion of women, children and slaves on an equitable basis with men. Thus, when Paul wrote in verse 11 “So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus,” he was stating the discontinuity of the convert's life with all that had gone before and yet also some obvious continuity with that experience. No wonder there were – as there still are – real difficulties for Christian converts, as well as those baptised as infants, living in the same social, political and economic milieu in which they formerly lived.

## **Matthew 10:24-39** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **The Disciple and Teacher**

10<sup>24</sup> “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant<sup>[a]</sup> above his master. <sup>25</sup> It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign<sup>[b]</sup> those of his household.

### **Have No Fear**

<sup>26</sup> “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. <sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?<sup>[d]</sup> And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup> So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, <sup>33</sup> but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

### **Not Peace, but a Sword**

<sup>34</sup> “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. <sup>36</sup> And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. <sup>37</sup> Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> And whoever does not take his

cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

**Footnotes:** a. Greek *bondservant*; also verse 25. b. Greek lacks *will they malign*. c. Greek *Gehenna*. d. Greek *assarion*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/16 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a laborer).

**COMMENT:** This reading contains sayings given close to the end of Jesus' instructions to the twelve (verses 5-42). Most scholars agree that these sayings originally stood alone or in smaller collections gathered from several sources of the tradition. Matthew composed the whole as one of five discourses forming the body of teachings which cast Jesus as the new Moses. Verses 21-22 reflect persecutions which the apostolic church endured. These sayings on persecution and discipleship were drawn from Mark 9:41 and 13:9-13. Verses 24-25 dealt with the false expectation that disciples of Jesus would fare better than he did, however their success was not guaranteed. Nor is it for any of us who would follow Christ now. The remaining segment of this reading, however, does offer encouragement and a promise of reward for those who are faithful. Indeed, Jesus instructed his disciples to speak openly in contrast to the rabbinical custom of keeping their teachings so secret that they whispered to their disciples (verse 27). Such openness would certainly court opposition and even physical violence (verses 28-30). The reference to fear "him who can destroy both body and soul" is about faithfulness to God, for only he can do that. This is spelt out in verse 33. This brings forth the striking contrast of how valued the disciples are by God described in the hyperbolic statement emphasizing God's personal care for each one of them. The phrase about "the hairs of your head are all counted" (verse 30) is the level of care down to the smallest part and has a parallel in 1 Samuel 14:45. The note on the sparrows reinforces this. Psalm 69:4 provides the view that the hairs on our head are beyond counting, yet God knows the number. Deep commitment can not only find opposition by enemies, but as outlined in verses 34-36, but also provide hostility in families. The passage ends with a call to faithfulness.

**Psalm 69:8-19** *Quoniam propter te sustinui opprobrium.* Grail Psalter

**℟ In your great love, answer me, O Lord.**

<sup>8</sup> It is for you that I suffer taunts,  
that shame covers my face,  
<sup>9</sup> that I have become a stranger to my brothers,  
an alien to my own mother's sons.  
<sup>10</sup> I burn with zeal for your house  
and taunts against you fall on me. **℟**

<sup>11</sup> When I afflict my soul with fasting  
they make it a taunt against me.  
<sup>12</sup> When I put on sackcloth in mourning  
then they make me a byword,  
<sup>13</sup> the gossip of men at the gates,  
the subject of drunkards' songs **℟**

<sup>14</sup> This is my prayer to you,  
my prayer for your favour.  
In your great love, answer me, O God,  
with your help that never fails:  
<sup>15</sup> rescue me from sinking in the mud;  
save me from my foes.

**℟ In your great love, answer me, O Lord.**

Save me from the waters of the deep  
<sup>16</sup> lest the waves overwhelm me.  
Do not let the deep engulf me  
nor death close its mouth on me. **℟**

<sup>17</sup> Lord, answer, for your love is kind;  
in your compassion, turn towards me.  
<sup>18</sup> Do not hide your face from your servant;  
answer quickly for I am in distress.  
<sup>19</sup> Come close to my soul and redeem me;  
ransom me pressed by my foes. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** Although attributed wrongly to David, it is believed to date from a period long after the return from the exile in Babylon (539 BC). As an individual's lament it also projects a view of an individual's experience as history in miniature. The desperate pathos of the poet's condition comes immediately to the fore in repeated metaphors of verses 1-3. In water up to his neck, sunk in the mire, floods sweeping over him, weary from crying, with parched throat and dimming eyes – what a predicament! Immediately he declares how numerous his enemies are, though without cause (verse 4). It would appear that he was being falsely accused of some serious theft, although he does admit to some folly. Obviously, from verses 9-12 and 19-21, we learn that he has been the object of much public gossip and insult. So desperate is he to justify his conduct that he feels he can only resign himself to The LORD's favour and trust that in time he will be vindicated. He is no less bitter, however, in calling on The LORD to punish his enemies (verses 22-29).

### **Post Communion**

Loving Father, we thank you for feeding us at the supper of your Son: sustain us with your Spirit, that we may serve you here on earth until our joy is complete in heaven, and we share in the eternal banquet with Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**