

Sunday 2nd July 2017

Trinity 3

Proper 8 - 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 6:12-23 English Standard Version (ESV)

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

6¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Slaves to Righteousness

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^[a] you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which

you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Footnote: a. *doulos*, either “slave,” “bondservant,” or “servant”—depending on the context. (twice in this verse and verse 19; also once in verses 17 & 20).

COMMENT: Having settled the question how faith in the grace of Jesus Christ overcomes our sin, Paul now turned to the moral implications of that victory. He thinks of sin no longer “exercising dominion” over us. The Greek verb for this is *kurieuo*, a derivative of *kurios* (Eng. = Lord). So the issue really becomes; to whom do we answer? God - or sin! To explain further Paul draws an analogy with slavery, a very common institution in the 1st century AD and most probably within the Roman Christian community itself. A slave was someone who was under servitude to his or her master, which might be as a slave proper or a bondservant – a contractual period. He or she, could be summoned for any task or service at any time day or night on whatever whim the master chose. Even though freed by Christ, a Christian was not free to live in a libertine manner. Having been freed from slavery to sin, we are now “bondservants to God.” – a free contact That meant nothing short of sanctification, a wholly different kind of life the end of which is not death, but eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord” (verses 22-23). What Christ had done for us in freeing us from slavery to sin can best be summed up by lines from George Matheson’s hymn, “Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.” The final verse of that hymn reads: “My will is not my own, till thou has made it thine; if it would reach the monarch’s throne it must the crown resign; it only stands unbent amid the clashing strife, when on thy bosom it has leant and found in thee its life.”

Matthew 10:40-42 English Standard Version (ESV)

Rewards

10⁴⁰ “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.⁴¹ The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward.⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

COMMENT: The thrust of this brief reading at the end of Jesus' discourse of instructions to his disciples. Parallels are found in Luke 10:16 and Mark 9:37. It outlines how the Christian community was to continue the Lord's work. It also described how the apostles and other early Christian leaders were to be received. In some ways it also parallels Paul's "ambassadors for Christ" affirmation in 2 Corinthians 5:20. An ancient Jewish oral tradition later recorded in the rabbinical Mishnah ca. AD 150 required that a man's emissary be received with the same hospitality as would be given the man himself. It would appear that this attitude is reflected in verse 40. But it goes further to extend the authority of the apostles stated in 10:1 ("And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction") to that of emissaries of Christ and of God. Verses 41-42 identified three different groups of Christians: prophets, righteous persons and "little ones." Were these distinguishable groups of the church in Matthew's time? If so, what offices and functions did each have? It is known that the prophetic tradition held throughout the New Testament era. Jesus and John the Baptist were considered prophets by their contemporaries. Warnings about false prophets appear throughout the NT. Paul dealt actively with charismatic prophets who spoke in tongues and tried to define how their utterances should be tested before being accepted as authentic (1 Corinthians 14:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21; cf. 1 John 4:1). In Ephesians 3:5 & 4, we find the office of prophet set beside that of apostle, evangelist, pastor and teacher. The apostles no longer served as "the father of a particular local church" as Paul had done. They had become the founders of an institutional entity with a empire-wide scale, and a developing ministry of which the beginning are detected in Matthew. The question remains who were "the righteous person" and the "little ones" of verses 41-42. It has been suggested that these were euphemisms for "tested and honoured Christians" (who may have been Christians resident in local communities across the Roman empire into whose homes the travelling evangelists came) and "ordinary disciples" respectively. The cup of cold water is given as an example of any minor service rendered to one of these.

Psalm 69:15-21 *Salvum me fac*

℟ In your great love, answer me, O God

¹⁵ rescue me from sinking in the mud;
save me from my foes. **℟**

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

¹⁷ Lord, answer, for your love is kind;
in your compassion, turn towards me.

¹⁸ Do not hide your face from your servant;
answer quickly for I am in distress.

¹⁹ Come close to my soul and redeem me;
ransom me pressed by my foes.

℟ In your great love, answer me, O God

²⁰ You know how they taunt and deride me;
my oppressors are all before you.

²¹ Taunts have broken my heart;
I have reached the end of my strength.
I looked in vain for compassion,
for consolers; not one could I find. **℟**

**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: This is a lament from an individual. In verse 18 – asking God not to hide his face is a plea to be attentive to his prayer – and is emphasised in the request for a quick answer. Phrases from this passage (verses 15-21) find echoes in our Lord’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46).

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.**