

Theme: **Reforming our lives to God's Words to be his servants**

Text: Romans 6: 1 – 23

Season: 9th Sunday after Pentecost

Date: August 6, 2017

Place Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and Peace to you as you let God work in your lives, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"I feel like a new person!" That's the way someone would talk when life has taken a sudden turn for the better, with a promising and brighter future, when someone has recovered from a severe illness or when a great burden has been lifted from one's shoulders. "I'm a new person!" That's the point of view that we all should be taking as we walked with the Apostle Paul through the first five chapters of the letter to the Romans. In the first 5 chapters of the books of Romans the Apostle Paul has gone to great lengths to describe how God's grace in Jesus Christ has created an altogether new position for all men and women. This all came about because God provided our rescue from sin and its consequences of death and eternal condemnation. God's own Son, Jesus Christ stepped in and took our place under God's punishment for all our sins and gave us His righteousness, by His grace as a free gift. That brings us to chapter 6 in the book of Romans where the Apostle Paul explains to us that this new life that we have been given by God's grace has changed our lives because we are freed from all our sins.

A child asks his mom. "Mom, why don't we start dinner with the desert first and save the vegetables for last if we have room?" It sounds like a silly question doesn't it, but that's the way the Apostle Paul begins chapter 6, with a silly question: **"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?"** (Rom 6:1) The Apostle Paul knew how our sinful nature loves to sin and give us any excuse, even God's willingness to forgive our sins as a reason to keep on sinning. The Apostle Paul quickly answers his question with a vigorous, **"By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴We 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."** (Rom 6:2-4)

How wait a minute! We did what? We died and have been raised from the dead. God has redeemed us from all our sin by given His Son, Jesus Christ as our substitute. With Christ death on the cross of Calvary our sinful human nature has put to death and then when Jesus rose from the grave three days later we were given a new nature through the Holy Spirit working in us. Because

Jesus Christ died and rose again with all our sins, so we have died and risen again to a new life in Christ. This all happened when we were wash of all our sins in our Baptism and given the Holy Spirit to bring us to faith in all that God has done for us. We have a new life through our faith in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul says it this way, **“We know that our old self 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. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin.”** (Rom 6:6-7)

A real death has occurred in our lives because Jesus took our sinful nature and died for each and every one of our sins, that means that our sinful nature has been redeemed, put right with God once again, so that’s the new nature that can grow and flourish by the word of God in us. Has the Apostle Paul exaggerated the death of our old sinful nature with Christ on the cross? It sure looks like it when you look at our lives; our old sinful nature is alive and well. No, for the Apostle Paul goes on to tell us, **“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”** (Rom. 6:8-10)

Death was not the end of Jesus Christ and as God’s children by the redemption given to us by Jesus Christ we also are no longer dead or a slave to our old sinful nature but now have a new life through faith in Jesus Christ to live in the love, peace and joy of God instead of the sin, turmoil and death of our sinful nature. This is not a human accomplishment. The life we enjoy is new, undeserved life from God in Christ Jesus. We have been set free from sin so that we can live in righteousness. We may now withdraw the parts of our bodies from the service of sin and use them instead in the worship and service of God.

In 1849 Senator Abraham Lincoln was visiting Virginia and came upon a slave auction. As Lincoln was passing the auction he noticed one of the slave women and the sad expression that she had on her face and body language. Lincoln stopped at the action and bid on her until he had won the bid and then when up to the auctioneer and paid for her. As Lincoln moved away from the auction crowd with her she asked him, “What are you going to do with me?” Lincoln walk a little further away from the crowd and then stopped and got out the deed of sale been given to him and wrote across it FREED and handed it to her. Lincoln then said to her, “You are free!” She

said to him, “I’m free to do whatever I want to do?” Lincoln responded, “Yes, you are free to do whatever you want to do from now on.” She stood there for a while looking at the deed of sale that he had been given her and said to him, “Well then if I am free to do whatever I want, I want to work for you.” From that moment on Mariah Vance became the Lincoln housekeeper from 1850 till 1860, in Springfield Illinois and stayed there taking care of the house when Abraham Lincoln became the 16th president of the United States.

What then are we going to do with our lives as we have been freed from our sinful nature? That’s the question that the Apostle Paul asks us as he says, **“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, 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.”** (Rom. 6;15-18)

Obedying the will of God is only possible because of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus, only because in baptism we have died and been raised with Christ and now the Holy spirit is working in our lives through God’s Word and Sacraments. We can live in a God pleasing way only because of what God Himself has done for us. “Don’t you get it yet?” the Apostle Paul says to us. “Don’t you understand that if you offer yourself to someone to obey him as a slave you are a slave as you strive to obey him in every way.” If you offer your life to sin than you will be a slave to sin and it will lead you to death. If you offer your life to righteousness than you will find the real life that God made you for, in His love, peace and joy.

By all means the Apostle Paul tells us to offer ourselves to be slaves of righteousness. Enslave yourself to a master who would treat you well. Slavery to sin leads to death, eternal death, but slavery to obedience to God’s righteousness leads to life, eternal live in the love, peace and joy that God has given to you through Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior.

You are free, but what you do with your freedom has an incredible difference in your life here on this earth and for all eternity. The world that we live in tells us to, “Just indulge yourself! Do whatever you want!” Sounds great, right? Yet such “freedom” is no freedom at all. It is a false freedom that is actually a tyranny of sin. The sweet taste of sin soon turns to bitterness and ashes

in our mouths. The seductive promises of adultery result in the loss – not the increase – of love, peace and joy. The same is true of all other sins. **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Rom 6:23) the Apostle Paul reminds us.

Slavery to righteousness produces a much more satisfactory result. The benefit that comes from slavery to righteousness is not a wage but a gift of life eternal in Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior. The Father in heaven first gave His Son to buy our freedom from sin. Now He gives new life through the washing of Holy Baptism, making us His Son to buy our freedom from sin. Now He gives new life through the washing of Holy Baptism, making us His Sons and daughters. These gifts are ours now and ours to keep for all eternity. Praise be to God!

Abraham Lincoln freely gave His money to purchase Mariah Vance from slavery to give her freedom. Mariah Vance, the freed slave woman from Virginia, freely became the Lincoln family housekeeper and served and learn much from Abraham and Mary Lincoln as she served and worked for them from 1950 till Mary Lincoln died in 1982. Mariah Vance became a Christian under the encouragement of the Lincolns and lived a life that few African Americans in the years of the 1850 – 1900 were able to live.

Each of us have been given a freedom from the slavery of sin through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How we use that freedom has a drastic difference in what life now and for all eternity looks like and truly is. You can let God reform your live to His righteousness and freely become slaves to God’s love, peace and joy or you can fall back into the slavery of sin and find death waiting for you for eternity instead of the love, peace and joy God offers to you. You have been freed from the slavery to sin by Jesus Christ and that freedom is yours to us in the way you choose. You can put in God’s hand and share the love, peace and joy that God has given to you with others or you can keep it in your own hands and this world and lose out on the love, peace and joy that God wants to give to you now and for all eternity. It’s your choice because you have been set free from the slavery of sin. Amen.