

Rick Mark May 29, 2022

Kingdom Deliverance Romans 8:1-4

Dear Friends in Christ, Grace and Peace be unto you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Before I begin this morning by focusing on the preaching text from Roman's 8, I would like to take a few moments to reflect on my past 29 years with St. Timothy's and why I am here today. When asked by Pastor Jim Cords to lead worship and preach, I need to take you back to mid-February. Be mindful I retired officially on February 8th.

Soon after the 8th, Pastor Jim called and asked me to go to lunch. When your pastor invites you to lunch, it may make you a little suspicious. It did me. I accepted. We met at Aquis in WG. After some initial chit chat, Pastor Jim looked at me and asked, Is it true. I responded with, "Is what true?" Are you official retired? I told him yes. I quickly followed with "my plan for retirement is to commit to absolutely nothing for the first 6 months". I need some time to decompress I told him hoping to fend off any suspected requests. He smiled and said he would respect that; however, he had a nagging concern. With Pastor Jonna now gone and Pastors Jim and Judy wanting to limit their workload, he was fearful the bench at St. Timothy's was rather light. He told me he wasn't sure where he would turn if he came down with COVID. He asked me if I had a sermon in the hopper I could pull out and step in to preach. I responded, Jim the likelihood of you getting COVID is not great, so reluctantly I said yes.

Fast forward to about one week ago. For those of you who may not know, Tammie and I are moving to Scottsdale AZ on June 9th. We are in the process of selling our home here in San Jose and purchasing one in Scottsdale AZ and I get a call. It was Pastor Jim. Rick, he said, I tested positive for COVID. This Sunday is covered as Jim and Judy are leading worship and preaching; however, I need someone the following week. Jim, I said, I am a person of my word, do not worry, I will cover for you. The sound of relief followed.

Some of you know I am an inactive ordained pastor. This month marks the 40th anniversary of my ordination. However, it has been a long time away from the pulpit. 33 years ago, I felt release from the called ministry and begin my life in corporate America.

Some of you know Tammie and I have been members of St. Timothy's for 29 years. In that time, I have been involved in almost every aspect of ministry here from huddles and grow groups to assisting in raising over \$750K for the Water Mission ministry, Village House, City Team, served on two call teams and the list goes on. Those of you I have worked alongside of know there are many more.

I love my St. Timothy's family and the opportunity to serve the Lord here. But I have only preached here a couple of times, so here it goes. Let the Holy Spirit lead us and guide us in this adventure together. You have supported me as a congregation through prayer many time...I sure could use your prayers right now.

Last Sunday Pastor Jim Bangsund set the foundation for this sermon with his discourse on the book of Romans. If you remember he stated that it was the apostle Paul's greatest letter. It influenced the likes of Augustine, Martin Luther, Wesley, and others in their journey of faith. These great voices have influenced the life of the church through the ages.

Jim then went on to help us understand this complex letter by dividing it into 5 sections, The basics of the Gospel (chapters 1-5), The Life that follows (6-8), The Question of the Jews (9-11), the life that follows part 2 (12-15) and final chapter 16 where Paul addresses things like dissensions and offers various greetings. He suggested Chapter 8 was the focal point of this letter and described it as the sparkling gem. The first four verses are the focus of today's message.

Let us begin with Verse 1:

Paul writes, "Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Whenever you read "therefore" in one of Paul's letters, he is pointing back to something he references earlier. Paul is pointing back to Chapter 7 to God's law. To the law given in by God to the Israelites, his chosen people. To the same law given to us his chosen today. ***The law is the very thing binds us to a desire to earn salvation.***

Many years ago, when I attended the Sunday School openings, one of the popular songs sung was Climb, climb up Jacob's Ladder. The words conveyed the notion by doing the right things we could get into heaven. This is the powerful deception of the law. It is the voice that still lives in my head, and I imagine it was the voice that still lives in yours.

When asked by Jim to preach today, instantly that voice in my head said, Rick you need to live a better life this week. Well guess how that worked out? I soon found the "old Adam" is alive and well in me. Once again, the law proved I was a total failure.

Paul writes in Chapter 7 Vs 6: "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not the old way of the written code."

I have several roses in the home that we sold in Willow Glen. When pruning them it is easy to get ensnared in the thorns. That's exactly how Paul viewed trying to live a righteous life by the law...every time he tried to do it on his own, with his own power, he just kept getting caught deeper and deeper in the thorns of his own sins...when Paul begins Romans 8...he acknowledges for the first time in his life he's been cut free by the knife of God's Holy Spirit.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The word that's used in Greek for "condemnation" is "Katakrino" It means "to pass judgment against" like a judge "who passes sentence upon a convict."

In other words, when we attempt to keep the law, when we try to be "a good person", when we try to free ourselves from the ensnarement of sins, when we try to climb Jacob's ladder...the law

convicts us. Self-reliance is the road to condemnation. But for those in Christ Jesus Paul states, there is no condemnation.

Verse 2:

Because, through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death

We are no longer ensnared by the thorns of sin but cut loose. We are free. Jesus invites us into his Kingdom now by the act of wearing thorns as a crown and being put to death on the cross. He defeats death and sin through His death on the cross. He is resurrected. This Sunday marks the last Sunday of the Easter season. Would you indulge me one last time? HE IS RISEN. HE IS RISEN INDEED. Next Sunday we celebrate Pentecost-the fifty days following the resurrection where God's Spirit is delivered to His people.

In this verse Paul reminds us of Pentecost. It is the law of the Spirit that sets us free from the sin and death. God's Kingdom has arrived, and we are delivered from the grasp of death. Oh death where is thy power, Oh death where is thy sting?

Verse 3:

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh **TO BE A SIN OFFERING**. And so he condemned sin in the flesh.

Paul makes it very clear. The law does not deliver us. The law does not save us. The law reveals to us in our sinful flesh that we are powerless. We can't climb Jacob's ladder. We can't live a good and righteous life apart from Christ and the Holy Spirit. Apart from Christ we are powerless and doomed to fail. It is God's activity and God's activity alone that saves. Jesus became for us a sin offering to condemn sin.

Verse 4:

In order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit

Hallelujah we are freed from the law. We are freed from death. We are freed from the power of sin. This is the good news of deliverance. This is the good news of the Kingdom of God entering into our world and entering lives.

Yet being completely and totally saved, we live in the in between times. We have been delivered from the Kingdom of Evil and into the Kingdom of God. In the most perfect prayer Jesus teaches us to pray daily the words "deliver us from evil".

The devil is defeated and is powerless to harm us. Yet the devil continues to lurk around every corner. He jumps into every faithless void possible. He encouraged a hopeless individual to kill

innocent children and teacher in another most horrific shooting in Uvalde, TX this past week. He continues to harden the hearts of the leadership of one of the largest countries in the world, Russia, and allows them to direct bombs and other travesties on the people of Ukraine. And that is just a small sampling of the evil in our world this week. However, even in the worst of times, those faithful, caught up in these evil situations, have hope. Satan is powerless to them, and they know in Christ they have victory over all suffering, even the suffering brought about by death.

As the community of the faithful, what are we do?

We immerse ourselves in the “good news” of scripture.

In preparation for this theme of Kingdom deliverance, I was reminded of John’s words at the end of his gospel.

In John’s gospel, Jesus’ post resurrection command gives his disciples and us the answer. John writes: And again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

God sends us into the world to deliver His peace. How do we do that?

Jesus sends us. Jesus empowers us.

We go into the world to offer all those whom we come into contact with His forgiveness. We offer all those whom we come into contact with His grace. We offer all those whom we come into contact with His love by loving them.

For the past 29 years at St. Timothy’s, I have worshipped God and I have studied His word. But until recently, I did not take the command to go into the world and offer others His peace that seriously. Discipleship until recently was the missing piece.

This Law/Gospel dialect shared in Romans is part of my life and yours. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is shared by us all. It is the going into the world and offering His peace where I and most likely you continue to struggle. It is that which makes us all uncomfortable. However, with the power of the Holy Spirit I know I will do better...God’s creation is depending on it. I know with the power of the Holy Spirit you will be encouraged to do better...God’s creation is depending on us. Go into the world and share His forgiveness, His peace, His love. May we continue to be delivered from the sinfulness of this world and may His Kingdom come to us all. Amen.