

5th Sunday of Pentecost

July 5,2020

Collect: O GOD, you have taught us to keep the commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart and united to one another with pure affection through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Lessons: Zechariah 9:9-12

Psalm 145:8-15

Romans 7:15-25a

Matthew: 11:16-19, 25-30

Sermon: In today's lesson of Romans, Paul is struggling, he is conflicted. He knows what is right to do but he has difficulty doing it. He is well versed in the Jewish Law, the 10 Commandments and the Torah. He had been taught by Gamaliel one of the most influential rabbis of early Jewish history. Paul knows from his study of Jewish Law what he should do, but he finds that he wants to do something that differs.

He says he can will what is right, but cannot do it. He states that nothing good dwells within him and sin overwhelms his body. He sees the Law as being, spiritual, the words of and directions from God. Yet his flesh, his human desires wants him to do things he thinks are contrary to the Law.

Paul is a divided and conflicted man. What seems to be his problem. Maybe we need to look at the situation Paul is in.

He was an educated man; he was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin Court. It was his responsibility to interpret and teach the scripture of the 10 Commandments and the Torah so that people could understand what the faith required. It was also part of his responsibility to help maintain order within the Jewish society. His focus had been on obedience to the Law.

Now as a disciple of Jesus, he is doing things that are troubling him because of his prior teachings and status. He is working among sinners and casting out demons whenever and wherever he is confronted by the need. He is baptizing people. He is forgiving people of their sins and not asking for a sin offering or a sacrifice.

He states that he loves the Law of God but there is another law, his thoughts and desires. He is changing because of the ministry he is doing and what this new rabbi, Jesus, is teaching. Jesus knows and understands the Law, but instead of focusing on obedience to the law, he seems to focus on the needs and condition of mankind. If a sick person comes to Jesus on the Sabbath and he/she needs healing. Jesus' action is immediate, he heals them. There is no questioning of how they got into the situation, no request for a sacrifice and no reprimands.

Maybe this ministry of Jesus is causing Paul to rethink things. He describes himself as being a wretched man doomed. He fears that only death will rescue him.

He cries out to God and perhaps he sees his relief in Jesus.

Looking into the Gospel, we see that Jesus is also dealing with conflict. He states that people complained when John the Baptist came, they were distrustful and unaccepting of him because he did not eat ordinary food or drink wine. They said he had a demon in him. But Jesus, the Son of Man came eating and drinking and they called him a glutton and drunkard. They accused him of being a friend to tax collectors and sinners. He too like John was rejected.

Jesus does provide relief for Paul. He issues an invitation that says, "Come to me all that are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest." He also asks that the person take his yoke, his guidance, instructions and learn from him. By working with him and learning his ministry, a person's life should become easier.

As we know Paul does accept the ministry of Christ and gladly bears the yoke. Perhaps he dealt with his holdover conflict through work. He becomes the greatest missionary carrying the Gospel throughout the Mediterranean

area and the rest of the Holy Land. He is said to have written 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament.

It is not always easy to do the right thing. Sometimes it can be very lonely, but if you are a committed Christian, it does get easier. Amen,