

Choose Life!

Romans 6:3-4, Matthew 10:34-39

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ

Our First Reading from Romans declares the Good News of the New Life we have in Christ through Baptism:

³Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. [Romans 6:3-4]

But then our Gospel reading, when we first read it in isolation, doesn't sound at all like the 'Good News' that we associate with the Gospel of Jesus about this New Life that he has come into this world to give, when he says things like this:

³⁴“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.’”

Then Jesus explains what he's getting at, when he says that:

³⁷“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”

But these demands are not horrible or unchristian as they seem to be—they're simply a statement that everyone now, because of Christ's redeeming work, has a free **CHOICE!**

Everyone now can, and has, to **CHOOSE** what is offered by **CHRIST** OR what is offered by the **WORLD!**

And you can't say that to be free to choose is a terrible thing!

It's something that the apostle Paul points out [Rom 6:23], when he says that we have been set free from sin by Christ resulting in eternal life because the:

“wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

You see there will always be, in this fallen world, the temptation to choose the **wages of sin!** That's why the apostle Peter [1 Peter 5:8] warns Christians:

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith” [1 Peter 5:8,9]

The ever-present temptation is to turn our **affections**, **loyalty**, and **trust**, to the people and things of this world, **AND** in the process

NEGLECT, even **REJECT** God's grace that he offers, gives, and **has** given us in Jesus Christ!

The choice we make has eternal consequences! You see, turning away from God's grace can mean the loss of: **salvation**, **freedom**, **peace**, and **life** that is ours in Christ!

God's redeemed people always had to make this choice!

Israel, rescued by God from slavery, where the only choice they had was a life of slavery!

Before entering the Promised Land they were given a choice by **MOSES**
[Deut.30:19]:

¹⁹This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.

And the same choice was given by **JOSHUA** [Joshua 24:15]:

¹⁵But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

We, too, have been freed from slavery to sin and have to choose between

What is offered in Christ – **AND** - What the world offers

Because of Christ's perfect life for us and his sacrificial death on the cross where he took on, and into, himself our sin and our death, means that we now have

forgiveness, **restoration**, and a **new life** of peace in fellowship with God!

We received all this when we were joined to him in holy Baptism!

In Baptism God called us by name, and we died with Christ and were raised to a new spiritual life of peace and freedom, as children of God who can call God **“Abba,”** Father/Daddy. We have a new life that leads to eternal life!

In our Baptism we, who were dead in our sins, were brought to life and now live in the freedom and love of God, as his beloved children. Nothing whatsoever can now separate us from this love! We might lose family, friends, or “things,” but never his love!

“Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Rom 8:38-39]

God can be trusted, and the promise he made to us when he called us in Baptism will never be broken or forgotten!

“But now, this is what the LORD says: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.” Isaiah43:1

You belong to God, you are his beloved child, and there is no way that God can and would ever forget your needs or abandon you in the time of your trouble! Here is God’s guarantee and pledge to you:

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” [Isaiah 49:15]

This guarantee and pledge is signed and sealed in the blood of Christ!

“See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands!” [Isaiah 49:16]

WE ARE LOVED AND REDEEMED PEOPLE OF GOD!

We are a people who have been **reborn to a new life!**

We are a people who have been **joined to Christ** and have all the privileges that he has won for us by his life, death, and resurrection! We have the blessings of:

FORGIVENESS; FAITH; ETERNAL LIFE; RELEASE from the hold that sin has over us;

and **ACCESS** to the throne of God’s grace in prayer.

And we have the assurance of his **PRESENCE**—with us always!

SO: When faced with hardships we need to take to heart our Lord’s promise [Isaiah43:2-3]:

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.”

Amen.”

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor John Simboras
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