

Dear Friends at FPC Merchantville,

Here is this week's Worship Guide. We will be open this Sunday 6/28 at 10:00am, however, we urge those whose health is compromised, who are in a vulnerable population, who may have been exposed to Cov-id 19, who have symptoms of Cov-id 19, and/or who are concerned about public gatherings, to please stay home. We are all anxious to get back to normal, however, we are concerned for all of our members and will be taking precautions.

We will be following the guide for the next few Sundays until our transitional Pastor, Laura Donovan starts on July 19th. If you are coming to church, you must wear a mask, use hand sanitizer upon entering the building, and social distance. Bring your own Bible, as pew Bibles and hymnals will be moved. If you stay at home, suggestions for using this guide would be the following:

Gather Worship Materials –

- A Bible – (A study bible may be helpful if you have one)

- A Candle

- This Worship Guide

Optional Materials –

- A Cross or other representations of God's acts of salvation

- Flowers, shells, or other objects of nature

- Art supplies

If you have children

- Children may be permitted to bring a beloved stuffed animal or doll with the explanation that "it's always good to invite a friend to worship"

Decide on the space for your worship.

Prepare Your Heart.

- Set up your selected worship space

- Worship at 10:00am on Sunday morning as if we were in our church sanctuary

- Light your candle as a sign of the Lord's presence

I hope that this guide will help you to feel God's presence in this time of personal worship, and may the Lord continue to bless and keep you.

Please don't forget to mail in your offering, or go online at www.fpcmerchantville.org

In Christian Love and Service,

Kim Tomlin

June 28, 2020

Gathering Around the Word

“The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.” John 4:23a

Prelude: Light your candle as a sign of the Lord’s presence. Think of your FPC family and sense the others in the congregation, especially those that you usually sit near. Remember that during this time, we are worshipping together.

Call To Worship Psalm 29:2

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness.

Song: I Love You Lord<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYV0ce3ybEA>

Scripture Reading: Psalm 13

Prayer of Confession:

(Sin and evil are real, and no one is without sin. Naming the evil robs it of power and frees us from the mistaken belief we should, or can, be sinless. Confession and forgiveness in Jesus Christ set us free from sin and guilt, and allow us to live joyfully dependent upon God’s grace. At the ellipsis (...) add your own confession.)

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Hear now and accept our personal confessions....

In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Dear Lord, Open our eyes that we may see the truth in your word for each of us. Open our ears, that we may hear the voices of truth you have clearly sent for each of us. Open our hearts, that we may prepare to love each other as you have commanded us. Illumine us, Spirit divine. Amen

Scripture Readings:

Old Testament: Psalm 89: 1- 4, 15-18

New Testament: Romans 6: 1-14

United with Christ in Death and Life by John Piper – desiring god ministries

Pragmatists and Puritans

We Americans are pragmatists to the max. We want results. And we want them yesterday. We want them simply. We want them without too much pondering and too much pain. And in the church, we have developed all kinds of Christ-coated remedies that are shallow and short-lived. We are not, by and large, the deeply grounded saints that some of our forefathers were.

J. I. Packer compares the old English Puritans who lived and suffered from 1550 to 1700 with the Redwoods of California. They were giants whose roots were incredibly deep in the Bible, and whose branches reached to the heavens, and whose trunks were so strong and durable they could endure forest fires that scar them but don't kill them. But then Packer looks out over the pragmatic American landscape of our quick fixes for life's problems and our impatience with depth and complexity and pain, and says, "Affluence seems for the past generation to have been making dwarfs and deadheads of us all."¹ Here's the difference between the pragmatists and the Puritans: pragmatists do not have the patience to sink the roots of hospitality and brotherly kindness and authentic love in the deep rock of Romans 6-8. We want to jump straight from justification to the practical application of chapter 12. Just give us a list. Tell us what to do. Fix the problem at the immediate surface level, so it goes away. But the Puritans were different. They looked at the book of Romans and saw that life is built another way. Being a sage, being a Redwood, being unshakable in storm and useful in times of indescribable suffering – that does not come quickly or easily. Romans is not two chapters long. It is 16 chapters long. It does not skip from chapter 5 to 12. It leads us down deep into the roots of godliness, so that when we come up, we are not people with lists, but people with unshakable life and strength and holiness and wisdom and love.

So come with me into Romans 6.

Sin So That Grace Abounds?

Verse 1: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" That is, are we to go on in the pattern of sin because forgiveness is guaranteed and we have right standing with God by faith alone? His answer in verse 2 is "May it never be!" Absolutely not! Don't go on sinning that grace may increase.

Why not? His answer comes in a question (verse 2b): "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" That is, since you have died to sin, you *can't* go on living in it. Now, this answer poses two questions that I want to try to answer this morning. 1) What does "You have died to sin," mean? 2) What does "You can't go on living in it" mean? Or to ask the questions another way, 1) In what sense have we died? 2) In what sense are we beyond sinning? We have died. And we cannot therefore go on living in sin. What do those two amazing assertions mean?

Be careful here. Are you starting to check out and think, this is too heavy, too deep, too complicated? This is not where I live. Just tell me about the soup and the battery and brotherly kindness. I guess I am a simple pragmatist. To which I say, Don't let ten or twenty or fifty years of self-assessment define you. Let the Bible define you. Paul is on his way to Romans 12 – the brotherly kindness, but he will not skip over chapter 6. If you try, do you know what you are doing? You are choosing to be a cattail in the swamp instead of a redwood by the ocean. Why are there so few redwoods – sages – in our churches? Because we are so impatient with Romans 6.

If you are willing to sink some roots, I am too. Let's try.

The first question is: What does Paul mean in verse 2 by "we died to sin"? The "we" here is Christians – that is, believers. We know that because in verse 3 the "we" is those who have been "baptized into Christ Jesus." Baptism is what you experience when you become a Christian, and so he is talking about Christians, believers, in verse 2: "How shall we [baptized believers] who died to sin still live in it?" (We will talk more about the meaning and the role of baptism next week.)

We Died to Sin

So our question is: What does it mean that all believers have died to sin?

Probably the most important verse to explain this is verse 5: "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." What Paul says here may be outside our categories of thought. So let's add a category. What he says is that for believers there is a *union with Christ* – note the words, "we have become united with him in the likeness of his death." There is a union between Christ and Christians so that what happened to Christ is counted by God as happening to us. His death is our death. God establishes this union. [1 Corinthians 1:30](#) says,

"But by [God's] doing you are *in Christ Jesus*." God establishes a union between believers and Christ, in a way that makes it fitting for him to count Christ's death to be our death.

So when verse 2 asks, "How shall we who died to sin, still live in it?" it is referring to our death with Christ when he died. This death is something historic and once for all. It is *applied* to us now through our faith, but since Christ died in history only once, and verse 5 says we were united to that, our death happened, in God's way of seeing things, on the day Christ died. Now let's confirm this with a few other verses. Verse 6: "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him." This is another way of saying that we died (verse 2) or that "we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death" (verse 5). Notice that while verse 6 says the "*old self*" (=old man) was crucified, verses 2 and 5 say "*we died*" and "*we were united to him in the likeness of his death*." I take this to mean that my "old self" is me – but different than I have become. The "old self" is the me that was rebellious against God, and insubordinate to God's law, and blind to God's glory, and unbelieving toward his promises. Verse 6 says the "old me" was crucified with Christ. (See [Galatians 2:20](#).) When Christ died, God counted the old sinful me as dying with him.

For another confirmation look at verse 8: "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." So here again Paul makes it explicit that the death we died in verse 2 is a death with Christ. "We have died with Christ." (See also [Romans 7:4](#) and [2 Corinthians 5:14](#).)

So the foundational teaching of these verses is that there is a union between believers and Christ. That's the point of verse 5. This should sound familiar to you if you were with us during the six messages on [Romans 5:12-21](#). There we saw that God established a union between Adam and his people, and a corresponding union between Christ and his people. Condemnation came through our union with Adam. Justification comes through our union with Christ ([Romans 5:18](#)). Now in [Romans 6:5](#), Paul makes that union explicit and relates it to sanctification as well as justification.

That's Paul's answer to the first question: What death does Paul refer to when he says in verse 2, "How shall *we who died* to sin still live in it?" It was our death with Christ because of our union with him.

You Can't Go on Living in Sin

Now the second question is: What does Paul mean that "you can't go on living in sin"? Verse 2: "How shall we who died to sin *still live in it*?" That is, if you have died to sin, you can't go on living in sin. In what sense are we beyond

sinning? We have died. And we cannot therefore go on living in sin. What does this amazing statement mean? Is Paul teaching perfectionism – that once you are converted you never sin any more?

There are several reasons from the context that make me think Paul does not mean that.

1) Notice that what Paul denies is not that you can never commit a sin, but that you cannot "live in it." "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" "Living in it" corresponds to the question in verse 1: "Are we to *continue in* sin so that grace may increase?" The idea in these two phrases, "continue in" (verse 1) and "live in" (verse 2) is that when we have become united with Christ in his death, we cannot go on with an unchanged pattern of sin in our lives.

2) Another pointer to Paul's meaning (not perfectionism) is in verse 6, "Our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, *so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.*" Here the effect of being crucified with Christ is that we are not "slaves to sin." It is possible to fall into sinful attitudes and actions without sin being your overarching slave master. As verse 14 says, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Being freed from the mastery or enslavement or dominion of sin is not the same as being sinlessly perfect.

3) The third support for this view (that Paul is not teaching perfectionism) comes from the commands in verses 11, 12, and 13. In verse 11 he says, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin." In verse 12 he says, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body." In verse 13 he says, "Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness." If there is no ongoing battle with sin in the Christian life, then why these commands? I think they imply clearly that, even though we have died to sin, and therefore cannot "live in" or "continue in" sin, we can sin, and we do sin and we must lay hold on the reality of what has happened to us in our union with Christ and confirm it in our daily lives. "Reckon yourselves dead . . . Don't let sin reign . . . Don't present your members to sin."

Our Death With Christ, Our Freedom From Sin

So here is my conclusion on these two points: our death with Christ and our freedom from sin.

1) In Christ – that is, in our union with Christ that God established, according to verse 5 – we are dead to sin, meaning this: In our truest position and our truest identity we are completely and finally dead to sin – both its guilt and its

power. This is decisive, unrepeatable, and unchangeable. This is the foundation for all our warfare against sin, and all our progress in holiness.

2) The Christian life is an already *and* a not-yet experience of this sinless position and identity in union with Christ. What happened to Christ Jesus historically and finally and unchangeably – and to us in him – is *applied* to us not all at once in its fullness, but some now completely, and some now progressively, and all fully in the age to come. We are *already* fully forgiven and acquitted and declared righteous and justified in our union with Christ by faith alone. And we are *already* delivered from the slavery to sin, that is, from the power of sin as the defining direction of our lives. And we are *already* able by faith to grow more and more triumphant over sin in our daily life.

But we are *not yet* perfected in our daily, earthly experience. We must fight the fight of faith and become in experience, by faith, what we are perfectly in our union with Christ. Paul put it like this in [Philippians 3:12](#), "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." You see the already and not yet. Christ has laid hold of Paul for perfection and everlasting blessing. That secures Paul. Now Paul confirms that great work of God in Christ by laying hold of that for which he was laid hold of by Christ. Conclusion: Underneath the call and the freedom to do hospitality with soup and Styrofoam bowls, and to push dead cars for a stranded friend, and to be real with each other in small groups – and everything else beautiful that displays Christ – is a deep and glorious foundation of what happened once for all *for you* when Christ died, and what is happening progressively *in you* by faith.

In sum: If you are a Christian, God created a union between you and Christ, as verse 5 says. Because of this union, you died with Christ, when he died. Because you died, you are now free from the guilt and power of sin in your fullest and truest identity, that is, in your union with Christ. And because of this unshakable position and identity, you are already justified, and you are most certainly being sanctified, but you are not yet perfected. Therefore, confirm this great transaction by reckoning yourself to be what you really are in Christ.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Ellipses(...) in prayers indicate a pause for silent prayer.

Satisfy us with your love in the morning, and we will live this day in joy and praise.

Mighty God of mercy, we thank you for the resurrection dawn bringing the glory of our risen Lord who makes every day new. Especially we thank you for:

The beauty of your creation....

The new creation in Christ and all gifts of healing and forgiveness...

The sustaining love of family and friends....

The fellowship of faith in your church...

Merciful God of might, renew this weary world, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring about your peace for all in Christ Jesus, the living Lord. Especially we pray for:

Those who govern nations of the world...

The people in countries ravaged by poverty and warfare...

All who work for peace and international harmony...

All who strive to save the earth from destruction...

The church of Jesus Christ in every land...

Those who serve and protect us every day...

The Doctors and Nurses and all medical staff serving us during this pandemic...

Eternal God, your touch makes this world holy. Open our eyes to see your hand at work in the splendor of creation, and in the beauty of human life. Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us, to share your blessings, and to experience the joy of life in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord who taught us to pray by saying:

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Benediction: II Corinthians 13:11, 13

Finally brothers and sisters, farewell. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Song – I Love You Lord

I love you Lord, and I lift my voice – to worship You, oh my soul rejoice!

Take joy, My King, in what you hear. May it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear.