

## Written Copy: Your Gonna Have to Serve Somebody-Romans 6:20-23

Proper 7-3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020-Father's Day

### Text: Romans 6:20-23

<sup>20</sup> For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Exegetical Statement

As those who have been baptized into Christ Jesus death and have been resurrected with Him to a new life, the battle begins and continues. Are we going to allow our sinful hearts to reign in us, using our mind and our bodies to serve the sinful passionate desires buried within us? Or are we going to make our thoughts, words, and actions captive to the will of Christ as He has taught us? Which ever we choose to serve we have made ourselves slaves to. Serving the sinful desires makes us slaves to sin, but we have been redeemed from this slavery to sin, death, and the devil. But have not been redeemed to live a life of pleasing those sinful desires with Christ as our fallback guy, who keeps forgiving so we can keep sinning. We have been redeemed and brought into the Kingdom of God where Christ rules. We have been purchased by Christ's blood and are now slaves to serve Him. But He is not like the master who our sinful heart serves which is the devil. The devil lies and says we can live a life where we obey God when convenient and obey our desires when convenient. We cannot serve two masters. The fruits of a life enslaved to sin lead to a life lived without Christ now and eternal death as our future. But a life lived as a living sacrifice, enslaved to Christ, seeking to obey His call to love God above all else and love our neighbor as ourselves brings the fruit of true life for us now as we grow to be more like Jesus, true service in the Kingdom by proclaiming the Gospel, and the end that is eternal life to come. A life lived to sinful self pleasure ends in eternal death. But the gift we have been given by the Gospel through our Baptism is God's grace which enslaves us to Him and gives us eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Focus Statement:

The wages of sin is death but the gift of grace in Christ Jesus is forgiveness for our sinful choices, life with Him now, and eternal life to come. In baptism our sinful heart dies with Christ. His death breaks our slavery to sin. We rise again to a new life where the Spirit empowers us to obey our new master: Christ Jesus. Through Word and Sacrament the Spirit continually breaks our slavery to sin and renews the reign and rule of Christ in our lives. He keeps turning us away from serving sin and back to serving our Gracious Master

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

We can see sin lightly in our life. We consider ourselves to be "mostly" loyal to the commandments, except for those one or two minor things that we know are wrong, but are really no big deal because we obey all the others. But we can't serve two masters. Allowing sin to have a toe-hold in our life opens the door for the spread of infection and our returning to slavery to sin, death, and the devil

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

When the Spirit shows us how we are serving the sinful heart, confess this as standing opposed to the reign and rule of Christ. Through the power of Christ's work in the absolution turn away from sin and turn to obedience to our gracious Master Jesus, for whom service leads to Gospel witness as the Church and eternal life to come.

### Subject Sentence: Enslaved to Jesus we serve to confess Him w/our lives

## **Introduction: Your Gonna Have to Serve Somebody:**

*From the Bob Dylan song: "Gotta Serve Somebody"*

*You may be an ambassador to England or France  
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance  
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world  
You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls*

*Refrain:*

*But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes  
Indeed you're gonna have to serve somebody  
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord  
But you're gonna have to serve somebody*

*You might be a rock 'n' roll addict prancing on the stage  
You might have drugs at your command, women in a cage  
You may be a business man or some high-degree thief  
They may call you doctor or they may call you chief*

*(Refrain)*

*You may be a state trooper, you might be a young Turk  
You may be the head of some big TV network  
You may be rich or poor, you may be blind or lame  
You may be living in another country under another name*

*(Refrain)*

I don't know what your personal feelings are about Bob Dylan. I certainly wouldn't hire him as a soloist here at Lamb of God. I know at one time in the early 1980's he converted from Judaism to Christianity and was baptized. But I confess I don't really know what his religious beliefs currently are. So I won't be letting him step into the pulpit to preach. But here in this song, written shortly after he was baptized, he hits the nail on the head, as far as what our Epistle Lesson is saying. No matter who you are or what you confess, you are a slave who is going to serve one of two things: either the Devil and Sin, or Jesus Christ and righteousness.

Now as Americans who see yourself as living in the land of the free and the home of the brave, you may be turning up a questioning eyebrow at such a black and white take on life. You probably agree, that before faith came along, you did live as a slave to sin. But now, you say, "I've been freed from sin! I'm a Baptized child of God". And that would be correct. Christ has freed you from slavery to sin. You now live showered in the blessings of grace that Christ pours out on you daily. That being said, how free are you? Free to live however

you want? Free to choose which commandments are really important to keep? Paul in our Epistle Lesson makes it simple and clear cut. There are only two options in our life lived on this earth. Either we live as one enslaved to sin or as one enslaved to Jesus. There is no third option that we might like to believe we have open to us which says we can live for Jesus, while still living to please our sinful heart. That we can still indulge ourselves in those special treasured desires that our heart holds on to. Paul says that is not an option. That is living enslaved to sin while buying the devil's lie that it is all part of our freedom in Christ.

## **What Does it Mean to be Enslaved to Sin?**

What does Paul mean by being enslaved to sin? The context of this reading from Romans is very important. Paul has been extolling the gifts we have in our Baptism. **Romans 6:6 "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."** Our old self, the self that controlled us before Baptism, before we were born again. That's the sinful self that made life about pleasing us first, and then if it was convenient or advantageous, we might actually do something beneficial for someone else. Not a stranger necessarily, but someone who would reciprocate in word or action. Someone who might be moved to like us and do something good for us in the future. That sinful self was enslaved to sin. Our thoughts and actions stood in direct disobedience to the command in **Matthew 22:37 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."** Enslaved to sin we served the purposes of the devil. It was all we could do.

But in baptism that old sinful self was crucified with Christ. In Baptism we were so intimately united with Jesus that, as He took our sins upon Himself on the cross and died, our sinful self was put to death with Him. He broke our enslavement to sin. He destroyed the power that sin held over our lives. We have been freed from sin.

But how should we view that freedom? **Romans 6:8-11** <sup>8</sup>**Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.** <sup>9</sup>**We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.** <sup>10</sup>**For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.** <sup>11</sup>**So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.** We are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. We have been born again to live new lives that reflect the One who died to give us that new life. We are born again to serve the One who ransomed us from out of the devil's grasp, out of the devil's kingdom.

Paul then goes on to ask a legitimate question: **Romans 6:15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!** After all, our sins are forgiven. Doesn't that mean we are now free to sin away to our hearts content because Jesus has forgiven all of them? Paul answers "By no means should we live that way! That is the equivalent of what Romans 6:12 warns us not to do. **(Romans 6:12) Let not sin**

**therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”** And for the most part we are on board with this.

But we would like to include a little asterisk, a little addendum to that, one or two small exceptions. And what that exception is differs from Christian to Christian. For some that exception is lust, either after someone or something. Men especially are prone to sinful desires of the flesh, and the internet with its anonymity is an enticing outlet. For others, its alcohol, or drugs. For others, its gambling. And there are others; the sins that we recognize are wrong and we should not be obeyed when our heart desires engagement in them. Our struggle with these is usually a quiet, secret struggle that we hide from others.

But there are other things as well. Things that seem innocuous and innocent. Things that we've heard are wrong in a sermon or a Bible Study, but we still keep doing anyway. After all, we say to ourselves, we are good on avoiding those big things, those big sins. I know a Christian is not supposed to gossip, but I only tell my closest friend. And after all, its not anything really bad, although I would never mention what I said in that person's presence. I know that gambling is wrong, but the lottery isn't really gambling, and after all, it goes to education; right? I know that I really shouldn't watch that show with all the profanity and sexual inuendo and promotion of sinful lifestyles. But it's not like it's me living it. Jesus is probably indifferent on these things; right?

Paul would beg to differ. There are really no innocuous sins. **Romans 6:13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.** No matter if the sins are big or little, seemingly innocuous or blatant, when we willfully commit them, we are presenting our members: our mind and our bodies, as instruments to do those things that stand in disobedience to God's Word. Even with the little things, when we allow them to have a place in our lives. we are opening the door back up to serve sin, to become enslaved to it again. As Paul says in **Romans 6:16 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?** There it is, laid out black and white in God's Word. Either you are enslaved to sin and serving to promote the devil's cause in this world, which is to entice people away from faith and into unbelief, and lead them to eternal death, or you are enslaved by Jesus and serving His will and purpose. There is no middle ground.

When we make exception for certain pet sins and desires where do those exceptions stop? Our sinful self is always looking for loopholes. And the devil, who is far more intelligent and slyer than we are, is there to help find the loophole. He says "Well, if this one little thing is OK, why not this other little thing? No one will know. Sin is forgiven. Indulge yourself." But as Paul points out in **Romans 6:19a "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness,"** A little lawlessness leads to

more lawlessness. And when our conscience rises up to point out the disparity between God's Word and our life, the devil is there to say, "Aren't you a fine Christian? You know its wrong and yet you continue to do it! Do you think your Jesus will still forgive you?" And then he has us where he wants us, doubting our salvation.

## **What Does it Mean to be Enslaved to Jesus?**

Do you know what the answer is from Jesus? It is a resounding "**YES! You are forgiven! I suffered and died to forgive that sin, and all the others you have committed and will commit. I came to earth, and gave my life for you, and rose again so you might know that you are forgiven**". Paul tells us that without Jesus and the gift of Baptism we would remain enslaved to sin, unable to save ourselves. We would live a life apart from Him and eternal death would be our future. **Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** As a slave to sin all your actions earn your death. But Jesus actions on the cross and rising from the dead earn for you and for me life now, lived with His Spirit in our hearts and lives, protecting us from falling away, so that we will enjoy eternal life to come. You have been set free from the judgment of sin. Jesus declares that you are righteous: that you are in right standing with the Father. All because His free gift made you that way.

**Romans 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.** Now that we have become slaves of Christ, we can do what we never could before. We can actually begin to do good works which are thoughts, words, and actions that are in obedience with Christ's will and plan for you as a member of His Church. Works that make you reflect Him and His love for God and for others. Works that lead to sanctification: the process of making us more like Jesus, the process that grows our faith and knowledge of Him

That idea of being "enslaved" to Jesus may not sit comfortably with you. Some of that comes from the image of the enslavement of black people in the south leading up to the Civil War. But that enslavement is more like our enslavement to sin. Because we are pleasing our sinful selves it may seem like fun and games. But Paul says in **Romans 6:21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.** The fruit of sin is death. Separation from Christ now in this life and eternal separation to come. But when Jesus is our Master. Our Savior and Lord, then enslavement to Him in His kingdom is far different. What other Master would give His life to save us from eternal death? What other Master would reach out to those who hate and disobey Him and call them into His kingdom? What other Master would wash them in Baptismal water and put His own name on them? Only Jesus. He does it all. It costs us nothing. As Paul says in **Romans 6:17-18 <sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.** Thanks be to God that Jesus has done all that for us.

## Serving as Living Sacrifices: Slaves to Christ

All that being said, what kind of lives should you and I be living? Repentant lives. Lives where we encounter the Holy Spirit working in the law to show us how we are enslaving ourselves to sin. Then holding fast to the Gospel as the power to turn from sin to obedience to the standard of teaching that Jesus summed up in **Matthew 22:37-40** <sup>37</sup> **And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."** As slaves of Christ we commit our minds and our bodies to works that show love for our Savior God and show His love for others. And when we fail, which we will, our Master doesn't beat us and throw us in a cell. Our Master, who loved us enough to take our punishment in our place, forgives us, and restores us again from slavery to sin, back into His kingdom, in good standing with Him, the standing He earned for us.

### Conclusion:

Bob Dylan has gotten plenty wrong in his career. But he got it right when he sang "You gonna serve somebody. Well it may be the devil or it may be the Lord..." One or the other describes the life of all people on earth. We were born enslaved to sin, serving the devil in his kingdom. Jesus came to redeem us from the kingdom of the devil, break our bondage to sin, and save us from eternal death. In baptism He has made you and me slaves of righteousness, slaves to Him serving in His kingdom. We need not shy away from this designation of being slaves for His the loving Master who gave His all for us. He gives His Spirit to keep us safely in His kingdom, even when our sinful hearts that we resurrect try to lead us back into slavery to sin again. Our life lived out as repentant believers will be this constant spiritual battle. But thanks be to God Jesus won that war for us. **Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for saving us. Reign in our hearts. Make us your willing slaves now who will reign with you in life everlasting. Amen.