

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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First Sunday After Trinity, June 19, 2022

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 369, 75:1, 402, 398, 413:5.

Lessons: Isaiah 61:1-8, Galatians 5: 16-26, Luke 16:19-31.

Sermon Text: Romans 8:5-11

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

If you are a typical human being, you have probably had your mind set upon something at one time or another. As a child you may have had your mind set on some particular toy that you really wanted.

As you grew older, your mind was set upon something else, and maybe even today, this very day, your mind is set upon something you want to do or something you want to have.

Well, the Apostle Paul is talking about people who have their minds set on something. Today we see

A CONTRAST

- 1. What the sinful nature desires.**
- 2. What the Spirit of God desires.**

In this text which follows immediately on last Sunday's text, we see more about the contrast between flesh and Spirit and between those people who are devoted to either one. We read about those who are devoted to and follow the lead of the sinful flesh, who have their minds occupied and taken up with the things of the flesh. All their desires, imagination, and their lusts are centered upon gratifying worldly thoughts and ideas. These are things that the sinful nature desires.

If "*Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires*" the result and conclusion is death. "*The mind of sinful man is death.*" That's what happens. Scripture isn't just talking about physical, earthly death.

Oh yes, things may be going along really well in this world. One may be prosperous, even wealthy and have all the things, or even just some of the earthly things that he or she desires. A person may have gained things or influence or power that the heart has been set on.

But without faith in Jesus Christ, without the continuing work of the Holy Ghost in the heart, the final end, the result will be losing everything gained in this world and going to hell and receiving eternal damnation. Hell is complete separation from God and everything good. In our Gospel lesson Jesus told a parable about a wicked rich man who died and was suffering terrible torments in hell. The book of Revelation also speaks of hell as "*the fiery lake of burning sulfur*" Revelation 19:20 (NIV) and that suffering is eternal, unending.

"*For to be carnally minded* [earthly minded, fleshly minded] *is death*" although people do not realize it. Even if you have everything your heart is set on here on earth, without Christ after death is hell forever. Everything you acquire on earth all ends when you die, and you can't take it with you. Things may seem great, and even really be going great here on earth, but what is the end result of following the flesh? Death.

Paul even tells us why: "*the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*" Hostile! Enemies! Hatred! Enmity!

And doesn't the mind control the body and actions? That is the way we all are naturally, by nature. Even believers have a sinful mind and will have it until we die and are taken to heaven to be with Christ.

The sinful nature “***does not submit to God's law.***” It simply does not! Every one of us. We don't want to, by nature submit to God or to any authority set up by God. That is what Paul is talking about in these very words. It doesn't want to, it doesn't, it cannot.

And then God's conclusion: “***Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.***” Listen to how other translations accurately capture this idea: “***To be carnally minded is death.***” Romans 8:6 (KJV) “***The mind set on the flesh is death.***” Romans 8:6 (NASB) “***The mind governed by the flesh is death.***” Romans 8:6 (NIV2011)

The flesh, the old man, the old Adam cannot please God! It cannot satisfy God! Not only is it impossible, but man tries, and he comes up with self-righteousness and work righteousness, as if we could please God that way! There cannot be any agreement between the two mind-sets Paul writes about.

Such a one “***does not belong to Christ.***”

2.

Then we see the other side in this contrast: what the Spirit of God desires.

“***But those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.***” Here is the opposite: look at what the Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost desires. And Paul becomes very specific.

The result of the Spirit's desires is life and peace. The spiritual life of a Christian does not cause it, but this life and peace is given by God.

He says “***You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit.***”

Remember to whom this letter is addressed? To those “***who are loved by God and called to be saints!***” Romans 1:7 (NIV) Saints! Believers! God's children by faith in Jesus Christ! Paul wrote in the previous chapter: “***Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!***” Romans 7:25 (NIV)

He isn't saying you have to decide to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. He says You Are! “***You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit.***” And we know that the Holy Ghost has worked faith in us to believe and receive that.

This happy situation comes about “***if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.***”

The Spirit of God lives in you: Remember the two natures of the child of God? In the previous chapter Paul wrote: “***I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.***” Romans 7:18-19 (NIV)

The Spirit of God was planted in you by the Word of God, and if you were baptized as an infant, this happened at your Baptism. It has been fed and has been growing and has been nourished by the Gospel in the Word as it is proclaimed and preached and heard and read. Because of this, you belong to Christ.

In the very first verse of this letter to the Romans, Paul speaks of himself as a slave, a servant of Christ, just as he does elsewhere in the New Testament.

And so it is with every Christian. Every Christian is a slave, a servant of Jesus Christ. Paul also writes of beating down his sinful flesh, and fighting it every day.

“***And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.***” Such a one does not belong to Christ. And I think you know that even in earthly things, when we don't belong, we feel bad, we think we are missing out. And so here, too. The one who does not belong to Christ misses out on the free gift of eternal life.

But – and here's the good news again for you: “***But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.***” You are dead to sin. That means that you take no pleasure in sin. We fight against sin. We fight against Satan. We fight against the flesh. And oh, how hard that is! We find temptations at every turn, and even worse, we find temptations in our own minds. Our sinful flesh keeps on wondering how we can satisfy the lusts, the desires of the sinful flesh, whatever they may be. But you are alive

in Christ and because of Christ. Because you were dead in trespasses and sins, God had to work faith in you, to convert you, to give you new birth, to quicken you, to make you alive in Christ.

And it is because of righteousness, not yours, but Christ's righteousness. God gives, imputes that to your account, he applies that to your life.

"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

Paul brings the discussion back to Christ, the Messiah. Paul's been talking about you, O Christian, O child of God! If that Spirit lives in you, you are not dead, having been fed by the Word of God. Then "***he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.***" That will finally happen at the resurrection to eternal life on the last day, yes, but God can give life to you even here on earth, to serve Christ and not to serve yourself and your sinful lusts and not to serve Satan and not to serve the wickedness in the world because God is powerful – all powerful.

All this happens through the Spirit who lives in you

Because the Holy Ghost lives in you, in your mind, in your attitudes, in your life, he gives you the fruit of the Spirit. As you heard in our Epistle lesson, "***the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.***" Galatians 5:22-25 (NIV)

God repeats that idea in the letter to the Ephesians: "***For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.***" Ephesians 5:8-11 (NIV)

Paul writes in Galatians: "***Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.***" Galatians 5:24 (NIV) And by the grace of God, you, dear believer, beloved Christian, belong to Christ Jesus!

What a joyous, happy life the believer in Christ can have – and has! God works in you and leads you to all the fruits of faith, the fruits of the Spirit we just mentioned.

May God the Holy Ghost live in all of us every day and direct our every thought, word, and action to gladly serve God! Amen.