

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Twelfth Sunday After Trinity, August 23, 2026

✠ ✠ ✠

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

Hymns: 44, 237:1, 412, 453, 591.

Lessons: Numbers 16:20-35, 1 Timothy 2:1-6, Luke 18:1-8.

Sermon Text: Romans 14:1-9.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ:

There is a strange-sounding Greek word which is the subject of our sermon today. The word is *adiaphora*. (ah dee `ah for ah) It means things of indifference. The things to which we may be indifferent are those things that are neither commanded nor prohibited by the Word of God.

Some Christians may be troubled in their conscience about things that are neither commanded nor prohibited by God. And others may be insensitive to this weakness on the part of some. Our text speaks concerning both and from it we may learn:

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT ADIAPHORA (MATTERS OF INDIFFERENCE)

- 1. We should not judge nor despise others in disputable matters;**
- 2. We should be firmly assured that we are serving the Lord in the best way possible; and,**
- 3. We should confidently live and die as belonging to the Lord.**

Paul writes: ***“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.”*** We know that there are some Christians that are strong in faith and others that are weak in faith. Paul speaks here of those who are weak in a certain respect. They are true believers in Christ, but they are weak in regard to the liberty which believers have in matters not commanded nor prohibited in the Word of God. The weakness Paul referred to in the Roman congregation had to do with eating meat. Some of the weak may have been troubled by the fact that some of the meat bought in the shops may have been first offered to idols at heathen sacrifices. Some may have thought they should eat only vegetables. Paul writes: ***“One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.”***

Now, what should be done with such weak believers? Paul says in our text that they are to be accepted by the congregation, but not to pass judgment on them in disputable matters. They were to be received as members, but not argued with. They were to enjoy the privileges of membership, and then gradually, as they learned more from God’s Word, they would learn about their Christian liberty. That liberty is this: We are no longer bound by all the ceremonial regulations under the Law as in Old Testament times. Christ has by his redemptive work freed us from this bondage under the Law. We have liberty. Paul writes: ***“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”*** II Cor. 3:17 Again, Paul writes: ***“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*** Gal. 5:1

Believers in Christ should know that sin and holiness do not depend on the food that is eaten or not eaten. Jesus said to the people who were weak in this matter: ***“Listen and understand. What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’”*** Matt. 15:11 Here, however, we must not confuse Christian liberty with a license to sin.

Christian liberty does not give a person the right to do anything contrary to the Word of God, such as eating and drinking to excess or taking something that is harmful, such as illegal drugs.

Concerning those who were weak and had a troubled conscience in these matters, Paul says: ***“The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must***

not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.” Here we learn that God commands us not to judge in disputable matters, and not to despise someone who is doing what God has not prohibited or not doing what God has not commanded. When God has not spoken in his Word about a matter, let both the weak and strong in faith live together in peace.

In disputable matters Paul also teaches in our text that we should be firmly assured that we are serving the Lord in the best way possible.

2.

Paul teaches this with regard to what day of the week to worship. He writes: ***“One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”*** There were some believers in Paul's day at Rome, just as in our day, who felt they could best please the Lord by worshiping on a certain day of the week. Others who were stronger in faith, saw no difference in the days of the week. They felt that any day could be observed for public worship, and that all days ought to be set aside to be used for service to the Lord.

Paul advises both of these groups: ***“Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”*** He is not saying that both sides should stubbornly insist they were right and the other side wrong. This is not a matter of right and wrong, but a matter of adiaphora, a matter of indifference. The Apostle, of course, is also not advising that we are to be tolerant in the matter of religious teachings. We hear this so often in our day from the liberal false teachers who do not stand up for God's truth and reject error. The Bible by no means wants us to put error on the same level with truth. The Bible never gives equal rights to error and truth. Paul is saying in our text that every believer, guided by God's Word, should be fully assured that he is serving the Lord in the best way possible.

Paul gives an example: ***“He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord.”*** The early Christians made use of their Christian liberty in choosing a day for public worship. They chose Sunday because Christ rose from the dead on that day and the Holy Spirit was given on Pentecost Sunday.

In the same spirit, we worship on Sunday. It is not this, that God has commanded Sunday. God has not given us a command for a certain day, as he did in the Old Testament, telling the people they had to observe the Sabbath - Saturday. In the New Testament times, under the covenant of God's grace in Christ, it would be legalistic to insist on a certain day for public worship, as for example the Seventh-Day Adventists do. It is also legalistic for anyone to insist that God has in the New Testament times chosen Sunday instead of Saturday. What God has commanded is this: ***“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*** Hebr.10:25

What Paul says about days also applies to eating: We should do it with this in mind, to serve the Lord in the best way possible. ***“He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.”*** The weak in faith are troubled about eating certain things. The strong in faith believe that all food is a gift of God and eat freely. This is also what the Bible says. Paul writes: ***“Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.”*** 1 Tim. 4:4 So we learn again not to judge in disputable matters, but let everyone be assured in his own mind, with guidance from God's Word, that he is serving the Lord in the best way possible.

This also is emphasized in the last part of our text where Paul teaches that we should confidently live and die as belonging to the Lord.

3.

Paul writes: ***“None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.”*** Unbelievers falsely think they are victims of blind chance, that things just happen without any direction by the Lord. Unbelievers think also that they can do what they want with their lives and their bodies. Feminists, for example, and others,

speak of abortion rights, and some parade around with a sign which reads: “It’s my body; it’s my choice what to do with it.” But this is not the Christian’s attitude.

The Christian’s purpose in life and his attitude are altogether different. Paul expresses the Christian attitude: ***“If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”*** Christians are not to selfishly think only about their wishes and desires for themselves, but they are to look to God’s Word to find out what is pleasing to him, and what God’s will is for their lives. Christians should ask themselves: How can I best serve the Lord and live to his honor and glory. Paul writes: ***“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.”*** I Cor. 10:31 This should be on our mind every day: What I do, does it praise the Lord? Does it glorify him? For this we should also pray, for the Lord must enable us to live a sanctified life. Through the means of grace, the Gospel, he gives us the strength to do so.

Then, whenever God’s time has come, the time he has chosen for us to leave this earth, we should willingly commend our souls into his hands. Our faith may be strengthened by hearing what Luther prayed just before his death. He prayed: *“Lord Jesus Christ, accept my soul. O heavenly Father, though I must leave this body and be torn from life, yet I know for sure that I shall abide eternally with Thee, and no one can take me out of Thy hands. ... Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit, Thou hast redeemed me, Thou faithful God.”*

We as believers in Christ should also know this truth as Paul states it in our text: ***“Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.”*** Christ is our Lord because, as Luther wrote in the Second Article, he *“redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death.”* Christ is our Lord by right, because he atoned for all our sins. He delivered us from slavery to Satan and sin. He has abolished everlasting death in hell for us and won for us eternal life in heaven.

Our Lord Jesus did this for us so that we might be moved to say with Luther in expressing our determination: *“that I may be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from death, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. Amen.”*

Reprinted from Ministry By Mail for October 13, 1991.