

“Baptized into a new life”

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday June 21, 2020

Romans 6:1-11

I want to begin this morning with one of those philosophical questions.

“Does what we do matter?”

Our knee jerk reaction to that thought is “yes”.

But the deeper question is “why”.

Why does what we do matter?

If God loves us, and there is nothing I can do to make God love me more, and nothing I can do to make God love me less, then why does it matter how I live and what I do?

From a really practical perspective it matters because living without regard for others makes our world a really terrible place for all of us.

The “Black lives matter” movement is a result of wrong thinking, and so wrong actions towards people of different races.

Throughout our history, there have been crimes against humanity – crimes that are so horrific that we as a whole human race declare the crimes were against all of us.

What we do matters as we live together as a society.

This pandemic highlights that what people in other parts of the world do matters- if the US doesn't handle the pandemic well, or if people in another province doesn't handle the pandemic well, we will all suffer.

But does what we do matter to God?

Again, instinctually we all answer “yes” but why?

Paul, the great thinker, theologian, writer and teacher begins to answer that question for us this morning.

The end of Romans 5 reads: *But the more we see our sinfulness, the more we see God's abounding grace forgiving us. Before, sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, but now God's kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

And so Paul asks his version of my rhetorical question: **“Should we continue to sin in order that grace may abound?”**

And he gives a resounding “NO” as his answer, but then he goes on to explain why.

Listen to this wonderful explanation of who we are now as people saved by Jesus.

Paul turns to our baptisms.

Some of you remember the day you were baptized, others of us were baptized as infants, but for all of us, we are to remember what happened in our baptisms.

Paul begins: ***Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?***

We have been buried with Jesus by baptism into death, so that, just as Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of God, the Father, so too with us.

We have been raised from death together with Christ so we might walk together in new life.

There are two things that I want you to hear:

The first is how we are linked to Jesus, and at the same time how we are linked and joined to one another.

You and I together have been baptized into Christ's death.

All of us at our baptisms- who are claimed as Christ's, went down into Jesus death together, crucified with Christ-

and then have been raised up together in new life with him.

We now share life together in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit- joined in Jesus- joined with one another- and together now we have resurrection life.

In our baptisms God has acted.

The Christ event is actualized in each one of us.

And when we realize what has happened we find at least two things.

1. How much we are loved. Think deeply today about what it means that Jesus shares his death and resurrection with you. All that is broken and sinful, all the ways you are separated from God, all the ways you have fallen short, all of that has been crucified with Jesus. You have gone down into the waters of baptism with Jesus, and you have emerged a new creation. You are set free from sin and death, you are free to walk in the life of Jesus. You are loved and freed, no more guilt, no more shame, new life.
2. You are forever joined to the community of faith. You might not like all of us, you might not want to be joined to all of us, but you are. You are grafted into a tree, or are a part of a body, and we all only thrive as every part of the body thrives. As the whole is healthy- then the branches and parts thrive.

What we do matters because we are one in Christ- we were all dead in our sin, but now we have all been made alive, buried and resurrected together.

And so later Paul will teach that on this basis; now there is no slave or free, male nor female, Jew or Greek, black or white or brown.

We together have been raised in Christ to new life and we are joined in a whole new way.

For just one minute let me share with you what new life looks like.

It looks like being in love with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and being in love with the world that Jesus loves and that he died for.

If you are in love with someone you might say loving words, - you might write loving messages, you might shout to the whole world your love for all the people Jesus loves.

If you are in love with someone you might give loving gifts.

Now that you are joined to Jesus, and the life you live you live in him, you might find yourself wanting to give gifts to his people, to his church, to the people you are joined to in love.

If you are in love with someone you might spend time with them, give yourself to them, and do special things for your beloved.

So now that you have been raised with Jesus in new life, and you are joined in Christ, you might find yourself caring, doing, giving, blessing, loving them.

I invite you to take a few minutes in this quiet, to think about being joined with Jesus in his death, being buried with him in baptism –setting you free from everything that separated you from God- and rising out of the waters to new life – and then look around – for this whole community is with you.

We are one body – we are all vines attached to the same branch.

Let us pray:

Holy God, how can it be that we are buried with Jesus, that all our guilt and shame, and all that separates us from you, all our brokenness is crucified in the waters of baptism with Jesus? It is a wonder to us that we are raised up to new life, set free to live that new life in Jesus, joined in a whole new way to this community around us. Remind us that we are joined to you, and each other each day. Amen.