

June 19, 2022

Christ Church, Dallas

Galatians 3:23-29

All Are One In Christ

Happy Father's Day and Happy Juneteenth.

Hopefully none of you will be too disappointed that I am not preaching on today's Gospel from Luke. We have heard the story of Legion many times and there are many interpretations of the story. But today I felt that Paul's letter to the Galatians held more meaning for me.

I'm not sure if I'm going through an identity crisis, but each of us get to a time in life when we ask ourselves who we are and why we are really here. It hits all ages. Teens go through it trying to fit into their circle of friends and wondering about the meaning of life. In middle age some people struggle with their identity, maybe out of disappointment for not having achieved all they had hoped for. In later years people realize that the end of life is fast approaching, and they wonder what kind of person they have become.

We Christians are not immune to those kinds of questions. So sometimes it is good to review not who our clothes, cars, careers, or degrees say we are but who God says we are. In answer to the question "Who are you?" It's good to remember that who we were, who we are now and who we are to be is by God's grace.

Satchell Paige, the famous professional baseball player once said “Don’t look back because someone may be gaining on you. In contrast, I read that George Santayana, the Spanish author, said “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Which of those perspectives do we think Paul is trying to share with the Galatians today?

“Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law.” The law was the constant reminder of our condemned status before God. The Bible says, “Through the law we become conscious of sin.”

There is an often-told story of an atheist group that placed a sign beside the community Christmas display in a town in Wisconsin. It read “In this season of the winter solstice, may reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our material world. Religion is but a myth and superstition that hardens the hearts and enslaves people.” On the back of the sign had the printed warning “Thou shalt not steal.” It’s highly ironic that people who don’t believe in God’s existence would appeal to one of God’s laws to keep people from stealing their sign. If there is no God to establish what is right and wrong, that commandment is merely a human directive with no teeth. The truth is, there is one God who gave us his commandments to shine the light on our sins and our need for forgiveness.

If you have ever gotten a ticket in the mail with a photo of you going through a red light you know in this age of technology there are tiny, hidden video cameras everywhere. They can record everything in your office, school room, home, car and on the street.

Did you ever stop to think that God sees everything we do and hears everything we say or think every moment of every day?

Frightening thought, yes? But here's the good news. A spiritual life does not expect us to be perfect. But it does tell us to be honest about who we are and that's when we will come to know God. If we reach out and meet God here, where God is, if we accept God's will in life, if we are willing to learn from others, if we can see ourselves and accept ourselves for what we are and grow from that, if we can live simply, if we can respect others, and reverence them, if we can be a trusting partner to each other, we have nothing to fear.

Paul tells us to be more "Christ-like" "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ." The church in Galatia had all those people and those differences were causing a lot of tension and stress. Sound familiar? These differences still do. It's called prejudice. When we judge people on the way they dress, look, talk, what color they are, and how many tattoos and piercings they have, we need to remember our Savior doesn't play favorites. "You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ...you are all one in Christ Jesus."

People tend to pick friends and social circles or seek out people much like themselves. God's people and his church are different. We are asked to look at others through the eyes of Christ. Now I ask you always look at yourself through the eyes of Christ to answer that important question "Who am I?" The answer is I am a cherished child of God; I am united with others in Christ.

Now remember Satchell Page and George Santayana? Who's right? Do we move on and never look back or do we dwell on past sins and try to eliminate them in the future? The Bible tells us to do both. We do need to regularly reflect on our former lives and mistakes and the grace of God that we have been blessed to receive and also to look ahead and use God's word and sacraments to avoid repeating the sins of the past and become more like Christ.

The God-life, St Benedict tells us is a never-ending, unremitting, totally absorbing enterprise. It is not perfection that leads us to God it is perseverance.

AMEN