

Lent 3 – March 12, 2023

Text: Romans 5:1-8

Theme: When Did Jesus Die for Us?

**One of the teachings that causes so many Christians to struggle is the question of when Jesus died for us, not so much the date of His death but more our condition when He died. In other words, did Jesus die for me because I had become worthy of such a death, or did Jesus die for me when I was completely unworthy of such a death? One way or another, this plays out in our lives because no matter how holy you try to be, you're still sinning! Why do you do that you poor miserable people? Don't you know that Jesus died because of your sin? And yet, here we are, still sinning. We all feel some guilt and shame because we know the price our Lord paid on the cross with His own body and soul and yet...and yet we just cannot seem to stop taking our Lord's name in vain! We just cannot stop ourselves from making fun of that weird neighbor, the fat kid in P.E., or the know-it-all at work. We just cannot stop watching that TV show that does nothing but make sport of our Christian values and sensationalizes every sin the Commandments forbid. We just cannot stop ourselves from having that fourth drink, that third helping of mashed potatoes or that drag off the vape pen.**

**Then of course it is also just as easy to be judgmental of people who struggle with sins that don't happen to bother us. We like to highlight those sins because it just makes us feel better about our**

**own lack of ability to refrain from sinning. My point with all this talk about sin is that it seems as though we spend an inordinate amount of time categorizing, ranking and talking about sin!**

**All sin has already been forgiven. It reminds me of people who have survived a horrible disease. For instance, if you had cancer and now you are cancer free, how much time do you spend thinking about where the cancer might be? If you are like other cancer survivors I have known, every time you get a twinge somewhere in your body, you wonder if the cancer is back. We know that cancer sometimes comes back, and even if we beat it for good, there's still a hundred other types of cancer we could get. We sinners are similar. I have not had cancer. When I get an ache or a pain, I never think, "What if it's cancer." If we had never sinned, we would never think, "What if God is really angry at this one and just decides to throw me out with the bathwater?" But I have sinned. I have been corrupted by sin and so every time I sin, there is a thought in the back of my mind, what if this is the one that's too much? What if this sin is the straw the broke the camel's back?**

**So I go back to this important question that St. Paul asks and answers for us this morning. When did Jesus cure the cancer of sin in our lives? First answer when it was not. It wasn't once we had cleaned up our act and lived rightly for some period of time. It**

wasn't when we had done enough good stuff to outweigh our bad stuff, like given enough money to the Church to outweigh all the money we spent on booze, or spent enough time volunteering for VBS at Church to outweigh the amount of time we had wasted gossiping about a fellow student or co-worker. No, Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners. Remember that God is not bound by time the way we are so everything is happening at once for Him. Jesus is continually dying on the cross and being raised from the dead every moment of every day. In the midst of all our worst most deplorable sins, Jesus is dying for us and forging all the sin we are committing, all the sin we ever committed, all the sin we ever will commit. St. Paul says,

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” “SINCE we have been justified by faith...” – past tense, already done, “since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is what we have RIGHT NOW. Not when we're good enough. Not when we have made restitution for our sinful ways, but RIGHT NOW.

**You all are sinners. I'm a sinner. Our family and friends are sinners. We can get over it now and move on. We know we fall short on our own and the Word of God continues to remind us that we need to keep striving to please the one who gave everything for us but the deed is DONE. We are saved.**

**Not even suffering can get us down! St. Paul tells us, yes we live in the midst of sin and a sin-fallen world but God even uses that to help us grow stronger. You know the old adage, "whatever doesn't kill me only makes me stronger?" It's kind of like that. Satan can throw all the suffering he likes at us and God is going to use it to make us stronger. Will it be pleasant? No, not always, but our lives do not consist only of what we experience in this world do they? We have pleasant times and not so pleasant times and all of our times lead to paradise. We live in a no-lose situation and we can rejoice every moment of every day because all the work has been done. The introit said it all today.**

**"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion." Blessed indeed. That's us no matter our situation at any given moment along the path, blessed indeed.**