

Sermon followed by Service

October 10, 2021

Romans 8:5-14

Huh?! You're at the art museum. There in front of you is DaVinci's Mona Lisa, the world famous Mona Lisa that people around the world have wowed over. You look, and you look again, and you don't dare say it, you don't dare say it out loud, but you think it - "huh?!" You're in the potluck line. There is front of you is the bean salad. You hear people say how good it looks, how good it tastes. You look again; you see kidney beans and lima beans; and you don't dare say it, but you think it - "huh?" You're reading Romans 8, our lesson. You're told: "After the darkness and death in Romans 7 - **“the good that I would, I do not; the evil I don't want to do, that I keep on doing.”** After the darkness and death of Romans 7: **“What a wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?!”** You're told, after the darkness and death of Romans 7, Romans 8 is a pick-me-up chapter of life. So you read our lesson, and read it again, and you don't dare say it, but you think it - "huh?!"

Last week somebody dared. Last Sunday in Bible Class, we read today's lesson, and I asked the class to write down their questions - some great questions, deep questions, painful questions - "Why can't I get it right? Will I ever get it right in this world?" And someone wrapped up their questions this way - "huh?!" So often reading this section of Romans 8 has me thinking that same way - "huh?!"

Why? Part of it might be this. Paul is using common words in ways that aren't common to us. For example, when Paul here talks about our flesh, he's not talking about our skin and the meat under our skin; he's talking about our natural sinful nature, our natural sinful self. And when Paul talks about our spirit, he's not talking about our feelings or our soul. Instead, sometimes he's talking about the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, and sometimes he's talking about what the Holy Spirit gives and works in us - a new spirit, a new nature, a new life powered by the Spirit of God.

In our lesson, Paul shows us the difference between: flesh / spirit; old self / new self; sinful nature / our new nature alive with the Holy Spirit. Those terms might still sound kind of fuzzy. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul makes those fuzzy words vivid and clear. **“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”** Paul goes on: **“But the fruit**

of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Now, I'm not just thinking “huh?” Now, I'm also thinking “yikes” because I can see my sinful nature still working death in me. And the fruit of my spirit? Too often bug-bitten, bruised, and shriveled. Looking at the work of my flesh, looking at the fruit of my spirit, I might wonder: “Who am I? Who's at work in me?”

Is it a good thing or a not-so-good thing to be asking those questions?

From there we might wonder: “Look at the hurt, the heartache, the death my sinful nature is causing. Look at Jesus and what he has done for us! Look at heaven and what Jesus has for us! Why won't our sinful nature get on board with Jesus? What do I have to do to get my old self on board with God?” Our lesson doesn't have good news for us in that. Paul tells us an ugly truth: “**the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.**” Our old sinful nature is at war against God. It will never willingly submit to God. Our old sinful nature is at war against God and there is nothing that can be done to change its mind.

Does that mean that we are doomed to heart-aching battle with our sinful nature for the rest of our lives? What hope (future reality) do we have? What power do we have today?

*Why doesn't God simply remove our sinful nature now?
(I wonder if Genesis 3:15 points us to part of the answer.)*

Paul goes on: “**Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.**” That can be hard to swallow. Why? I imagine most of us know people who don't believe in Jesus, people without the Holy Spirit ... and some of them seem so nice; they do such nice things. So how can Paul say that they don't, that they can't please God? Because God doesn't just look at the nice on the outside, he looks at the inside, and he sees the undercover agent of Satan that lurks inside all of us.

Here we could discuss the difference between the righteousness that God praises and civic righteousness. Which of those two kinds of righteousness are blessings from God?

On top of that painful truth Paul adds another scary truth - **“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”** We might like to think that everyone belongs to Christ, that everyone is a child of God. Paul won't say that. He says: **“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”**

Put those hard, scary, ugly truths together with what our sinful nature is still doing today. Put those hard scary, ugly truths together next to the fruit of our spirit that some days looks so bug-bitten, bruised, and shriveled. Put those hard, scary, ugly truths together - no wonder we might think: “huh?!” No wonder we might think “Yikes!” No wonder we might wonder where we stand with God! In fact, Paul wants us to be thinking about our mis-fit. He wants us to be thinking about where we stand with God.

Is it a bad thing to think about our mis-fit, to think about where we stand with God?

That's why Paul uses a word I don't like to hear from him, a word I don't want to deal with. He uses the word “If.” **“If the Spirit of God lives in you.” “If Christ is in you ...” “If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”** Did I tell you that I don't like those “ifs”?

I much prefer to hear the new covenant - **“I will be your God and you will be my people”** ... no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I'd rather hear Paul in Romans 3: **“There is no difference for all have sinned, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”** And **“We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law”** - that is, we are right before God apart from satisfying some “if I obey, then I'm saved” condition. I love to hear Paul in Romans 5 - **“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** I could go on. The Bible is clear. God loved us, Jesus died for us, God declared us forgiven and right in Jesus, long before and completely apart from us fulfilling some “if we do good by God, then God will do good by us” condition.

So why the “ifs”? To get us thinking about where we stand with God. Not to get us doubting our place with God, but to get us thinking about where we stand with God - and what that means for how we live our lives. In the chapters before this, Paul has made it clear - **“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** Yes, you have sinned, but Jesus has died for you. Now

you are **justified freely by his grace**, forgiven full and free by his grace. Not by what you do, not by your trying, not by your crying, but through faith in what Jesus has done, you stand in God's grace - you have God's promise of peace. Paul has more to say: In your baptism you are connected to Jesus and his death - your sin has been sent to the cross. In baptism you are connected to Christ and his life - you are connected to Jesus for life with God. Even though we have good reason, awful reason to cry out: "**Who will save me from this body of death,**" you have this promise: "**There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.**" And now in our lesson, Paul doesn't just say "if." Paul says of you: "**You ... are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit...**" "**Your spirit is alive because of righteousness.**" "**His Spirit ... lives in you.**" Because all that is true - Paul wants us to think about this - "How are we going to live? We have the power of God's Spirit to live by the Spirit!"

Someone asked: "With all my sin, how can I know I have the Spirit? How can I know that the Spirit lives in me?"

How can you know you have the Spirit, that the Spirit lives in you?

Let me start with your baptism. In your baptism, God promises you the gift of the Spirit. "But how can I know that I haven't rejected my baptism, that I haven't rejected the Spirit?" When you look at your sin, do you want more? That's the thinking of the sinful nature. Do you see your sin and cry out: "**Who will rescue me from this body of death?**" That's the work of the Spirit! When you hear the promise of forgiveness, do you see a pass or a license to keep on sinning? That's the thinking of the sinful nature. When you hear the promise of forgiveness do you answer: "**Thanks be to God?**" That's the work of the Holy Spirit. When you see Jesus and the cross - do you believe that your sins put him there, that he paid for your sins there? That's the work of the Spirit. When you see Jesus holding that lamb, do you see yourself there, hopeless, helpless but for Jesus? Would you like to see yourself there? That's the work of the Holy Spirit. I could go on.

Someone else asked: "How can I have more of the Spirit at work in me?" Part of the answer is we pray: "Come, Holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love." And then, instead of sitting back and waiting to be Spirit-zapped, we go to the Spirit - we go to his word, to be filled with his Word and Spirit. And then, instead of holding back from the life God has for us, instead of stepping back from the challenges God has for us, instead of putting a lid on the Spirit, stagnating our spirit, we step up to the plate and put the Spirit to work in our lives.

Luther would answer this question with a combination of oratio, meditatio, and tentatio (anfechtung) - prayer, Bible Study, and trials/struggles/attacks How might this change our attitude about challenges and troubles?

And what will we see? Perhaps a bit less “huh?!” and a bit more “Wow!” A bit more “Wow!” that shows in the way we live - by the Spirit! So, Come Holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love!” Amen.

When I say: “Perhaps [we will see] a bit less ‘huh?!’” does it sound like I’m hedging? Why is that an appropriate “hedging”?

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

A Family Connecting in Christ



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WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Masked

With the renewed mask mandate across Illinois, we now offer masked worship - Saturdays at 5 and Sundays at 9. If you have questions, please ask!

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church. We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... Satan has planted a lie in our hearts, a lie that fights against God, a lie that can only lead to death. What is that lie? Our way is better than God's way.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we are shown the way to life and peace with God. Thank you, Lord Jesus!

OPENING HYMN

"Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord"

Hymn 176

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord! May all your graces be outpoured
On each believer's mind and heart; Your fervent love to us impart.
Lord, by the brightness of your light, In holy faith your church unite
From ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue;
This to your praise, O Lord our God, be sung: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Come, holy Light, Guide divine, And cause the Word of life to shine.
Teach us to know our God aright And call him Father with delight.
From ev'ry error keep us free; Let none but Christ our Master be
That we in living faith abide,
In him, our Lord, with all our might confide. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Come, holy Fire, Comfort true; Grant us the will your work to do
And in your service to abide; Let trials turn us not aside.
Lord, by your pow'r prepare each heart,
And to our weakness strength impart
That bravely here we may contend,
Through life and death to you, our Lord, ascend. Alleluia! Alleluia!

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,
For sins of habit and sins of choice,
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,
I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Mercifully grant, O God, that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, for without your help we are unable to please you; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

Romans 8:5-14 (EHV)

To be sure, those who are in harmony with the sinful flesh think about things the way the sinful flesh does, and those in harmony with the spirit think about things the way the spirit does. Now, the way the sinful flesh thinks results in death, but the way the spirit thinks results in life and peace. For the mind-set of the sinful flesh is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God's law, and in fact, it cannot. Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the sinful flesh but in the spirit, if indeed God's Spirit lives in you. And if someone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit, who is dwelling in you.

So then, brothers, we do not owe it to the sinful flesh to live in harmony with it. For if you live in harmony with the sinful flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.

Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

PSALM 51B (CW)

Refrain



Come, Ho - ly Spir - it, re - new our hearts and
kin - dle in us the fire of your love.

Psalm tone



O Lord, open my lips, *
And my mouth will declare your praise.

O Lord, open my lips,*

And my mouth will declare your praise.

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;*

You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;*

A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Refrain

Create in me a pure heart, O God,*

And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence*

Or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,*

And grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,*

And sinners will turn back to you.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son*

And to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning,*

is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Refrain

VERSE OF THE DAY

“Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.
My Father will love him, and we will come to him
and make our home with him. Alleluia.”
(John 14:23)

GOSPEL LESSON

John 14:15-21

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN

"I Want To Walk as a Child of the Light"

Hymn 771



1 I want to walk as a child of the light;
 2 I want to see the bright - ness of God;
 3 I'm look - ing for the com - ing of Christ;



I want to fol - low Je - sus.
 I want to look at Je - sus.
 I want to be with Je - sus.



God set the stars to give light to the world;
 Clear Sun of Right - eous - ness, shine on my path
 When we have run with pa - tience the race,



The star of my life is Je - sus.
 And show me the way to the Fa - ther.
 We shall know the joy of Je - sus.

Refrain



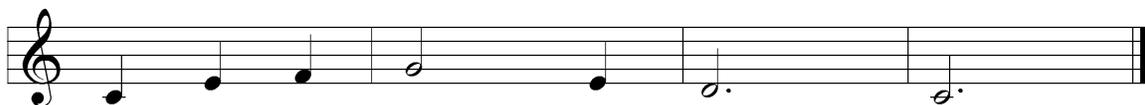
In him there is no dark - ness at all; The



night and the day are both a - like. The



Lamb is the light of the cit - y of God.



Shine in my heart, Lord Je - sus.

HYMN

*"Take My Life and Let It Be"***Hymn 469**

Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to thee.
 Take my moments and my days; Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of thy love.
 Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing Always, only for my King.
 Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold; Not a mite would I withhold.
 Take my intellect and use Ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine; It shall be no longer mine.
 Take my heart - it is thine own; It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour At thy feet its treasure store.
 Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, all for thee.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways”

Hymn 462

Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways To keep his statutes still!
Oh, that my God would grant me grace To know and do his will!

Order my footsteps by your Word, And make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord, But keep my conscience clear.

Assist my soul, too apt to stray, A stricter watch to keep;
And should I e'er forget your way, Restore your wand'ring sheep.

Make me to walk in your commands - 'Tis a delightful road -
Nor let my head or heart or hands Offend against my God.

OFFERING

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60 YEARS OF GOD'S GRACE AND BLESSINGS

The Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM) is a mission of WELS supported entirely outside of the synod budget through gifts from WELS women's groups, Lutheran schools and Sunday schools, and individuals. Its work is administered by the Central Africa Medical Mission Committee, with input from Medical Mission Councils in Malawi and Zambia and the WELS Board for World Missions. We thank the many committee members who have served as volunteers throughout the years.

CAMM began its work in 1961 when it established its first medical mission on the Sala Reserve near Lusaka, Zambia. A permanent dispensary was built and opened later that year. By 1963, as many as 4,000 people were being treated at the Mwembezi Lutheran Clinic each month. Special prenatal clinics began in 1965, and an under-fives clinic began in 1968.

Work was expanded to Malawi in July 1970 with a mobile health care unit. The nurses traveled to five designated bush areas to set up a clinic for the day and then returned to their home in Lilongwe by night. Permanent structures built to serve as clinics during the week are used as churches on Sunday.

Dozens of faithful workers have carried out the work of this mission for six decades. The mission has faced many challenges, and, as circumstances changed, adjustments were made to the way in which the mission carried out its work. Despite the challenges and changing circumstances, God has blessed the work richly. With God's help, hundreds of thousands of patients have been served and countless lives saved through the work of the Central Africa Medical Mission. Many adults and children have been baptized.

We take time to thank God for what he has accomplished and for the people he provided to carry out this work faithfully for 60 years. Learn more at camm.us.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder



2021 Lutheran Convention for Seniors

October 19-22, 2021

*We Will Tell the Next Generation the
Praiseworthy Deeds of the Lord*

Where: Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

*Pandemic precautions led to the cancellation
of the 2020 Convention for Seniors. We were
able to reschedule our convention plans for*

*2021. For the safety of all, COVID-19 vaccinations are recommended. Masks may be
required on the MLC campus—exact requirements are not known at this time.*

With the theme “We Will Tell the Next Generation the Praiseworthy Deeds of the Lord,” this year’s convention will give seniors insight into passing the faith to the next generation. Among the topics, speakers, and workshops are:

- Lessons from the Immigrant Generation
- Silencing the Skeptics: Martin Luther College at 25
- What Christians need to Know about Evolution
- 6 Minute Novels: Using Short Films to Generate Christian Conversations
- Music and the Arts at MLC
- WELS Early Childhood Ministries
- The WELS New Worship Project
- WELS Q & A: A Helpful Resource for Individuals and Groups

Early arrivals at the convention can enjoy tours of MLC or historic New Ulm.

The convention is open to any WLS and ELS member who is 55 or over, retired or not, whether a member of OWLS or not. It’s an excellent chance for members of local senior ministries to get a larger perspective on ministry by seniors and for seniors. With plenty of time to make new friends and connect with friends from the past, the New Ulm convention promises to be a relaxing and enjoyable opportunity for seniors.