

Sermon – John 6.1-15 (Lent 4 – 2022)

**Children of Promise**

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, by Your Son You fed five thousand men in the wilderness with five loaves and two fish, showing that you nourish our bodies: We beseech You to nourish also our souls with Your gospel, that by the redemption of Your Son, we may be freed from sin, and be led with believers from every nation to our eternal inheritance by Your merciful Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Grace to you and peace, from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

<sup>21</sup> Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

<sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman.

<sup>23</sup> But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,

<sup>24</sup> which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar--

<sup>25</sup> for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children--

<sup>26</sup> but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

<sup>27</sup> For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, *You* who do not bear! Break forth and shout, *You* who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband."

<sup>28</sup> Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise.

<sup>29</sup> But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

<sup>31</sup> So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

These are Your words, heavenly Father, sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

I would be curious to see what percentage of the Bible consists of the condemnation of evil and of the judging and correction of false beliefs. I wouldn't be surprised if that percentage would be at least 50%. Regardless, there is a lot in there, and by the world's standards, the Bible is a very judgmental book. If there's anything the secular world judges, it is being judgmental—as ironic as that is. Unfortunately, this kind of thinking has infiltrated Christian churches as well.

If speaking the truth is judgmental, then the world may go on and accuse us, but we will not apologize for it. Nor will we admit to have done anything wrong. Sure, if we speak the truth with hatred and condescension, then yes, that is sin and we would have to repent of it. But if we speak the truth in love, that is good and right. We will call sin sin. We will unapologetically confess God and His divine doctrine. We will say a man is a man and a woman is a woman. Speaking the truth does not make us Christians, but Christians speak the truth. It's what we do.

There was error and some correcting that was needed in our Epistle and Gospel readings today.

In our Gospel reading, we have a large crowd of people that do not believe rightly about Jesus. They do not see Him as their Savior from sin, but rather as a bread king, who will provide for them all their needs of body. Jesus escaped their wicked plans to make Him king. The next day, He corrected their false beliefs, but they would not accept His teaching and left Him.

The book of Galatians is Paul's rebuke of the Galatian Christians for heeding the words of false teachers, and he corrects them that they may be restored to the true doctrine, and retain the saving faith.

There was a group of false teachers called Judaizers that were teaching false doctrine among the Galatians. These Judaizers believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the Savior, but they taught that people are not saved by faith alone in Jesus. The Judaizers argued that if they wished to be saved, the Christians also had to practice circumcision, observe the Old Testament festivals, and all the other laws of the Old Testament.

The Judaizers had a wrong understanding of Scripture. They misunderstood the meaning of Sarah and Hagar. They believed that the Galatians who were uncircumcised Gentiles were like Ishmael, illegitimate children. They taught that they had to be circumcised and keep the OT laws if they wish to be true children of Abraham. The Galatians were falling for this.

So Paul speaks the truth and corrects them. And we should understand that Christians not only speak the truth, but also hear and submit to truth. And so we hear the rebuke of Paul and listen to the truths He speaks, because this is for our eternal good.

Paul addresses the bad direction the Galatians were going and turns the false teaching of the Judaizers on its head. He begins by saying to the Galatians, "**You who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?**"

They were willing to submit themselves to the Mosaic law as the requirement for their salvation! But have they heard the law? Have they paid attention to it? Don't they realize what it says? It's enslaving! It's damning. The Law says, "**Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them**" (Deut 27:26). And they can't do it!

Is this what they desire? Desiring to gain salvation by the Law is actually how they subject themselves to bondage under the Law. And so in this way, those who wish to be saved by the Law are really the children of the slave woman, Hagar. Even the Jews, who by are physically descendants of Abraham and Sarah, are truly the slave children of the slave Hagar if they wish to ascend to God by the Law.

The Gentile Galatians who believe in Christ, on the other hand, are free from the bondage of the Law, free from its condemnation, and are truly children of the freewoman, Sarah. They belong to the Jerusalem above, that is, they are born from above.

Do you know the Law? Most people don't. Ask most people how they get to heaven, and the answer is by being a good person. If they knew the Law, they would know that there is only one who is good and that is God. The Law, in fact, teaches us our wretched sins. If we knew the Law, we would see that it is not a pathway for us to get to heaven, but a brick wall that shows us that we are utterly incapable of entering the gates of heaven and earning the favor of God. If we knew the Law, we would despair of our righteousness, and our repentance at this altar would be a confession of that. Our hearts are desperately wicked. So many are my sins against you, O Lord.

You can clearly see in Paul's letter to the Galatians, that he is appalled by how quickly the Galatians who had received the gospel preached by him, was willing to return to the bondage of the law. We should not underestimate how quickly our prideful nature can forget the fierceness and curse of the Law. Lifelong Christians have forgotten it. The fallen human nature in us has a tendency to believe that salvation is completely or in part through the law. The Judaizers weren't denying Christ. They believed that Jesus was the Christ, but they were saying that faith in Him wasn't enough. It had to be faith and works. It's no surprise that the whole Roman Church went that way, and other Church bodies have done the same, when they say that you must surrender or must commit your life to Jesus in order to be saved. These imply that faith is not alone, but you must do something along with faith to gain your salvation.

We need to be on guard so that we do not fall into this idea that faith in Christ is not enough for our salvation, but that works of the law are required.

You were born of the flesh, born in bondage to the law. But you were also born from above by water and the Spirit, so you are not in bondage, but you are born of the freewoman, Sarah. You are free, because Christ is your Savior. He has freed you from the curse of the Law, by becoming a curse for us, for cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. (Gal 3). By His perfect life under the strict demands of the Law, and by His sacrificial death on the cross, He accomplished your salvation perfectly and completely. There is nothing to add. This salvation is promised to you, a free gift.

And through faith, that is relying upon this promise, you are a free people. You are the true children of Abraham. You are citizens of the Jerusalem above, the Holy Christian Church, which is not of this world, and whose Lord is the ascended Christ.

See the beauty and joy of being children of promise. Let us not go back the way of bondage under the law. As free people, we see the law differently. It is not something that we do to become Christians. But the law, the moral law, is what we freely do. Just as speaking the truth does not make us Christians. But as Christians, we speak the truth in love.

May God give us ears to hear His rebuke, to repent of our sins, to despair of our righteousness, and to believe the free forgiveness, life, and salvation Christ has won for us. And may He grant us mouths to confess and praise His holy name before the world. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.