

## Mountain View Lutheran Church

Sunday, June 26, 2011

**Sermon by Pastor Mark Friedrich**  
**(as transcribed from recording)**

Gracious God, our Heavenly Father, it is well with our soul because You love us and You've given Your life as a ransom for many. Help us Lord to see Your love each and every day with greater intensity, that Your love might live in us and that we might be controlled by the Spirit each and every day to follow what You've called us to live. Now Lord bless the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts that they might be acceptable in Your sight, oh Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

What motivates you? Well, if you're a grandparent – grandchildren! I've heard grandparents say "I'll drive 3,000 miles to see my kids and grandkids." More so the grandkids than the kids, but we know how that works, don't we? That grandchildren are the reward for not killing your kids when you wanted to. Grandchildren are good, unless they live with you for any length of time, huh?

What motivates you? Money? Boy, think of the job that you have. You'd probably put up with just about anything to get the greenback. People do. They'll even work at Wal-Mart just to pay the bills. Or be Pastor, just to have the mucho dinero that I make.

What motivates you? How about guilt? Does guilt motivate? Oh, it's a negative motivation and it works sometimes. That's why the husband brings home those two dozen roses, when he says "Honey, I'm sorry." Guilt motivates.

The law sometimes can motivate. Driving a little fast down the highway, see that cop car in the distance - ERRRR! Slow down because that's a motivation.

There are many things that motivate us, even as Christians. Sometimes we, as Christians, live our lives under the motivation of the law. We're here because we're afraid that if we don't come, something bad will happen to us. Or sometimes in churches I get from well-meaning Christians, "Pastor, you know you just gotta tell those people to do this and this and this, or else!" Sounds like it would motivate, and in some cases, it does motivate external actions, but it does nothing for the inner soul.

So, Paul says "The Law has authority over a man only as long as he lives." What does that mean? That we're under the authority of the law for our whole life and then we're set free? Well, you could almost take it that way except you've got to read on, because Paul uses an illustration that we're kind of familiar with. He says take a bride and groom, OK? When they get married, they pledge to be faithful as long as they live. But what happens if a spouse dies? Can the other spouse get remarried? I hope so. I did that. But because of the death, the individual is set free.

Have we died to the law? Yes! Paul says it this way, "You also died to the law through the body of Christ." When Christ died, remember what He said, the last words on the cross? Do I have to go through that whole Lenten series again? He said "th-th-th-that's all folks! to quote Porky the Pig. No! "It is finished." And then He died. The work of our salvation, the payment that the law required was complete, and so in the body of Christ, we died to the law.

Do you know when that took place in your life as a Christian? In baptism. Romans 6:4 says, “We were, therefore, buried with Christ through baptism into death.” So that just like He was raised by the glory of God we, too, have new life. This simple act of water and Word is transformational! Because we died to the legalistic requirements of the law, and now we live for Him! And daily we use our baptism through confession, agreeing with God what He already knows about us, and realizing and trusting that all of our mistakes have been paid for through the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

But, you know God does more than just forgive our sins. You know, that’d be enough. If all God did for us was forgive our sins, we could never have enough time to praise Him for all that He’s done. But God says, “You know what? I’ve got even more for you!” Would you read these words with me – “You might belong to Him who was raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God.”

First of all, now, through that forgiving waters of baptism, God owns us! We’ve been bought and paid for! But we’re not slaves, we’re His children! We’ve entered into a relationship and He allows us the privilege of serving Him. Serving God isn’t something we have to do. Serving God isn’t something that God needs. God doesn’t need anything from us. He gives us the privilege to bear fruit for Him, to live a new life in Christ. Because you see, when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit unto death! You see, either we are enslaved to that old nature into a set of do’s and don’ts; and there’s many religions out there today that are just a bunch of do’s and don’ts, and if you’re following all those regulations, you’re heading towards death.

The sinful nature wants to lead us to death. The sinful nature tries to make sin look so good! But it only destroys. So when we were controlled by that old nature, we were headed towards eternal death and despair. We were living a life of guilt and shame and we had no hope. So is the law sin? What purpose is the law?

Paul says, “No, the law isn’t sin!” The law shows us our sin. The law shows us that we need a Savior! Those who think that they can keep a bunch of regulations and please God are misguided at best. They’re just fooling themselves. Because if you really want to keep God’s law – you know how well you have to keep God’s law? Perfectly. Never ever mess up. Never ever make one mistake. Because the Bible says whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all! The purpose of the law isn’t for us to work our way to salvation. The purpose of the law is to say we need Jesus because we can’t do it ourselves! That’s the purpose of the law.

The purpose of God’s grace and forgiving love is this – that we have been released from the law, so that we can serve in the new way of the Spirit. Our life in Christ isn’t a bunch of have-to’s, and betters or shoulds, or else! It’s a life that is lived by the power of the Spirit. And what does the Spirit do for us?

Well, first of all, the Holy Spirit changes our thought processes. A big word is a “paradigm shift.” It changes our motivation and we ask that the Lord give us what the Spirit desires. That our desires are what the Spirit desires; that our life is to live for Him! Not because we have to, but because we want to. You know I’ve had people say to me “Pastor, do I have to come to church?” Do you know how I answer that question? I say, “Don’t you want to?” The Psalmist says, “I was glad when they said unto me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.” To do what the Spirit desires brings great joy because we want to please our loving God.

You see, we’ve entered into a different relationship. It’s a relationship of a Father/son and an intimate one, whereby we call him “Abba Father.” He’s not just some guy in the sky, or Herr Pater. He’s a

loving daddy, who loves us; whom we trust because He's shown Himself faithful and will never forsake us. That's who we want to serve and then we are given the Spirit, in ever greater measure!

Our life is to bear fruit. What kind of fruit? It's what the Spirit bears. To have that love! Christian love isn't something you can fake. Christian love isn't something you can demand! Sometimes people try to fake it. They're so nice to your face. When people are watching they're so good, but when nobody's watching, watch out! Because they've got the knife in the back and you can't trust them. But to have joy – the Spirit's joy – is something that just bubbles out! The joy of knowing that I'm heaven bound - that on the worst day of my life, the best is yet to come – that I have peace.

How many of us worry? Do you worry? I think a lot of times we worry. There are a lot of things in life to worry about. We can even worry about worrying, because if I worry too much my cholesterol and my blood pressure will go too high and then thphht! I'm gone! Oh! We have that promise of peace because we can cast all of our worries on Him! He cares for us.

And patience. You know how many times I've prayed, "Lord give me patience and give it to me NOW!?" I've actually been able to pray "Lord give me patience, I can wait a little while until you give it to me." I guess the Spirit's working on us. To have that goodness is what the Spirit produces in us, to have that faithfulness, keeping our promises, gentleness, and self-control. But we don't, by the power of the Spirit, don't get out of control. That's what the Spirit brings, and what God wants to do in our lives each and every day! To each and every day know that we can have that newness of life. That each and every day we can grow, by the Spirit's power, not by our own efforts. That each and every day we can experience the grace and mercy of God, who loved us, called us out of darkness, made us His own children, who is our Abba Father, who gives us His Holy Spirit to work in us, to live in us, to change us, to bring the fruits of faith to fruition until life everlasting.

May God's love give you peace and joy, as we live for Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses our human understanding, guard our hearts and our minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.