

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

09/12/2020

Sermon Title: Liberty

Sermon Text: Romans 14:1-12

Pastor Teklu

“A certain pastor was visiting one of his congregation members, and as they were talking, the conversation began to lag. The lady of the house, wanting to pick up the conversation, pointed out her window to her neighbor’s back yard where the wash was hanging on the line. She said: “See that lady next door and the wash she hangs out, see how dirty it is, she never hangs out a clean wash.”

The pastor felt somewhat uncomfortable and tried to change the subject and quickly drew the visit to a close. As he was departing from the house, the lady of the house walked out on the front porch with him, and again the wash next door was clearly visible to both of them. They both realized at the same time that this wash was sparkling white, just as white as any wash could ever be. The truth began to dawn on them that it wasn’t the neighbor’s wash which was dirty, rather it was the window through which they had viewed the wash.”

(epulpit.com by REV. Billy D. Strayhorn, Sep.11,2005)

Like the lady in the story, **we are in liberty to look at others in any window or lens we choose. How clean are your windows? Which window do you pick to look your congregation members with? How clean are your windows you see your neighbors with? With Which window do you look at your faith family? Romans**

chapter 14:1-12 tells us the wrong windows/lenses we should avoid and the right windows/ lenses we need to see through.

The author of Romans, Apostle Paul, enjoyed his Christian liberty to the full. There was no other Christian more thoroughly liberated than him from unchristian inhibitions and taboos. He was emancipated from spiritual bondage. He conformed to the Jewish way of life when he was in Jewish society. He was as cheerfully as he went along with Gentile ways when he was living with Gentiles. Paul writes our option to look through others is the lens of judgment.

The Roman church had a minority of Jewish members. Paul mentions two areas of the Roman church's life where others were looked through the lens/ window of judgement (Verses 1-8). One was food (Verses 1-4), and the other was a religious observance of certain days (Verses 5-8). Some Christians, including Paul, were free about eating any food. Paul calls them strong or mature in their faith. Others had principles about eating certain kinds of foods. Paul calls the immature/ weak believers. Paul and Some believers, the strong believers, also made no distinction between more and less "holy" days. They lived every day as 'sacred to the Lord'. Others/ the weak believers felt that some days were holier than others.

Both sides are members of God's church. Besides, Christians do not live for themselves. (Verses 7-8). They live to the Lord in this life and the next one (Phil.1:20). Even death can't separate Christians from the love of God in Christ (Rom.8: 38-39; 2 Cor. 5:9). Instead, Christians death is an opportunity to show forth the praises of the Lord. Relationship to him is the key to life on either side of the grave.

What is to be done when Christians of such different convictions find themselves in the same fellowship? Must they start to thrash the matter out, one side determined to convert the other? No, says Paul; let each one be satisfied in his mind and conscience. **Those who enjoy greater liberty must not despise others as spiritually immature. Those who have careful principles must not criticize their fellow Christians for doing what they would not do.** Each Christian is the servant of Christ. It is to Christ that each is accountable, both in this life and in the next one. Christ died, and is Lord of the dead; Christ lives and is Lord of the living.

We judge fellow believers and our neighbors by everything else under the sun. We judge people by: their spiritual conviction, their prayer style, lifestyle, understanding of the scriptures, weaknesses, sins/past mistakes, clothing, jobs,

friends, the kind of car they drive, the music they listen to, their hairstyle, their family and even where they live.

We also love jumping to conclusions, don't we? Sometimes that's ALL the exercise some of us get. That's what "normal people do," that is what our culture tells us. However, remember that we're not normal people. We're the abnormal people. We've given our lives to Christ. And through Christ, we're called to live by different standards. God calls us to love each other and treat each other the same, no matter what. God has mercy on us, and He expects us to see others through the lens of God's mercy.

We're not called to live in Judgment House, where doors are locked and secured, where there's no handle on the outside of the door, and you can only get in if somebody lets you in. We're called to live in Grace and Mercy House, whose door is always open, and a welcoming committee is there to greet you. And if they're aren't there when you enter, it's not because you're not welcome, it's because they've gone out in search of others like you who need a place to live.

We are not called to judge others but to have mercy on them (Verse 9-12). We are not called to judge others. We all are all personally accountable to God (Galatians 6:5). Weak believers are prone to judge the strong believers (Verse 10). Strong believers are prone to criticize the weak ones. Both attitudes are the same. They involve improper judgement. Both groups will have to answer to God in the judgment day. It is premature to pass judgement on one another now (1 Cor.4:5). Our judgement is not only premature but also a usurpation of God's role.

Therefore, judging others is not our job. Our Lord Jesus Christ will assume that responsibility. He gave his life, laying it down in obedience to God's will, purchasing the church by his blood (Acts 20:28). He is also the Lord of resurrection. He is the Lord of both the dead and the living. God is the true judge of all of us. His time for judging is coming.

Jesus died and gave us a life of liberty. We are free to eat what we like or what we believe is Kosher. We are free to live every day holy to the Lord or observe a day or

two for the Lord. **Until Jesus Christ comes again to judge all creation, please use the right window to see others. Please see your faith family and your neighbors with the lens of God's mercy.**

Amen!