

Sermon July 3, 2016 - Pentecost 7

Why We Do the Things We Do

Galatians 6:1–10, 14–18



Introduction:

Dear friends in Christ,

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come... from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (Rev. 1:4-6)

In the last several Sunday bulletins you had, and even today, a brief introduction of volunteers, specifically of Council members so that you get to know them some more, and so that you get to know what they do in the ministry of our congregation,

and like those whom you have read about, there are many of you who serve in the congregation in many and various ways. Just like them, there were and are many who gave of their time, talents and resources for the sake of the church.

Now, as they served and as you are serving, we ponder on the why, why do you do what you do?

I’m sure for some it is pure joy serving and not a burden, for others it could be, or could become, depending on the circumstances. But today we are reminded once again that whenever we serve, somebody smiles on you: Your Father in Heaven! But that’s not the reason we serve, there is something else, as we shall see.

So do you do the things you do as a burden? Our Epistle reading this morning helps us to understand that one of the things we do as Christians, is to bear one another’s burdens (vv 1–2). The text commands us to do so: “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

The text tells us that church members, the members of the Body of Christ have burdens, burdens of all kinds. Burdens because of sin, for example. Faithful brothers and sisters in Christ fall into sin and struggling against sin can be a huge burden of guilt.

But that’s not all. Because Christians struggle with other burdens too. They are in need of support and encouragement over troubles at home, a lost job, an illness.

Yet we read in our text that we are to restore these fellow believers in “a spirit of gentleness” (v 1; Phil 4:5; Col 3:12).

That means forgiving them of sins. And also means we are to stand by them in those times of suffering. Obviously, bearing one another’s burdens is a very good thing! It’s “the Christian thing to do.” It’s what we do.

“Brothers,” Paul says, “if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”

Now, “caught” in this case does not mean an “a-ha, I caught you!” moment. We are not responsible for going looking for others’ sins, hoping to catch them doing

something wrong. It is not our duty to police the sinners, to investigate the church members' lives looking for skeletons.

Rather "caught" here means being "trapped" or "entangled". It is what sin does, it entangles us. We get stuck in sin. It's like quicksand. The harder we fight, the worse it gets. The people around us will likely get "stuck" in something they shouldn't. Galatians 5:1 says "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

It is easy to get entangled in sin, but it is our duty to help the erring brother or sister to turn around so that person would receive the forgiveness of Christ. Whatever that sin is, including those sins that entangles some body in addictions.

But why do we do it? Why do we bear one another's burdens? Why do we have to help the one entangle in sin? Because it is what God desires for us to do. Now, if we have done those things, have we done them because we think it's what we have to do as a good Christian or to be a good Christian? That is, do we see bearing one another's burdens as one big burden to us? Or, do we do those things because we want something in return, surely if we help somebody, or serve in the church, we must get something in return, don't you think so?

After all even our text says: "for whatever one sows, that will he also reap." (v 6).

Or maybe do we do it because carrying others' burdens makes us feel good about ourselves: "We're the strong ones. We don't have problems, we don't have addictions, or cave in to temptations, or have family troubles... like they do." So we become condescending.

If that's why we bear one another's burdens, and if that's why we want to restore the fallen into sin, then what we do is not only for the wrong reason, but also it receives a stern warning (vv 3-5). "For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load."

Transition: Okay, so we still agree that bearing one another's burdens is the Christian thing to do. We all know it's what we should do. When we're living out our Christian life, it's just what we do. But we want to do it for the right reason. What is the right reason?

In the case of Galatians, if Salvation is by grace, how then do we live together as sinners saved by grace? Galatians 5 tells us of what things we can expect when the Holy Spirit is in control of our lives. Galatians 6 then flows out of that, to tell us how we relate to one another when we walk "in step with the Holy Spirit"

And the Spirit leads to realize our past first of all, our present condition and leads us to see the needs of those around us.

The Spirit leads us to forgive our neighbor because we wish her or him to be released from guilt of sin, to be forgiven just as we are forgiven, to be saved like we are.

And when we are used to restore somebody else who is in sin, Paul says we are to do it in the spirit of gentleness. Sin is a spiritual matter, therefore it requires a spiritual solution.

Dealing with sin should always have restoration in mind. Dealing with sin is not about punishing the guilty. The priority is reconciliation. Moving toward making things right again- getting that person back to where they should be. Helping the one who has

fallen to the side get back where they belong with God. but how do we do that? Only because of Christ.

We are to listen, to comfort, to counsel others because we want him or her to live in joy and peace of mind, just as you and I are given peace.

That is, our works for others are not to lead us to sinful pride but to humble service (Eph 4:2; 1 Pet 3:8), humble service that stems from the forgiveness of our sins. Because we have been there, because we to are sinners even now, but the difference is that we know where forgiveness comes from.

The fact is the only way we can do what we do for someone else is because of Someone Else Jesus Christ who is our Savior.

By nature, we care only about ourselves, account-ing for ourselves, looking for ways and opportunities to feel good, thinking we are really something.

Feeling pretty proud of the way I bear my own load, pull my own weight, don't need anybody else's help. Earning myself a reward—or avoiding punishment—by fulfilling what I think must be that “law of Christ.”

But that Someone Else, Jesus Christ, has freed us from thinking about ourselves (v 14a). Instead gives a new nature that cares about others no just about ourselves. And now, we focus on the cross of Christ. The cross which was considered a place of defeat (Is 52:13–53:12; Heb 12:2), Jesus turned into a place of victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil (Rom 8:37; 1 Cor 15: 54–57; Gal 2:20).

We do what we do for someone else (our fellow believers) because Someone Else (Jesus Christ) has done what he did for us. Because he has changed us. He changed us into a new creation (vv 14–16).

The old Adam is drowned in our Baptism, and a new man arises (Rom 6:4; Eph 4:22; Titus 3:5). As a new creation, we are renewed, redeemed, restored (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:27) and led by the Spirit. Now our priority is not the world and its pleasures any more, but God's Kingdom.

We now embrace the things of Christ—live a Spirit-led life of loving, bearing burdens, as Jesus has loved us (Jn 13:34–35; Rom 12:10; 2 Cor 13:11). And that's what we reap, heavenly blessings he bestows on us.

So, today dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are a family. God's family, the church. God has brought us together in this congregation, so that we can care for one another. So that we can help restore one another, when one of us goes astray. When one of us in this congregation has a need, the rest of us will be there for that brother or sister to give our help, as we are able. This is a beautiful thing, this church family that we are a part of. This is God extending his care to us, through Christian brothers and sisters doing good to one another.

Remember that God assures us the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus Christ died for you, for your sins, lifting that burden from you, when he carried your bundle of sins on his back to the cross. “Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” Jesus is saying to you today. Lay down that burden of guilt at the foot of the cross. The slate is wiped clean. You are free. Free to help others.

Christ frees you, and he frees you, enabling you to do good works for others. That means also to those outside the church. As children of God, you share in his character, and he is kind and merciful to all. And your works of charity and kindness to

others will bear witness to the love that God has for them. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

We cannot depend on ourselves to do good for others. Our sinful nature leads us into temptation, and sin will rule the day. But we do what we do because of Someone, because of what Christ has done for us in love. In love and empowered by the Spirit, we are crucified to the world and made alive to Christ. In a spirit of gentleness, we restore our brothers and sisters in Christ, bearing their burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ. Amen.