

Who Do You Think You Are

Romans 6:1-14

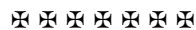
Rev. Brett Shoemaker ~ October 4 2026 ~ Faith Presbyterian Church



¹ What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may increase? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, so we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸ But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, so that you obey their desires. ¹³ No longer present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.
(Romans 6:1-14)



Children's Message - Kids - this is really the start of my sermon this morning, and I want it to begin with you. Mostly because it was a child who taught all of the adults something really important.

So, let me tell you this story.

There was a little boy coming home from a long walk to the market. How do I know he was coming home from the market? Because he had 5 loaves of bread. Way more than he would need for his own lunch. It was for

his entire family for dinner that night. Or maybe one of the loaves was for him to eat for lunch on his way home.

But as he came over the hill, he was ready to cross a field - his favorite shortcut back to his house. But today, in that field by the lake, he saw people everywhere. Hundreds of people. No. Thousands of people. What were they doing here? They were coming from everywhere, and they were listening to something. As he got closer, he saw they were listening to *someone*. When he got to the crowd, he passed a man who was telling everyone who could hear that this man had healed him by the pool after 38 years of not being able to walk. So, he decided to come around back and get close enough to hear what he was saying. By the time he got close, he heard him having a conversation with some friends, it looked like to him. They were kind of - arguing. The man they were listening to said, "Why don't *you* give them something to eat?" They started laughing. Then they realized - he was serious. Well the boy, he kind of felt sorry for these guys, because there was no way they were going to feed them all.

The boy looked down at his five loaves. He thought about his family. He had gone to the market to bring this bread home. His parents would not be happy if he didn't bring it home. Or would they - when they found out? He thought about keeping three at least, and offering them two, but a lot of good that would do.

So, he just did it. He said, "Excuse me?" And he held up those five loaves to them. And one of them, named Simon, got the slightest little smile across his face, like he was trying not to laugh, but at the same time thought it was really cute. But then his expression changed. And he whispered, "You know, I saw something pretty amazing happen at a wedding a couple weeks ago. Thank you." So, he took the loaves, and held them up to the man. "Master! This boy has five loaves of bread! How many could we feed with this?"

And this so-called "Master" said, "Have the people sit down."

You wouldn't believe what happened next.



Prayer of Illumination (Bernice Hopkin's prayer)

*Dear God, please open my mind to your truth,
My heart to your love,
My senses to the beauty you have created,
And my eyes to see your will for my life.
In Jesus' name we ask these things. Amen.*

Today is Commitment Sunday. A day when we commit to pledge a portion of our resources for the work of the church for the coming year. So let me connect this story to a message I preached just two weeks ago on Stewardship Sunday, when we began the process of considering what we would give. In that message I felt like David's prayer of gratitude for the gifts to build the temple challenged us to think about *all* of what we have as God's gift to us that we should prayerfully consider how to use, rather than just the portion we feel we can part with as an offering out of our excess.

This boy didn't seem to count the cost of giving all 5 loaves. He just put it in the Master's hand. If his parents had been with him, I wonder how the conversation might have gone.

Son, you want to share your lunch with all of these people? Okay, first let's count out how much you're going to need to eat. Maybe we can all have a little less today, and share a little more, but let's save a couple of loaves for ourselves.

What? You want to give all of it? Well, actually, it's not really going to go that far. At least we can be fed, and then maybe we can have the strength to go back to the market and see if we can buy some more?

No? You just want to give it all now because you heard about a guy that used to not be able to walk? Oh, it just seems like he might use it in amazing ways? Well, okay. How about at least saving one loaf? Oh, you want to give him the fish you caught this morning, too? Great idea. My kid is generous, but struggles at math.

If your child came to you and wanted to give away their college fund to an organization that helps underprivileged foster kids get a more promising education, how would that conversation go?

Here's the connection to today's passage. Full commitment is hard. We continue to live our lives trusting in our own ability to make ends meet, to bring security, to build our own lives. But Paul says we need to experience a death of our own will, our own desires. He calls it *being baptized into the death of Christ*. Jesus called it losing your life for his sake in order to gain life (with a capital "L"). So, Paul was spending a couple of chapters here leaning in on this truth of the gospel: Jesus would rather not have us counting out a portion of things to give to him. He just wants our heart.

C.S. Lewis said it this way (on the cover): "Christ says, 'Give me all. I don't want so much of your time, and so much of your money, and so much of your work. *I want you.*'"

On this Commitment Sunday, let's remember the boy and his loaves...*and his fish*. The point here isn't to get you to make a last minute change to your pledge and add a little more. Let me repeat what I said a couple weeks ago. Maybe you need to give less money, and less time, and less work - and just give God — *you*...so you can remember that offering isn't about math and compartmentalizing what part of our lives we give to God and part belongs to us. It's all God's.

Okay, enough review.

The last passage we read in Romans 5 left the people sitting with a question. It was the wrong question, but it was an important one because people were actually asking it. They were saying, "Paul, if it's true that the greater our sin that we see in our lives, the greater the grace that we receive, what's to keep us from just going on a sin rampage - so that we can experience more grace? It's all covered, right?"

Paul's response: *You're asking the wrong question! Do you understand what baptism means? Was it only symbolic for you?*

The point of baptism (and the reason we only do it once) is that we claim that our sinful desire to be like God and live our own life *dies* - and is *buried* - deep in the grave along with Jesus, who carried all of what we once were and conquered it. If we get that, then we know that even though sin reigns in this broken world and affects us, *we* are no longer slaves to that sin or suffer its consequences. Our desire is to live lives surrendered to the one who gives us new life to the fullest. It's the other side of the coin.

How many times have I heard non-Christians AND Christians both say: *Okay, how much fun can you have as a Christian? What does God allow? What will God's grace cover? What can I get away with?*

Well, technically, grace covers all of it! But you see, that's not the point. We have been set free from the power that sin holds over our lives. God has given us the opportunity not to just "try and do the right thing, and make good choices" but to live *with* and *for* Christ as our master in this amazing *Resurrected* life even here and now. Paul would say that Resurrection begins now, it begins from the point we stop counting what we're giving to God, and simply offering ourselves to him.

So many times I've heard from young couples entering the dating world who want to follow Jesus. And what's

the question they so often ask: “Physically speaking, how far is too far?” – Where’s that line in the sand?

Guess what, there’s no line. God’s grace extends beyond any and all lines.

But it’s the wrong question! God cares about so much more than that! How about, “Lord, I know you care about so much more than just that part of our relationship. How can I selflessly love and honor this person with my words and time and other friendships and bring all of who we are to honor you as well. Lord, I (or better yet we if you’re doing this together) seek out all of the beautiful things you have for us that I’ve forgotten to be aware of because of my narrow thinking.

So much of our lives, even our Christian lives, might be spent sitting with the wrong question. We’re narrowed down this wide love of God to a list of do’s and don’ts.

As soon as we ask “What can I get away with as a Christian?” or “How much ‘fun’ can I have and still be a Christian?” we’re really asking, “How many loaves can I save for myself?”

We live in a world that puts such a high value on looking out for yourself, of getting what you can out of this life. Carpe Diem! Seize the day! Only keep around things *and even people* that bring you joy. Selflessness and self-sacrifice for others has become equated with weakness and allowing others to steal what we deserve.

Deserve, really? What we deserve is what Jesus got on the cross, if we’re honest. But God in his love, made it possible to die to that power that holds us and to live a new life. This great reversal is called the Gospel. It’s the other side of the coin of dying to self that the rest of the world may never come to know and respect.

You know who would have been the worst motivational speaker of all time? Jesus.

I’ve shared a couple of these before.

The world says, **You have the power to change your attitude and change the world!**

Jesus says: *Blessed are the poor, the meek, and the sad in spirit.*

The world says, **Seize the day, don’t let a moment pass you by!**

Jesus says: *Be still and know that I am God. Come to me and I will give you rest.*

The world says, **Go after your dreams. The world is your oyster. Go get it!**

Jesus says: *Lose your life for my sake to gain it. What good is it to gain the whole world but forfeit your soul.*

Here’s a newer one that I see all over the place: **Be the best version of yourself.** It resonates. It sounds right, doesn’t it?

I know someone who felt called by God to visit a Jehovah’s Witness church one day. Apparently they all knew he was not a Jehovah’s Witness because he was the only one not in a suit. He said, they actually had some really interesting, engaging conversations with people while they were there. At one point during their worship service, they offered this prayer:

Lord, help us to recognize and access the good already inside of us, and make us better.

It sounds good. It sounds like, “Help us to be the best version of ourselves.” But then Paul comes along and says, “Do you not understand what Jesus is saying? He was asking us to die to ourselves and not just be *reformed* but to be *transformed* in full surrender, all we have, all we are.

It’s a little bit like saying maybe a caterpillar really can fly! Maybe it just needs to leap off from a higher branch or thrown up higher in the air. No! A caterpillar, until it dies, will always crawl. It has to go through a process, a metamorphosis, in which it is completely changed into something else. It has no power to make it happen, it just surrenders to it because it’s how it was made.

We were made to be transformed into creatures that fully allow God to remake us and open up possibilities that previously seemed impossible – where thousands are fed from a few loaves, where 1,060 people get water for life because a few people ran a few miles, where relationships are built in the community and people see the love of God shining through.

Since the Fall Retreat, our youth group kids have been putting big questions into a bag, and we’re going through them. One of the questions is:

What does it mean to give your life to God?

That’s the right question. We’re going to talk about it more tonight, we’ll see if any of our youth remember my answer, or have some of their own.

To give your life to God is to pray one certain line of the Lord’s Prayer about 100 times each day and mean it:

Your will be done, Lord. Your will be done. Not just about our offering or pledge, but...

- When you find a \$20 bill you forgot was in your pocket. How should I spend this, Lord? *Your will be done.*

- When we have a choice to make between two conflicting events on our calendar. *Your will be done.*
- All of the small things and all of the big things. *Your will be done.*

I believe that everyday we're going to have a *FIVE-LOAF MOMENT*, when we're going to be standing with something to offer wondering how much we should give to God.

Your will be done Lord. Let us learn from the child. Let us be transformed.

There's a big difference between an "update" and an "upgrade". When an app on your phone asks you to UPDATE, you can usually do that free of charge and it makes some minor changes to make it better. But when it asks you to UPGRADE, be careful, you have to pay for it, usually. But it usually unlocks the full features of what it has to offer. You get rid of the old and you reinstall the new better version.

Dying in Christ is not just a better version. It's a full upgrade - into a Resurrected life. Easy and always perfect? No way. Hardest thing you'll ever do? Probably. Jesus was in the garden before he was killed and begged God to take away the suffering that was coming, then added what...?

Not my will Lord, but Your will be done.

How did that turn out for him? The pain and rejection were intense. But the resurrection was glorious. When we are buried with Christ in our baptism, going into the water, we also rise out of the water, and we take our first breath and realize life will never be the same.

What would a church look like filled with people that were constantly saying *Your Will Be Done*. Then saying, naturally, *Wait! You want me to do what Lord?*

Tony Campolo is a speaker who tells a story about a time he was in Honolulu, Hawaii for a speaking engagement. His jet lag and wonky meal schedule kept him up late, so he found himself in an all-night diner at 3:30 in the morning. A group of women who worked the streets came into the diner after a long night. One of them, whom he calls Agnes, mentioned offhand, that the following day was her 39th birthday. One of the other women responded kind of sarcastically with, *What, you expect us to throw you a party?* Agnes explained that, no, she wasn't asking for anything. She simply had never had a birthday party and of course didn't expect to have one now.

After the women left, this comment stayed with Tony.

So, he turned to Harry, the man who was running the diner whether they came in often. *Pretty much every night*, he said. So, Tony suggested something a little unexpected. *Why don't we throw her a party?*

Harry was all in - he loved the idea. He even offered to bake the cake. So the next night, Tony returned with decorations and put them all over the little diner at about 2:30 in the morning, with a sign that said, *Happy Birthday Agnes*. Word spread, and by 3:15, it was packed with women who knew Agnes.

At 3:30, she walked through the door. Everyone shouted, *Happy Birthday!*

Tony describes Agnes as being completely overwhelmed with emotion. They sang to her, brought out the cake with candles, and she began to cry.

Then, at about the time she was supposed to cut the cake and eat it, instead she asked if she could take it home and show it to her mother. And as they watched, she picked up the cake and carried it out of the diner.

There was an awkward silence. Tony didn't know what to do so he asked if he could pray. So he prayed for Agnes and the other women that were in the diner.

After people left, Harry asked Tony what kind of church he belonged to.

He said, *I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for people like Agnes at 3:30 in the morning.*

What a picture of the Kingdom of God! ¹

We can either talk every week about grace, or we can create a community where grace becomes tangible, and God has a chance to show up because we are giving more than a percentage, we are offering ourselves in ordinary and surprising situations.

Tony was asked what church he belonged to. He might have asked, like the title of this message: "Who do you think you are?"

Who do we think we are? Do we think we are capable of accessing the good inside of us and making ourselves perfect? Are we identified as people with a certain belief system sitting with questions of right or wrong, belief or unbelief, and what we can get away with? Or are we so identified with Christ, buried with him in his baptism, and raised into a life where we might throw a party for someone the world has discarded at 3:30 in the morning?

I'd love for you to wrestle in your life group with the same question the kids are going to talk about with

¹ Campolo, Tony. *The Kingdom of God is a Party* (1990).

their families and that the youth are going to talk about tonight - *What do you think it means to give your life to God?*

In this life with Christ, we are invited to be baptized...
...*just once and only once*, buried with Christ and raised to new life.

We are invited to share the Lord's Supper...

...on a *regular basis* to remember our baptism, to receive the broken bread of Christ's life and death and remember once again.

We are invited to offer whatever five loaves we have...
...*every day* as an outpouring of our thanks for what God has done.

And we are invited over and over in decisions we make:
Thy will be done...
...*in every moment.*

As we consider how Christ wants us to live this new life, we turn to this very table, along with Christians all over the world on this World Communion Sunday, remembering it's not just our community in this one church in the Pocket, we are the church with a capital "C" hopefully sharing Christ's light in every dark corner of the globe. And there are certainly some dark corners, so let's pray for our brothers and sisters around the world as we receive Christ's body and blood this morning. If you profess Christ as your Lord and Savior, come. Receive this gift of grace this morning.

Let's pray together...

Lord's Supper shared.

Amen.

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"THE NEXT STEP"

A Resource for Life Groups and/or Personal Application

1. This has been a difficult couple of weeks for so many people. Take a moment to share where you have needed God's grace.

2. Before you read our Scripture from this week, read the previous passage — Romans 5:18-21. What about these words of Paul are important for understanding today's passage?

3. Does Romans 5:20 give us "permission" or "justification" for a sinful life? Why not?

4. What justifications have we used for our own sin?

5. Read Romans 6:1-14. Is there anything you notice for the first time in these verses?

6. What does it mean to you to be *buried with Christ in his baptism*? If you have been baptized, what does your own baptism mean to you?

7. On this World Communion Sunday, how does the Lord's Supper confirm our new identity established in our baptism?

8. In what ways do you strive for the *best version of yourself*? In light of this passage, how would you answer this student's question: *What does it mean to give your life to God?*

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Table to Table:

Something for kids and adults to consider together

What do you think it means to give your life to God?
Talk about this together as a family.