

Sunday Sermon: June 24, 2018

Sermon Text: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Sermon Theme: Christ's Love Compels Us: It's All About Christ

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

It's a pretty common question that interviewers ask important people, "What motivates you, what drives you to do what you do?" The answer can be many different things.

The athlete might say winning or being the best drives them. The author might say that writing the story that people love drives them. The business owner might say making a product or providing a service for people drives them. The stay-at-home parent might say that raising their children is what drives them.

We all have something inside of us that drives us, or motivates to do what we do. Some of us have a very strong drive to get things done, others have a lesser drive, but we all have that drive.

In the Word of God before us this morning, the Apostle Paul gives us the answer to what motivates the us to live our lives of faith and thanks in this world. He says very simply, It's all about Christ -- Christ's love compels us.

As we look at these verses from 2 Corinthians chapter 5 we will see that our lives are all about thanking our Savior for what he has done for us. The love that Christ has shown to us, motivates us, drives us, compels, us to live our lives in thanks to him.

Any good writer will tell you that the main idea of a paragraph usually comes at the beginning of the paragraph or at the end of the paragraph. There are two thoughts why. Either you lead off with what you want people to know and then you support that idea, or you build the case first and give the big reveal at the end.

Paul has a habit of leading off and ending with the same main idea. Paul was educated in logic and debate. The process of debate was to state the case, support the case, and close with the clincher. That what Paul does here. He begins with wonderful Gospel news and then ends these verses with the same Gospel.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

These two verses are some of the greatest news in the Bible. They are the good news that show us the difference between the God and Savior of the Bible and any other god that has been created by man in wood or stone or on the pages of any other book.

If you were to go down the Las Vegas Strip and ask people how they get to heaven, what would be the most common answer? Probably being good. If you look at the false gods of the Old Testament most of them had the same basic idea. If you were good and pleased your god through sacrifice or actions then your god would bless you with many things here on earth and in the afterlife.

This was also true of the Egyptian gods. If you made the many different gods happy, if you were good enough for them, then you would be blessed with much. If you were bad, you would not be blessed.

The same is true with the false religions we have today. If you are a good Muslim and fast on Ramadan, pray accordingly, make a pilgrimage and so on, you will be good and you will earn blessings from Allah. In the Mormon faith, if you are a good neighbor, if you do your missionary work, if you work for your church, you are good and you have earned heaven by that goodness.

How is that different from the two verses we read? In these false religions who is salvation up to? It is really up to you. These gods are nothing more than gate keepers at an amusement park. They will check to see if you have the proper ticket of begin good to let you in. If you don't have the proper goodness that's your fault.

But Christ is different. Let's read those verses again to see the difference. **For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.** ¹⁵ **And he died for all God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

Who did the work for whom? He died for all, God made Christ to be sin for us, so that we would be righteous, we would be perfect. It is not us who have to strive to reach some goal of perfection or some level of goodness, Christ has loved us enough to take our sin and its punishment on himself, even dying in our place so that we could have the gifts that we do not deserve. This is good news. We don't have to walk up to heaven with our ticket in our hand hoping that it will be the right one. Christ has thrown the gates of heaven wide open for all who believe in him. Through Christ, there is no ticket of goodness, all who believe in him enter freely.

This is good news for sinners like you and me. It certainly shows us what happens after we die, but it is also a life changer here on earth. We know the final chapter of the book of our life, Jesus has already written it for us. Heaven is ours. Every step of this life is merely a step towards the victory that Jesus has waiting for us.

But Paul didn't say, Christ's love is wonderful and nice, he said it was a life changer. He said, **"Christ's love compels us. that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."**

The word compel is a very important word. In our introduction we heard words like drive or motivation. This is the same idea that Paul uses here. It is this love of Christ which loves us enough to lay down his life and forgive our sins that moves us, motivates us, drives us to live our life in a different way.

Without Christ we would be able to live however we would like. We could be the biggest, most selfish, sexually charged, arrogant, angry, greedy person that we want to be. Without Christ, there are no rules, other than the ones we make for yourselves or the ones that society sets.

But with Christ, we are no longer free to live in these sinful ways, we are compelled to live differently. We live not for ourselves and our sinful urges or drives, but we live for Christ. We live to thank and praise him with our thoughts words and actions.

Our life changes completely. This change is in our own personal, private life and in the way that we interact with other people. Paul says: ¹⁶ **So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.** ¹⁷ **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!** The people around us are no longer obstacles to our happiness. They are no longer getting in the way of what I want to do, now they are opportunities. They are opportunities for us to good to others and to let our light of faith shine.

In the Bible, we are told often to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us. We are also told to do good to all people, especially those in the family of believers. We regard no one in merely earthly ways anymore. Because Christ has made us a new creation, our old viewpoint is gone. We put away our anger at others, our selfishness, our greed and we see these people from a heavenly standpoint realizing that there is much more going on in a spiritual sense than we ever knew before. We can and should rejoice that we have brothers and sisters in faith, here and around the world.

Christ has died for you and me and the person across the aisle from you. They too are a new creation as are you. We can and should rejoice with them that heaven is ours and not make their lives miserable by hurting them with thoughts, words or deeds or causing problems and divisions in our congregation. On the other hand, if someone is not a believer, they are an opportunity, a soul to reach out to that they may believe.

We have one lens to view people through and that is the lens of Christ, **All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:** ¹⁹ **that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.** We do not deserve the forgiveness we have been given. We deserve an angry God, but through Christ we are reconciled. It was God who made that peace with us through Christ, it was not us who made that peace. Now we have been given this message of peace to share with others.

Paul says: **We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

It doesn't matter if you are an athlete, an author, a poet, a student, a business owner, a CEO, a stay-at-home parent, or an employee. Christ's love compels us to live our life, first and foremost, to bring glory and honor to his name. We are ambassadors for Christ in this world. We are the carriers of this message that Christ has taken away the sins of the world. We do not have to come up with a new story, or argument, an ambassador simply shares the message they have been given.

We have the good news that Christ has loved and forgiven us and we have the good news that Christ has loved and forgiven others. This is the news that drives us in our lives to live, not for ourselves, but for him who died for us and was raised again.