

**Grace, mercy, and peace are yours in abundance through faith in your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

<sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. **This is God's Word for God's people.**

**Dear Friends,**

I have had any number of people say to me, "If you wake up in the morning, and have a pulse, and can plant two feet on the ground – you know it's a good day." Those actions are indications of life and everyone wants to be alive. Paul, in this portion of scripture, reminds us that God is the one who makes us alive spiritually. He makes us **"Alive in Christ,"** because **"Christ took away our opposition,"** and **"Christ Brings substance to the Old Testament Shadows."**

**I. "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ."** Death certainly is in opposition to life. Many people don't like to talk about death. They would rather talk about life and living life to the fullest – whatever that might mean. The Bible connects death to sin. The Apostle Paul wrote, **"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all [mankind], because all sinned,"** (Romans 5:12). Adam and Eve brought sin into the world at the beginning of time and that sinful nature – that original sin – has been passed down from generation to generation. That is why we are all born, **"in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature."** That original sin has not yet been removed or "cut out," (circumcised) from us and consequently we are born spiritually dead. So how does God make us alive?

Jesus told Nicodemus, **"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again... no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. [sinful] Flesh gives birth to [sinful] flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."** (John 3:3-6). The Holy Spirit, through the water and the Word, works to create life by planting that seed of faith in a person's heart. This morning we saw this miracle of conversion as Lihana was brought to faith through the sacrament of Holy Baptism and that faith brings her spiritual life and the forgiveness of sins. This spiritual life is only possible because of Christ.

**"He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross."** The written code – what we think of as the 10 Commandments – stands opposed to us because it demands what we can't deliver. Yet Christ removed that opposition by keeping the written code perfectly. Christ not only kept the written code – the Law – perfectly but Paul tells us, **"[he]**

**cancelled the written code.”** He did this in the same way you would “cancel” a check. He didn’t just throw it away, he delivered the payment the check demanded. You might say he stamped the certificate of debt for our sins “PAID IN FULL!”

That is possible because our sins were nailed to the cross along with our Savior and in this way the debt was paid in full and thus our enemy, the devil, was defeated. As Satan tries to accuse us of those sins we point to the cross and remind him the debt has been paid in full. Paul tells us that Christ, **“having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”** Jesus not only defeated our enemy but made a spectacle of him by descending into hell and declaring his victory. We point to that victory parade every time we say the Apostle’s Creed. For us, the triumph of the cross was complete when Christ rose on Easter morning to assure us of his victory which we share in through faith.

God’s Word repeatedly reminds us that it is faith in Christ that makes us alive and enables us to share in this victory of our Savior. This faith is a free gift from our God. Paul in his letter to the Romans says, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”** (Romans 3:23-23). His letter to the Ephesians tells us, **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”** (Ephesians 2:8-9). To the Corinthians Paul wrote, **“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”** (2 Corinthians 4:7). In addition to all that Paul wrote, the gospel writer Luke reminds us that, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”** (Acts 4:12). The message is clear. Salvation and life comes to us through the actions of our Savior Jesus and not because of anything we ourselves do.

Yet so many people want to rely on their own works. At the time Paul wrote to the Colossians, there were many false teachers that were trying to emphasize the need for the Old Testament Laws to gain salvation. They judged people by what they ate and drank; by how they kept the Old Testament festivals; and by the way in which they observed the Sabbath Day. They couldn’t ignore what Christ did, but they insisted you needed Christ – plus these good works.

Paul’s reply was pretty simple, **“Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”** Salvation comes through faith in Christ – period.

**II.** While many people focused on the Old Testament Laws, they were a shadow of what was to come. They showed the people how imperfect they were and how much they needed a Savior. The Law still serves that purpose today but as a shadow it has no substance when it comes to our salvation. Jesus Christ is the substance of our salvation.

There are still many people today who would try and emphasize that our salvation is all about what we do and they discount what Christ has done for us. This appeals to our pride because our human nature finds it hard to accept help and our sinful nature entices us to want to participate in our salvation. When we start thinking that way we are chasing shadows.

Have you ever tried to hold onto a shadow? It's elusive and in the end, you have nothing. If we look to good works and the Law to bring us salvation, we have nothing but if we look to Christ Jesus we have everything. He comes to us through his Word and has substance that we can hold onto. We can count on him for our salvation. It is complete – finished – and it is ours through faith. Trying to work your way to heaven might make you feel good but in the end it leads only to a lot of uncertainty and finally to eternal death.

Paul continually emphasizes that only Christ can make us alive. He does this because he wants to make sure we don't miss this message of salvation that shows us how Christ took care of everything that opposes our spiritual life through his perfect sacrifice on the cross, and how he brought substance to the Old Testament shadows by living the perfect life for us. Rejoice in this message of salvation – rejoice in the life the Lord has given you – especially your spiritual life. Amen.