**Cranmer Group Sermon, Worship & Prayers**

**June 21st – The Second Sunday after Trinity**

**‘Dead to Sin; Alive in Christ’ (Romans 6:1-11)**

*Dear Friends,*

*It’s great to be with you this morning, having been – in my case, not just for the first time in a long time, but actually for the first time full stop, in most cases – in many of our beautiful churches this week, as we’ve been able to open them for times of private prayer.
I have really valued these quiet times in God’s presence, praying to Him and waiting on Him. I hope that those of you who have, like me, gone to pray, have found it a real pleasure to be back in our buildings, even if still under very restricted circumstances.*

*It’s been a real pleasure to bump into some of you there (still socially distanced, of course!), as you have been into the churches to pray too. We’ll continue to open each church at the same times each week until further notice – see the blog post of June 14th for details of which church is open when. Thank you so much to all of our Wardens for making this possible – it is hugely appreciated by me and by our Cranmer Group church family.*

*May our loving God bless you greatly this coming week.*

*Yours in Christ,*



**Rev. Tim Chambers
Vicar, the Cranmer Group
Website: www.cranmergroup.org.uk
E-mail: curate@stgilesparish.com
Mobile: 07946 526569**

The Lord be with you **And also with you.**

**Opening Prayers for Father’s Day**

See what love the Father has given us
**that we should be called the children of God.**

You are my sons and daughters:
this day have I begotten you.
**See what love the Father has given us.**

As many as received him,
to them he gave power to become the children of God.
**See what love the Father has given us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
**See what love the Father has given us
that we should be called the children of God.**

Gracious God,

For those fathers who have increased the joy in their families’ lives,
we give you thanks.

For those whose fathers have been a source of hurt and pain,
may their wounds be healed.

For those fathers who are separated from their children,
give them insight and help to parent in whatever ways they can.

For single fathers who struggle to be both parents to their children,
may they find strength and wisdom for their task.

For those who have lost or are facing the loss of their fathers,
may they find comfort in the love that their fathers have given them.

And for those who long to be fathers, bring your hope to troubled hearts, and graciously grant them peace.

And may we all grow in the knowledge of your Fatherly love for us,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
**Amen.**

**The Collect for the Second Sunday after Trinity
(Common Worship)**

Faithful Creator,
whose mercy never fails:
deepen our faithfulness to you and to your living Word,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
**Amen.**

**O For a Heart to Praise My God
Played by Deb Hubbard**

O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free;
A heart that always feels thy blood
So freely shed for me.

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My dear Redeemer's throne;
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.

A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From him that dwells within.

A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine;
Perfect and right and pure and good -
A copy, Lord, of thine.

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart,
Come quickly from above;
Write thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new best name of Love.

Charles Wesley

**Bible Reading: Romans 6:1-11 (New International Version)**

**Read by Pam Loughna**

***Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ***

*1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

*5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

*8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

*11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

**Sermon: ‘Dead to sin; alive in Christ’ – Rev. Tim Chambers**
Last week, we started our journey through the heart of St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans. Romans has a rather unique position in Paul’s letters, in that it’s the only one written to a group of followers of Jesus with whom Paul had had no significant personal contact. In almost all other cases, of the letters ascribed to him, Paul had known personally at least some of the Christians to whom he was writing, and had taught them, and led them, and walked with them, as they grew their fledgling church communities. So Paul’s letters to those Christians – although the teaching in them is really applicable to any location and time, generally address specific issues, either named or inferred, in those communities – the church in Corinth; in Thessalonica; in Ephesus; and so on.

But in the case of Romans, since he didn’t have this sort of close relationship with the Christians of Rome to whom his letter is addressed, St. Paul doesn’t deal with particular problems or challenges that he’d obviously learned these other churches were encountering. Romans, on the other hand, is in many ways a statement of Christian belief; period. In it, Paul sets out a reasoned account of what God has done for humanity in the person of Jesus Christ; of what it is to respond, in faith, and submit to Christ’s call on our lives (what’s known by theologians as ‘justification’); and the consequences of this for us in the way we live our lives - through the work of the Holy Spirit - in the image of Jesus (what’s known, in theology-speak, as ‘sanctification’).

In Romans, Paul articulates what’s distinctive about the Christian life; what difference it makes to our lives, to be a follower of Jesus Christ?

And in our reading this week, I think Paul homes in on what it really means to be a Christian; on the defining feature of the Christian life: the idea of the old self dying, and of us being born into a new life in Christ.

Let’s look more closely at what he says.

First, it’s important to say that where we’re joining Paul today, at the start of chapter 6, is halfway through a conversation. Over the previous few chapters, as we saw last week, Paul’s outlined the immensity of God’s grace, and the sheer depth of his forgiveness and love. And part of this conversation, we encounter the slightly strange question in verse 1 of our reading: “Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?”

God’s grace extended towards us is so extraordinary and so boundless, that maybe there really seems to be no point in living Christ-shaped lives. We’ll all be saved through the grace of God in any case! In fact, the more we do wrong, the more God will have an opportunity to show just how incredible his grace is, because we’ll have even more things which require his loving forgiveness. So why bother in the first place?!

Paul’s having absolutely none of it. Immediately, in verse 2, he exclaims, “By no means!” But interestingly, the reason he gives for us not to behave like that isn’t some sort of moral argument: he doesn’t say that it’s just a bad attitude to have. Instead, he gives a deeply theological reason for why, in reality, it’s actually impossible to carry on living with that attitude if we’re really walking faithfully with Jesus.

I think that “sin” is a deeply unfashionable word to use, in this day and age. It can carry with it all sorts of unhelpful overtones of condemnation, or persecution. But St. Paul talks about “sin” in a more complex way than this. On the one hand, he uses it to refer to the actual things we do wrong. But, on the other hand, he uses the word “sin” to mean a sort of spiritual power that controls us, and controls our eternal destiny, and this is the usage that Paul is using in our passage this morning: ‘how can we, who died to sin, go on living in it’?

What Paul means is that, when we give our life to God and we begin to live in the grace of our Heavenly Father, then sin – in this spiritual power sense - no longer has any more ultimate power over us. Yes, we continue to get things wrong, but the Good News is that this no longer determines our ultimate destiny. The power of God in our lives is greater than the power of sin. We’ve died to the power of sin, and are now living to God.

A spiritual exchange has taken place. We no longer want to treat God’s grace like some cheap commodity, continuing to do things wrong, in the knowledge that we’ll be forgiven, because that sort of attitude cheapens our relationship with God. The reality of our lives is different now that we’re living as Christians. We’ve left one age behind, and entered a new age. By definition, Christians are dead to sin, in this sense: the old has gone, the new has come.

But how has this exchange occurred? How’s the old life died and the new life arisen in us? Quite simply, it’s through our union with Christ, and what he’s done for us on the cross. As Paul says in verses 3 & 4, “don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

I remember when I was about 16, I guess, going with the scouts to the National Watersports Centre at Holme Pierrepont. I’d done a fair bit of canoeing before, but never on anything like the white water course there. I suppose there was an air of inevitability about it, that even after a good start, I couldn’t manage to keep facing downstream sufficiently. I found myself spun through 90 degrees, and pulled down into one of the course’s ‘stopper’ waves, flipping over completely, and being held under by the water’s churning motion. I’m sure it seemed far longer than it actually was that I was held down, but I still have an intense memory of desperately struggling free from my canoe underwater, and bursting up into the cold, bright sunlight, gasping with relief.

Baptism in the early church was in many ways - symbolically and physically - not dissimilar to my canoeing experience. Infant baptism was only practiced in a very limited way, and adults converting to Christianity went through an extended time of spiritual preparation, during which they were often kept in darkened conditions. The sense of communion with Christ in baptism was emphasized even more strongly by having the ceremony itself on Easter Day – just as Jesus rose from the tomb, so the new believers, dressed in white robes, emerged from darkness, via the baptismal waters, up into the light, joined with Christ.

This is the spiritual exchange in practice: we’ve become united to Jesus Christ. His death becomes our death and his new life becomes our new life. It’s nothing we’ve earned or achieved ourselves; Jesus has done this for us. If we unite ourselves to him, then his death becomes ours and his resurrection life becomes ours too and so, like Christ, we can live in the presence of God. We can live, not just this Father’s Day, but for all eternity, as daughters and sons – like Jesus himself! - of our Heavenly Father. That is the grace of God at work in our lives.

So does that mean that becoming a Christian is somehow just about ‘securing a place in heaven’? Absolutely not! In verse 4, Paul writes that “…We too may live a new life” – that is, God intends that living in his grace should absolutely impact how we live out our everyday lives. The more we rely on the grace of God in our lives, rather than trying to live in our strength, the more we have a new way of relating to the world, becoming Christ-like in the love, kindness and compassion of our daily interactions with others. Resurrection life is what you and I walk in every moment of our lives here on earth, in the here and now.

Paul goes on in verses 7 and 8: “anyone who has died, has been set free from sin. Now, if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” That’s to say, as Christians, we have a new way of relating to the world, and to one another - we ‘live with him; with Christ.’

And living with Christ means being governed by the same principles that governed Jesus Christ’s interaction with those whom he met.

Like Christ, we’re to be motivated by justice. Some of you will know about – and indeed some of you will have participated in – the vigil that was organized in Orston this last Thursday evening, in support of the Black Lives Matter movement; calling for justice for George Floyd, and an end to racial discrimination and violence in all its forms. ‘Living in Christ’ in our world means standing up for, and standing alongside, those against whom our social, political and economic structures are unequally weighted, that they may be valued & treated as men, women & children who are all equally made in God’s image too.

Like Christ, we’re to be motivated by social justice. Like Christ, we’re to be motivated by kindness. Like Christ, we’re to be motivated by hospitality and the welcome of others. Like Christ, above all, we’re to be motivated by the love and compassion he showed to all.

The question we all need to ask ourselves is this: “Have I died with Christ? Have we, as a church family, died with Christ? Have I, have we, died to the spiritual power of sin, and have we accepted new life in Jesus Christ, fully into our lives?

If we have, then the old has gone and the new has come. And if that is true of us, then we shall surely live with and in Christ, standing for his justice and mercy, and showing kindness and hospitality, compassion and love to all with whom we have contact, in whatever way, throughout our lives. This is the mission of God to which we are called.

And once we truly grasp this, there will be no turning back for us, just as there was no turning back for the resurrected Christ. There is no turning back for Jesus: he died, was raised to new life, and cannot go back into death again. We too have died with Christ, and been raised to new life with him. Dead to sin, alive in Christ, there is no going back…

In his holy name, Amen.

**Intercessions
Led by Sarah Hadfield**

Let us pray….

Lord, we pray for our churches, our nation, our world and our communities. Lord, we pray that you look after all the people in your churches throughout the world. We ask that all religions can work in harmony together. We pray for those working in areas where it is hard to be a Christian, and we thank you for all those who spend their lives helping others to find you. We are so grateful that we can use our churches for private prayer, and look forward to the time when churches will be open, and we can pray together as a congregation.

Lord,
**Hear our prayer.**

We recall the racism riots after George Floyd was murdered. Lord, calm the frustration that many people have felt, and we pray that genuine change may result from the anger that many people are feeling. We pray that we would be able to stand up and speak out about prejudice to people of colour. Lord, help us deal with this problem with justice and decency.

Lord,
**Hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for all leaders and politicians who are having to make difficult decisions about all the problems with the Coronavirus. People want to get back to a normal life, but there are many factors to consider. Lord, help us to tolerate our daily challenges.

Lord,
**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our communities which are broken – we cannot visit neighbours and friends. We remember before you all those who are lonely, desperate, frightened, ill and grieving. We pray for those who have lost loved ones, and we especially think of those who have had urgent operations or treatments postponed. Put your comforting arms around them, Lord; help them through their problems; and give them your light, to dispel their darkness.

Lord,
**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves. Thank you for our families and friends. We look forward to the time when we can see them, without being constrained by rules and regulations. Keep them safe, Lord, and in these hard times, help us not to dwell on doubt and fear, but trust in your loving-kindness.

We pray for the Cranmer Group of parishes. We give thanks for our beautiful villages, and for all those people who support their communities in so many ways.

And finally, we pray that you guide our steps along your way, however hard and uncertain the road. Enable us to witness to you not only in what we say, but in what we think and do.

**Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer**As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

**The Collect for the Second Sunday after Trinity
(Book of Common Prayer)**

O Lord, who never failest to help and govern them who thou dost bring up in thy stedfast fear and love: Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
**Amen.**

**Lord, for the Years
Played by Deborah Davies**

Lord, for the years
Your love has kept and guided,
Urged and inspired us,
Cheered us on our way,
Sought us and saved us,
Pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years,
We bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word,
The word of life which fires us,
Speaks to our hearts
And sets our souls ablaze,
Teaches and trains,
Rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word,
Receive your people's praise.

Lord, for our land
In this our generation,
Spirits oppressed by
Pleasure, wealth and care:
For young and old,
For commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land,
Be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, of our world
Where men disown and doubt you,
Loveless in strength,
And comfortless in pain,
Hungry and helpless,
Lost indeed without you;
Lord of the world,
We pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, of ourselves,
In living power remake us
Self on the cross
And Christ upon the throne,
Past put behind us,
For the future take us;
Lord of our lives,
To live for Christ alone.

Timothy Dudley-Smith

**A Closing Blessing**

God the Holy Trinity
make you strong in faith and love,
defend you on every side,
and guide you in truth and peace;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you & remain with you always.
**Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**