



Daily Faith Practices

Sunday, June 19-25 (A) – Romans 6:1b-11

Focus: *Walk in the Newness of Life*

word of life

“Therefore we have been 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 too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4 NRSV)

Read Romans 6:1b-11

The Apostle Paul has a fond habit in his writing of raising rhetoric questions followed by a sharp rebuttal. This passage in Romans begins with a classic example of this writing technique. Paul asks, “What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?” (Romans 6:1-2 NRSV)

1. *How would you respond to Paul’s question concerning continuing in sin so that God might have something to do—extend grace?*
2. *How do you explain people who call themselves Christians but don’t try to live as Christ?*

Paul understands the Christian life as a radical encounter with death. The death of Jesus on the cross changes all things and makes all the difference. Lives are transformed. A new creation comes into being from death. But for Paul, it is more than death; it includes being buried with Christ. It is about death as well as burial, so that clearly new life comes only by the grace of God.

The question is raised by Paul, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been 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 too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4 NRSV) This passage is the only reference to baptism in the book of Romans, but it is critical.

3. *Describe what it means to walk in newness of life.*

Baptism unites us with Christ in his death and his resurrection. “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will be certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” (Romans 6:5 NRSV) This passage is often read at funerals, for it gives us hope. There is something beyond the grave.

Paul does not fill his letter to the Romans with fluff and casual chatter. Instead, he calls and commissions followers of Christ to claim this newness of life extended through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The old self has died in baptism. Sin and death no longer have dominion. Thus, it is inconceivable to Paul how a person who has been changed by the death of Christ could remain unchanged.

4. *How does life change when we follow Christ?*
5. *Is it easy or difficult to walk in the newness of life provided by Christ? Explain your answer.*

Followers of Jesus are expected to live changed lives. No longer enslaved to sin, we can choose to live in new ways—the ways of Christ. Is it easy? Certainly not! Is it obvious? Certainly not! The ugly power of sin lays claim on us with each breath. But we are not alone in our struggles to walk in the newness of life provided by Christ. God’s grace shall be sufficient for the journey. God’s gift of the body of Christ shall provide encouragement. We can remind each other of being united once and forever with Christ in our baptism. Thanks be to God!

Word among us

At 85-years young, E.J. would wake at 5:00 am to prepare for an early morning walk. She yearned to meet the dawn of each day. As she walked and looked at the sun on the horizon, E.J. would say to herself (and any companions who dared to wake up so early), “Oh, what a wonderful day to be alive!”

1. *When you woke this morning, what did you say?*
2. *What might God have in store for you today?*

Paul uses the image of walking in a newness of life as a way to describe the journey of a Christian. This simple imagery is easy to understand. Infants can't walk until their legs are strong enough to hold up their bodies. It takes time for infants to learn to balance their upper body on their small feet. But the joy of a toddler who learns to walk is contagious.

Hopefully, we learn to walk in the newness of life provided through Christ. It takes a certain maturity of faith to grasp the gift of new life given to us in baptism, but maturity of faith is not about a chronological age. Children have the capacity to receive the gift of God's grace with such beauty, grace, and zest. Sometimes as we age, we can become tired and burdened by life. As we age, it can be a struggle to walk in the newness of life.

3. *What lessons about faith have you learned from children?*
4. *In your own life, was it easier to walk in the newness of life when you were younger or now?*
5. *What prevents us from walking in the newness of life today?*

Paul reminds us that as Christians we are not to be walking dead and going through the motions of life. Our time on this earth is more than eating, drinking, and sleeping. Life is more than passing a good time (a phrase used in Louisiana). Life is also more than the burdens and challenges we encounter on earth.

6. *What might you say to someone discouraged about life?*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

Paul writes powerful words in Romans 6 as he reminds Christians of the first century (as well as Christians today) of the radical act of baptism uniting the baptized with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. “Therefore we have been 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 too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4 NRSV)

We can proclaim that good news through our words and actions. By the grace of God, we are changed. It is the opportunity of a lifetime to live out that change each day of our lives.

7. *What (and who) inspires you to walk in the newness of life?*
8. *What do you do each day to help you remember to walk in the newness of life in Christ?*

Prayer

God of the universe, you have claimed us in baptism and made us your own. Help us to daily walk in the newness of life provide by you. Amen

last word

Each morning, slowly take five steps and claim the newness of life.

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