

We Are The Lord's

This is the final sermon I will be giving here. As I thought about that, I wanted to leave you with a message of hope to carry with you.

The verses that came to mind for me were from Romans 14:7-9:

“We do not live to ourselves and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.”

That is the message I want you to hear today. Whether we live or die, we are the Lords.

When you have been preaching at a church this long, it is hard not to repeat somethings I have often said before.

I have been here for 37 and a half years. I have been in ministry for 43 years, ordained in the summer of 1978.

I have no regrets about all those years of ministry.

The one year I will never forget was 2012. That year I conducted 46 funerals and 15 weddings. I remember having a phone conversation with my brother Charles during that time who was also a former pastor. He said, “Don't get burned out with all of that.” He was always a very supportive pastor and brother.

As I was going through things emptying out my office which I am still not quite done with, I came across a story in a sermon I preached at my brother, Charles' ordination anniversary in Holmen, Wisconsin.

A woman woke her husband up from sleep one Sunday morning and said, “it's time to get ready for church”.

Her husband said, "I'm not going ." His wife said, "what do you mean you're not going?"

He said, "I'm not going." She said, "oh yes, you are."

He said, "give me a reason why I should go."

She said, "I'll give you three reasons. First of all, you need it. Secondly, you're not sick and are able to go. And third, you're the pastor."

Hopefully, that will not be a discussion for Mary and me.

One thing I hope you have often heard from me is what is called the Unconditional Address of the Gospel.

That is something that was drilled into my head during seminary, especially from Dr. Gerhard Forde.

At what was called a matriculation interview which was held at the end of 2 years of seminary before internship, I was interviewed by Dr Forde and my advisor, Dr. Harrisville. Dr. Forde asked me, "what are your strengths for ministry?"

I said I like people and I like preaching. He said, "So what are your weaknesses?"

I said, "Probably preaching and relating to people." And they got a big laugh out of that.

I needed to hear the good news of the Gospel.

I remember just sitting on the edge of my chair in class and hearing that unconditional love and grace coming from Dr. Forde.

He would say, "There is nothing you have to do or can do to be saved. It is all a gift."

If that doesn't free you up, nothing does.

We all know we are not perfect. We sin. We make mistakes. We are not able to live perfect lives.

Even though, I was taught things in my confirmation like, it is a sin to dance. I never understood that and played in a dance band for 3 years in college. After all, dancing was part of the celebrations in the Bible.

Dr. Forde said things like, "So, since there is no way, since the law is no remedy for sin, God has decided to start over, to do something only God could do, to create something new---to show a righteousness completely apart from the law, sending Jesus into this world under the law, to die at our hands, and to raise him up."

This is the GOOD NEWS I WANT EVERYONE TO HEAR, "God decided to start over with Jesus." "You are JUST for Jesus' sake! It matters not whether you think you need it." "It is the Word of God."

God says, "YOU ARE MY CHILD, I LOVE YOU, I WILL NEVER LET YOU GO."

As Dr. Forde would put it, "There is nothing for you to do but just listen. Believe it, it is for you! It will really reform your life!"

So today, you might ask the question, Who Am I?

Here is the answer written in the book of Romans, "Whether you live or whether you die, YOU ARE THE LORD'S.

Always remember that and carry that promise with you.

For all these years, it has been great to be part of the Trinity Church family and to share in the gift of faith God gives us. GOD BLESS YOU ALL. THANKS BE TO GOD! AMEN