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Reformation Sunday  
Sermon Series: HSL- Life Together  
Sermons  
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## ROMANS 3:19-26; 5:20- 6:11- ONE PEOPLE IN CHRIST BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH, TESTIFIED BY THE SCRIPTURES

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! For the next few weeks in Worship we are focusing upon the theme **HSL- LIFE TOGETHER**. We will be examining two basic questions: **“Who are we?”** and **“What does our life together look like?”** So if you have been a Lutheran for a while, you’re a new Lutheran, or if this is your first time in a Lutheran congregation, all of you will have something to learn, think about, and perhaps act upon.

So who are we here at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church? First of all we are **“One People Forgiven In Christ.”** We are sinners who have been cleansed and called to be disciples of Jesus Christ through Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:16-20). We are a chosen people of God, a royal priesthood, saints of God by faith, members of Christ’s body the Church. We are God’s little flock in the world that holds fast to the apostolic preaching and teaching of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, for the forgiveness of sins and the promise of the resurrection of the body to life everlasting.

Now it is true there are many who believe and are baptized into Christ Jesus who are not Lutherans in the world. But when we say we are Lutherans, we are confessing to the world that we are Christians, that we believe and are baptized into Christ, that we are God’s little flock that holds fast to the apostolic preaching and teaching of Christ, that we are in fact members of the “One People Forgiven In Christ” which transcends all times, cultures, peoples, and places. It is precisely in this sense that Lutherans are “catholic” or universal. Though the Church of Christ seems divided by space, time, culture, languages, organization, and a host of other differences, nevertheless the Holy Spirit keeps the Church one in Christ, just as He calls and keeps each of us in Christ. In one sense this “One People Forgiven In Christ” is hidden from our eyes, since none of us has the ability to look into another’s heart and mind and find faith in Christ; but in another sense this “catholic” Church of Christ is sure to found wherever the Gospel is taught purely and the Sacraments administered rightly (AC VII); for through preaching and teaching of the Gospel and through Baptism and the Lord’s Supper God is at work to give and preserve faith in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of sins (AC XIII).

God forgives sinners and draws them to Christ through the Gospel, the evangel, the good news. God gives sinners comfort, peace, and hope through the Gospel. God

makes those who are dead in sins and transgressions alive through the Gospel. St. Paul says in *Romans 1:16-17*, *“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”*

Lutherans are bold in confessing that it is through the Gospel, the evangel, that God makes sinners to be part of the “One People Forgiven in Christ” and it is in this sense that Lutherans are “evangelical” Christians. The Holy Scriptures teach that eternal salvation, the forgiveness of sins now and in eternity and the raising of our bodies to everlasting life, is completely the work of our Triune God to the exclusion of any and all work or effort by man. In order to summarize this central teaching of Scripture and properly refocus the Western Church upon it, Martin Luther and the other reformers succinctly believed, taught, and confessed that, **justification (God’s declaring a sinner to be righteous or forgiven) is by grace (undeserved favor) for the sake of Christ (because of His life, death, and resurrection) through faith (trust) in Christ alone.**

Contrary to much thinking today and in ages past, Christianity is not chiefly about Christians keeping God’s law; it is not about us doing the Ten Commandments. God certainly wants us to keep His law and commandments, but Christianity is all about Christ, about how God has acted in Christ to forgive and save sinners; it is about Christ’s work not ours.

This is fact what St. Paul is saying very clearly in *Romans 3:19-26*: *19 But we know that whatever the law says to those in the law it speaks, in order that every mouth might be silenced and all the world might be guilty before God; 20 therefore from the works of the law not any flesh will be declared righteous before Him, for through the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been revealed, which is being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 but the righteousness of God is (revealed) through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and are lacking the glory of God 24 they are being declared righteous freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood (received) through faith for a demonstration of His righteousness on account of the passing over of the sins previously committed 26 in the forbearance of God, toward the demonstration of His righteousness in the present time, in order that He might be righteous and declare righteous the one from faith in Jesus.*

God’s law, His commandments, are good and holy, because God is good and holy. God’s law expresses to people the way God expects us to live in relation to Him and in relation to other people. God’s law may be summarized in this way: “Fear, love and trust in God above all things” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” God expects that people as His creation are to keep His law completely, to perfection, inwardly (in regard to our will, thoughts, and feelings) and outwardly (in regard to our actions). God’s command is clear we are to love one another; we are to serve our neighbor; we are to look after the needs of those who cannot serve themselves. We are to fear, love, and trust in God at all times; we are to order our lives according to His will and not our own.

But time and time again we do not! We may seem to keep God's law some of the time, outwardly in regard to our neighbor (by not murdering someone etc.), but we have failed to keep God's law in every way (inwardly as well as outwardly). As I have told many people in catechism instruction, "if you break even one of the simple commandments that govern our relationships with other people, then you have in fact broken God's First Commandment, to have no other gods by doing your own will instead of God's, thus you are guilty of breaking all of the Commandments."

The truth is we are all sick with sin; we are sinful; we are sinners; because we are sinful we act out in specific sins; because we are sinful we get sick and die; because we are sinful we can not keep God's law. This is what St. Paul means when he says, <sup>23</sup> "for all have sinned and are lacking the glory of God." This is the sinful human condition since the Fall, because of the disobedience of Adam. Thus God's law acts as a mirror and shows us our true condition before God. God's law does not forgive us or encourage us, rather God's law holds us guilty and condemns us as sinners before God.

But apart from the law, God has justly and righteously dealt with our sinful condition and evil. According to God's mysterious and wonderful promises He has revealed His righteousness in the broken, humiliated, and dead body of His Son Jesus Christ upon the cross. The death of Jesus Christ is the redemption, the price God paid to deliver us from our captors, sin, death, and the devil. The body of Jesus lifted up on the cross with blood shed is God's demonstration of righteousness to all; Christ Jesus is the blood offering, the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world (this is what propitiation means).

You see, God killed and judged sin in the body of His sinless Son Jesus upon the cross. God poured out the just condemnation and punishment for sin that we properly deserve upon His innocent Son Jesus Christ, who willingly laid down His life for us that we might live! Thus God is just (dealing with sin and evil) and yet God is gracious and merciful for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ to forgive sins to declare sinners righteous who trust in Jesus. <sup>24</sup> they are being declared righteous freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood (received) through faith for a demonstration of His righteousness on account of the passing over of the sins previously committed <sup>26</sup> in the forbearance of God, toward the demonstration of His righteousness in the present time, in order that He might be righteous and declare righteous the one from faith in Jesus.

Christ Jesus is the core of who we of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church are and He is also the basis of our life together. Apart from Christ Jesus, apart from His life, death, and resurrection, there is no life but only death. But in Christ Jesus God is gracious to forgive us for all our sins; Christ's righteousness far exceeds and covers the worst of our sinfulness. St. Paul writes in Romans 5:20-21: <sup>20</sup> And the law came, in order that the trespass might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded, <sup>21</sup> in order that just as sin reigned in death, in this way also grace might reign through righteousness for eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God has called us to believe in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins through the Gospel, the evangel and through that same Gospel, He keeps us in Christ. Truly we are **"One People Forgiven In Christ, justified (declared**

**righteous/forgiven) by grace for the sake of Christ through faith in Christ alone.**

But what of our daily life together? Is our life together in Christ to be marked by sin and evil since God's grace in Christ overcomes them? Should we follow the advice of Rasputin, who told married women that they should sleep him because this increase of sin would abound in more grace for them and draw them closer to God? Should we give ourselves over to lawlessness and evil of every kind? To this the Apostle Paul answers:

1 Therefore what shall we say? Shall we remain in sin, in order that grace might increase? 2 May it never be! Whoever died to sin, how yet shall we live in it? 3 Or are you ignorant that, as many were baptized into Christ Jesus, into His death we were baptized? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through Baptism into, death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, in this way also we might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united to the likeness of His death then certainly we shall be united to the likeness of His resurrection; 6 because we know that our old man was crucified with Christ, in order that the body of sin might be abolished, no longer are we enslaved to sin; 7 for the one who died has been declared righteous from sin. 8 And if we died with Christ, then we believe that also we will live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ was raised from the dead no longer will He die, death no longer lords it over Him. 10 For He died, to sin He died once for all; but He lives, He lives to God. 11 In this way also you, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin but living to God in Christ Jesus.

Our life together in Christ is not to be marked by giving ourselves over to our sinful lusts and desires of the flesh; it is not a life of lawlessness. Rather our life together in Christ is marked daily by Christ's death and resurrection and by our death and resurrection in Christ through Baptism. The old man along with all his fleshly, selfish, and evil desires has been crucified with Christ and must die daily that a new man in Christ might rise who lives to God as Christ lives to God. According to the new man/woman in Christ we are now free to love and serve our neighbor and to fear, love, and trust in God above all things, because Christ has set us free.

Our life together in Christ is lived under the cross of Christ; we are weak, but He is strong. Not one of us was made to live on our own. We have not been forgiven in Christ so that we can just go our own day by day. On our own we are weak and powerless to stand against the evil one and the temptations of our flesh. We need our brothers and sisters in Christ to remind us of Christ, to remind us of the Gospel. We need encouragement to stay in God's Word. So week after week we gather together in Christ under His cross to receive all we need from Him; Christ gives the forgiveness we need and frees us to love and serve one another according to the various ways He has gifted us.

So who are we? **"One People Forgiven In Christ."** What does our life together look like? A life of weakness, struggle, and temptation; a life of humility, thanksgiving, love, and service; but above all a life of trusting Christ together. In the weeks to come we will examine more what HSL- Life Together looks like. Today it is clear that our life together is centered and focused upon Christ Jesus, who according to God the Father's will lived, died, and rose for our salvation Amen.