

Romans 6:12-23

Passage for homily: Romans 6:12 – 23

You are second in the line at the supermarket checkout. The gentleman in front of you is proving not to be a gentleman. The young work experience girl on the checkout keeps making mistakes. His fuse starts to burn. “Why do they employ these incompetents?” He shouts to anyone who will hear. Through a veil of tears the young girl processes his card and the guy stomps off shouting.

A large queue has gathered behind you and choking back more tears she processes your things and you hand her a \$100 note. She passes you your change and you too walk out the door. It’s only when you get to your car that you notice she has not only given you your change but mistakenly included an extra \$20.

As one of Christ’s people what will you do? What thoughts go through your mind?

In our epistle reading from Romans chapter 6 today the apostle Paul spells out for us two important principles applying to every decision we make. Small or big, affecting many people or just ourselves, privately or publicly made, no matter what kind of decision faces God’s people these bedrock principles are our guide.

First, however, he shows us **the glorious reality behind being God’s people.**

That reality is: we have God as our Master. Look in the very last verse of our passage. *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)*

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Eternal life - another phrase for a forever relationship with God - is not something we earn.

We do not deserve it. We cannot earn it. We cannot please God so that he must give it to us. No - it is a free gift. A free gift of God because of Jesus. A free gift of God because Jesus has paid for it with his death so that it may be free, without cost to us.

Our culture thinks there is no such thing as a free lunch. And so as long as you try to be good God will smile on you. God will accept you.

This is a grave misunderstanding when this passage tells us that God's acceptance of us is entirely a free gift. It costs us nothing.

The Christian gospel, as the Thanksgiving prayers in our communion service remind us does not say: "do!", but rather "done!"

The Great Thanksgivings say things like this:

"he is the true Passover lamb who was offered for us. By his death he has destroyed death, has taken away our sin and the sin of all the world, and has reconciled us to you, Father, and to one another. By his rising to life again he has brought us into new and everlasting life."

In other words we have God as our Master.

We move on and see that this reality applies in all our decision-making in these ways:

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1. Sin is no longer your master – God is.

In verses 12 - 14 we read that we are dead to sin being our Master and alive to God. That we have been brought from death to life. And it finishes like this: “for sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

Sin is no longer our Master. We owe sin nothing. Much as it may try to convince us otherwise we are now on God’s side and this matters immensely.

Think for a moment. Think about the last State of Origin clash. Try to think about it without smiling. Think about that last try that Dane Gagai scored and the match was then won by Mr Thurston’s boot.

Imagine if Dane had received the ball, stopped, and then run to the opposite end of the field to score his try there. His speed was phenomenal. His landing was spectacular. And there was not a defender in sight. Because he scored on his own try line.

The commentators go berserk. Coach and players are fuming. Finally Kevin Walters controls himself enough to say why? Why did you do that?

And Gagai simply says, “I wanted to score a try at the other end. I wondered what it would feel like.”

“Mate, you are not free to do that. It’s not all about you. Either you are for us or you are against us. Queensland is your master”

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Corny and stupid illustration. But, you know, the imaginary thoughts going through Dane's head in that silly story are the kind of thoughts that go through our minds when we are tempted to sin.

"It doesn't matter."

"I just feel like it."

"No one else knows."

"It's not going to affect anyone, is it?"

And this one especially: "I'm already fully forgiven. I am no longer under law but under grace."

As we read in verse 15: "what then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?"

No no no no no no no. By no means!

Because sin is no longer your master. Now we have eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, he is our Master. He is our Lord.

And here's a second principle.

2. Sin has nothing to offer – God does.

Running through the whole of this passage is a link between sin and death. As we have seen in the last sentence of the passage, "the wages of sin is death."

That's all it has to offer.

No matter how attractive its offers may appear, no matter how reasonable its opportunities may seem, no matter how secret its committal may look,

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the offer is empty. As the Bible says elsewhere “there is a way that seems right to people, but that way is the way of death.”

In our better moments we realise that keeping that \$20 will mean the young girl who has already suffered much at the hands of a rude customer will either get the sack or have to make up the shortfall herself.

In our better moments we realise that stealing stationery from work destroys trust.

In our better moments we realise that secretly watching porn destroys our view of God’s wonderful creation of the other gender.

In our better moments we realise that cheating in exams only puts off the inevitable discovery that our knowledge is deficient.

In our better moments we remember that greed destroys families and nations.

And in our better moments we realise that sin does matter.

It only brings suffering and death. It has nothing to offer.

I want you to remember says the apostle, and not only to remember but to demonstrate in every decision that you belong to God. That sin is no longer your master. That sin has nothing to offer.

That God is our Master.

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That God has everything to offer, and has offered us and has promised us it all in Christ Jesus. Remember that!