

## “Coming Alive - Offer Yourself”

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Romans 8:10-11; Romans 6:12-23

Graphics: Coming Alive, cross and tomb

Big Truth: The Good News is that we are alive in Christ forevermore. Faith in the death and resurrection of Christ gives us everlasting life. Yet, our experience now is sometimes less than. The past few months have felt more like death than life. Yet, Jesus is still alive and calls us again to come alive in Him every day. Coming Alive by the Spirit in us is the call of the disciple of Jesus.

Focus phrase: The trajectory from death to life is sanctification through struggle and prayer.

### 1. Introduction

#### A. PRAY!

- B. Romans 8:10-11 gives us THIS incredible promise: “...if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.”
- C. **That’s** what it means to Come Alive! From death to life. From sin to righteousness. The trajectory of the Christian life is to always be moving from sin to no sin...from death in sin to life in Christ.
- D. And it’s not just for everlasting life, which is such a precious and hopeful promise Jesus gave to everyone who believes in and follows Him. And it’s not just figurative or aspirational.
- E. That promise - that life HE gives - is for TODAY AND forever for REAL!
- F. Last week, we talked about how **baptism** is the public mark - the doorway - to a new life in Christ.
- G. But just like crossing a threshold into a house doesn’t mean you know everything about the house, entering the Christian life - an everlasting life, mind you - has a beginning...and yet there’s so much to be learned, experienced, received, and lived out from there...for the rest of your life.
- H. The trajectory of our lives as Christians is the process of growing spiritually mature as we follow Jesus closer and closer. And, here’s a clue for us: we never fully get there...we never reach perfection. And if we never reach perfection in this life, then we ALWAYS have more to learn and do...to struggle with and pray about.
- I. We started this series by admitting that we’re dead in our sin, because sin is a part of life. **But God** made a way. That WAY is Jesus, the **One Man**, who we lifted up in week 2. Last week, we found out that the One Man, Jesus, IS the

WAY because he died and rose again, **Once for All**. If you missed any of those messages, you can go back and watch those on Livestream or FB.

- J. To summarize the Good News of Jesus in one sentence based on Romans 5 and 6: We are dead because of sin, but God sent Jesus, the only one who could rescue us, and he died and rose again once for all. The Good News, church!
- K. So, now, because we know that, the rest of this series will be spent on our RESPONSE to that Good News.
- L. Today, we start with the beginning - Offering Ourselves...offering yourself... to the transforming work that God wants to do IN you (camera), yes, even YOU, so that the **trajectory of your life** in Christ is one of **growth** from today until the day Jesus comes back or calls you home.
- M. Let's open our bibles to Romans chapter 6, starting in verse 12. We will read 12-14 and then 15-23.
- N. Paul started with a 'Therefore' here in verse 12...he was pointing to verse 6:11 which we read last week, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Therefore...

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ ROMANS 6:12-14

- i. As much as Paul wasn't really talking about what the Christians in Rome were DOING in the previous section, he IS here in this next section.
- ii. This whole passage is about choosing to do the things that God has commanded them to do.
- iii. Because we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ - saved by grace through faith - we don't let sin have control of your mortal bodies. Paul was talking about the actual things the people were doing - maybe sexual sin, getting drunk, greed, lying, stealing, and on and on.
- iv. If those types of sins are in your life, Paul says, then they are making you obey their passions. Those sins were such a strong force in their lives...and in Paul's no doubt.
- v. But, he says, CHOOSE NOT to present your members to sin, BUT present yourselves to God as those who have been raised to life. Don't go back to Vegas. Don't go back into the grave.
- vi. Paul, actually, here is making a neat distinction between THEIR WHOLE SELVES, and parts of that whole. The *members* he talks about in verse 13 were things like personality, or mind, or body, or time - anything that they could separate out and allow THAT to be used in a sinful way.

- vii. For example, as a pastor, it's my job to do things like read my bible, pray, teach and preach, care for others, marry, bury, and love people. In those ways, I'm presenting my WHOLE self to God...as a saved and called and ordained servant of God and the church. Yet, it could be that I have some parts of my life - some members - that I'm not using for God's glory, OR in fact am engaging in sinful behavior - my attitude, or my mind, or my heart. I'm not going to air my issues for us today...but trust me when I say, I'm still a work in progress!
- viii. Even though the Christians in Rome were saved and presenting themselves as a body to God for His purposes - there were PARTS of their lives - parts of their thinking - that still needed work...the work of the Holy Spirit!
- ix. So, the command Paul was giving them was to not present ANY part of their lives to sin, but present ALL of themselves (mind, body, heart, soul, strength) to God as 'instruments of righteousness.' - as instruments to be played by God alone for his purposes.
- x. The Holy Spirit gives the power to reject the one and choose the other. And this is a PROCESS, not a simple decision one time and done.
- xi. Paul goes on to ask this question to help explain what he wants us to do:

#### **B. READ ROMANS 6:15-23**

- i. Paul's main point here is that there are two options and ONLY two options. Either you are a slave (a servant) to sin and are walking farther away from God, OR you are a slave or servant to righteousness and are walking toward God's ultimate plan for your life.
- ii. Sin is on the death side of the equation...righteousness is on the God side of the equation.
- iii. No longer did the Roman Christians need to be slaves to sin, because they had accepted Christ as Lord and Savior AND they were freed from the power that sin had over them.
- iv. They were FREE to choose the right thing...the God way.
- v. That's the simple, yet difficult, pathway for any person who is following Jesus. The choice is simple...MAKING the choice and then doing what the choice implies is hard.
- vi. But, to NOT make the choice to do the God thing is to choose death - physically and spiritually.
- vii. So, even though the pathway is not easy - this following Jesus - we're not left alone because we have the **power and presence of the Holy Spirit** to guide us, show us, empower us, and change us.

- viii. So that, once we make the first decision to follow God's commands - things like forgiving, loving, turning the other cheek, praying, serving, sharing, etc. - then, we GROW and the next decision becomes a little easier.
- ix. This, church, is the process called **sanctification**. Of growing more and more into the image of Jesus...and farther and farther away from sin... growing into doing what Jesus did...and, in fact, becoming more and more **perfected** in the attitude, manor, and worldview of Jesus. Sanctification is a process that makes REAL changes in our lives for Christ.
  - a. For John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Movement, the doctrine or understanding of sanctification was critical to being a Christian. Sanctification, according to Wesley means, "...to be renewed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness."
  - b. In his sermon called, Working Out Our Own Salvation, Wesley wrote that the sanctification process is one by which, "...we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God."
  - c. N. T. Wright wrote, "What Paul understands by holiness or sanctification (is) the learning in the present of the habits which anticipate the ultimate future."
  - d. So, sanctification is about real change. About shedding pride in order to listen humbly. It's about leaving behind the sin that so easily entangles us and running the race before us, it says in the book of Hebrews.
  - e. Sanctification is the course set before us by God that makes daily, or even minute-by-minute changes in us and in our lives, so that the next minute, the next day, the next year, looks more like Christ than the previous one.
  - f. And the benchmark for those following Christ is love for God and others, and joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- x. To point the Romans Christians to the sanctified life in Christ here in chapter 6, he ends with this: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- xi. Just prior to that he said sin results in death "The end of those things is death." But for those who are choosing to be changed into the image of Jesus, the end is eternal (or everlasting) life.

### 3. Application

- A. I'm inviting you today to choose to be changed every day more and more into the image of Jesus. As a pastor, I can do nothing else. Even in the hardest of

times and in the most challenging of circumstances, when life seems to be moving in reverse, choose to allow the Holy Spirit to keep changing you.

- B. And like I said earlier, it's rarely fast and easy. In fact, it takes a lifetime. But it CAN be your trajectory today if you recommit yourself - if you offer yourself - to sanctification today.
- C. I watched last month with the giddy anticipation of the schoolboy as the SpaceX team launched the first humans into space from US soil in almost a decade. It was VERY cool! Two astronauts on their way to the ISS to spend time doing whatever they do up there every day.
  - i. And one of the most important critical parts of the mission is to get the right, consistent, and planned out **trajectory**.
  - ii. Getting the right trajectory takes hard work, lots and lots of planning, and being open to all the possibilities out there, with all the variables that could cause trouble along the way.
- D. Sanctification is the ongoing evidence of the trajectory that you are becoming more and more like Christ in REAL ways in your life.
- E. And just as the careful and difficult trajectory planning that takes place to send a rocket to the ISS, because your life is at stake, your planning for the life to which God is calling you also takes care and sometimes difficulty to overcome.
- F. Offering yourself to the trajectory of God's plan for your transformation and growth (your sanctification) will require two main things - **struggle and prayer**.
- G. Struggle is the work of the Spirit to change you and me - both to identify what needs to be changed and to do the hard work of changing.
- H. Prayer is the willingness to listen to - be open to - God's direction for the next step - or stage - in the process.
- I. You would think that reaching the ISS was the main goal of the launch of an astronaut into space. Not so. The Mission Commander just prior to the launch said, "The main goal is to get the astronauts **safely back to earth at the end of the mission.**" What a great metaphor for our Christians lives.
- J. The goal is not to arrive at some place or age or position like pastor or team leader. The goal is to keep struggling and praying until you're home! Home with God...safely...and ready to hear the words from one of Jesus' parables in Matthew 25:23, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."
- K. Let's look at those two elements of sanctification.

- i. The First element is PRAYER. **Sanctification is activated and continues through PRAYER.**
  - a. Prayer is the conduit that opens you to God and God's will. If indeed you have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus, then you're called to the process of sanctification - of becoming more like Jesus.
  - b. Paul would say that you have been freed from the power of sin and are now freed to be a slave to God's way. It must become your passion.
  - c. But in order to know what needs to be changed and how to change it, you have to ask God!
  - d. In our Intentional Discipleship Process, Milestone 3 is Openness. It's when you throw open the doors of your heart and life to expose it all to God so that God's light can shine on everything that needs to be changed for His glory and for the world around you.
  - e. That starts and continues in prayer - which is the main way God wants to communicate with us...along with fasting and listening.
  - f. The trajectory of sanctification is planned and begun through prayer... and any adjustments along the way are activated through prayer.
- ii. The Second elements is, not surprisingly, **SUFFERING**. Sanctification comes through SUFFERING.
  - a. And by suffering, I don't mean always despair or profound struggle, or depression, although that's sometimes the case.
  - b. I preached a series of sermons back in 2012 about Christian suffering. Suffering can sometimes come about because of the difficult circumstances in our lives...things we can control and things we can't.
  - c. But, suffering also is used as an invitation by God to fall into the arms of the Savior and let God do the amazing work of changing you - sanctifying you - of setting and staying on the trajectory he planned for you.
  - d. But being changed by suffering takes a life of Obeying. A Life of Obeying is Milestone 4 of our Intentional Discipleship Process. Growing in a life of obeying means being willing to do everything God is calling you to do, no matter how difficult or scary.
  - e. As you obey, especially through the struggle of growing and changing, then sanctification happens in your life.

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. You are a follower of Jesus. Followers of Jesus are called to be **like** Jesus.

- B. Through prayer and suffering, the trajectory of your transformation is set and followed. Offer yourself to the process. Offer yourself to grow and change, and to become more like Jesus.
- C. Offer yourself again today! Come alive in Christ Jesus!
- D. Let's PRAY!