

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
August 19, 2018

Text: Ephesians 5:6-20

Theme: “Redeemed to Redeem”

Redeem, to buy back, to recover, even to rescue. There is some cost involved, could even be a great cost. It is from the scrap heap to something useful. Maybe it is even from trash to treasure. Let me give you a swimming pool example. Nancy and I bought our house in 1999. It had a pool, a very old and in need of repair pool. We bought it not because it had pool, but in spite of that pool. It was not our first priority. There was a lot of other work to do to get the house in order as it had been empty for quite a while.

But finally it was time to tackle the pool. From that pool we pulled 20,000 gallons of stagnant water, one basketball rim, one 1 x 6 x 12' decking lumber, about a foot of decomposing leaves on the bottom, numerous frogs and one snapping turtle. We redeemed that pool cleaned it up, painted it. We were able to salvage the pump and filtration system. Initially the pump was stuck. I put the shaft end down in a bucket of oil and let it sit there for a couple of months. When I plugged it back in, it took off. I think we used it for two years before we replaced it. We learned all about pool maintenance as there was a redemption of a pit of decomposing things to clean water for swimming. Then in 2010 we repurposed that pool, decided it had a better use as a 20,000 gallon planter instead of little used water feature.

Redeemed, from refuse to recreation, from a headache to enjoyment. This would be something we can all relate to, new life from only death before. This is exactly what has happened in Christ. Paul puts all this before us clearly in Ephesians. He doesn't mince words when it comes to our former state, that is, apart from Christ. We were dead in our

trespasses and sins (2:1), those following the prince of the power of the air (2:2). It was matter of living in the passions of the flesh. We were by nature children of wrath (2:3). We were that old pool, only full of death and decay. Paul tells us we were darkness (5:8), not only in the dark, but darkness. We were on the scrap heap, junk pile, refuse. We were like this splintered yard stick, something to be tossed or maybe used for kindling.

But we are redeemed, been and still are. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace (1:7). This redemption came at a great cost to God. Paul calls us to walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (5:2). Jesus had become a stench in the nostrils to the leadership of the Jews. He was the stone the builders had rejected. And really He was a stench in God’s nostrils, the stench of all our sin. Yet it is described as “fragrant.” It is fragrant because it was all according to the will of the Father. We now have a pleasing aroma as we have the fragrance of His righteousness. Jesus was shown to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead.

This was all for us. Later in chapter five we read, “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, having cleansed her by washing of the water with word.” (5:25, 26) Yes, we were buried and raised with Christ in Baptism. So we might be presented without spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. (vs 27).

We are saved now, by grace you have been saved through faith, not by works, no, it’s the gift of God. We are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household. We are God’s workmanship, those redeemed from death, the devil, and the sin, to live with God forever and live for Him now!

We walk in newness of life, but that is not what saves us, no, that is the perfect righteousness of Christ. We walk in light as His light. Paul tells us the fruit of light is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth (vs 9). He calls to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. To walk carefully as wise ones and not unwise. God instructs us in wisdom and shows us what is pleasing and what is not in His Word.

What does this wise walking, doing what is pleasing to God, and fruit of goodness, righteousness and truth look like? It looks like living as members one of another, not stealing, but doing honest work to have something share with those in need. It sounds like no corrupting talk, no mud, but that which builds up, paint. We have been taking from the scrap heap, put together to serve. This is the new man created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (4:24). That which saves us Christ sacrifice and righteousness, that which shows to those around us is the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth. We never measure up to God's standard, always flawed, but yet through Christ working in us and through us quite functional. We have been redeemed to redeem that is to live the life God has given us no running back to sin, but serving.

We have not been redeemed to relapse, not pulled from the waste heap to wasting our time pursuing more death. Temptation is always at hand. It certainly was in Ephesus, the opportunity was there to lapse back into adultery and idolatry. The cult of Artemis in Ephesus may have been both. God does show what is good, right, and true for all the gifts He gives, sexuality included. Since the fall there is this constant twisting to make sexuality match twisted desire. No age has been excepted and non will. There is the temptation to consider the splintered and broken to be the good, right and true, the standard of no standard.

Living such a way is detaching oneself from wisdom. Paul says not to become drunk, says that is debauchery. To be debauched to is debranch, cut the branch from the tree (Webster). Debauchery is to be detached from control and from the source that nourishes. The end result is withering and dying. Such is the fruit of unfruitfulness. This is not redeeming the days, but giving place to the evil of those days.

It seems some of this was happening in Ephesus. The original Greek probably reflects this. The translation in verses 7, 11, and 18 respectively is, 'do not associate,' 'take no part,' and, 'do not get drunk.' It might well better be translated, 'stop associating,' 'stop taking part,' and 'stop getting drunk.' (Greek has the imperative with the negative, normally indicates to stop, to cease from what one is doing). Does this indulging instead of redeeming happen in our lives? It is taking part instead of exposing and doing what is not good, right, and true?

It is a big deal, gets to the core of what faith is about. Paul says because of such things, unwise, empty things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. Those who are still darkness only see light from those walking in the light. Indulging in sin is pulling down the shades and brings only more darkness.

We have been redeemed to redeem. Brothers and sisters we are still redeemed. Christ is still Christ crucified, Christ raised, and Christ reigning. All your sins are still atoned for. The penalty for all is still paid. We have been buried and raised with Christ in baptism. The Spirit was poured out. God still knows and shows what is good, right, and true. Gods law does expose and convict, convicts of what is not good, right, and true. The law shows us how splintered we are apart from Christ. If the law no longer convicts that we have a much bigger problem, shows we are becoming calloused. The good news is still good news. You have been saved by grace through faith. You are members of God's

household, even those reigning with Christ now. We continue to hear the One who has the words of life, the One who is the very bread of life. We are filled with the Spirit as we remember that Spirit being poured out on us at baptism. That Spirit is at work in God's Word right now even as we hear. The Spirit is a much better filler than wine. The Spirit does not detract from, but strengthens the attachment of the branches in the Vine. As we address one another in Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with all the heart the Spirit is working. These are songs filled by the Spirit that the Spirit uses to fill those hearing.

We were darkness, but now light. What a wonderful thing. We have been redeemed to redeem, given life to live. We have gone from the scrap heap, those full of only dead and rotting things, to those now fully alive in Christ. This new life existence can be a fragile one as temptation is always at hand tempting to tear us apart, but God gives the means to keep it all together. We walk in the light. As we do so we are light to those around us so more may escape the wrath of God and know His blessing. For Jesus' sake. Amen