

**“LIBERTY AND RESPONSIBILITY”**  
**SEPTEMBER 13, 2020, PENTECOST 15, SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON**  
**(abbreviated COVID 19 service/50% seating capacity)**  
**Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson

**HYMN (#172 AH) (# 124 OVH): “Crown Him with Many Crowns”**

**(Words for Drive up Only):**

**1. Crown Him with many crowns,  
The Lamb upon His throne.  
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns  
All music but its own.  
Awake, my soul and sing Of Him  
Who died for thee,  
And hail Him as thy matchless King  
Through all eternity.**

**2. Crown Him the Lord of love,  
Behold His hands and side,  
Rich wounds, yet visible above,  
In beauty glorified.  
All hail, Redeemer, hail!  
For Thou has died for me;  
Thy praise shall never never fail  
Throughout eternity.**

**3. Crown Him the Lord of life,  
Who triumphed o'er the grave,  
Who rose victorious to the strife  
For those He came to save.  
His glories now we sing,  
Who died, and rose on high  
, Who died eternal life to bring,  
And lives that death may die.**

**4. Crown Him the Lord of heav'n,  
One with the Father known,  
One with the Spirit through Him giv'n  
From yonder glorious throne,  
To Thee be endless praise  
For Thou for us hast died;  
Be Thou, O Lord, through endless days  
Adored and magnified.**

**PRAYER**

**CHILDREN’S SERMON: *Romans 14:5 “What day should we have church service?”***

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *Romans 14:1-23 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. 2 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. 14 As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. 15 If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. 16 Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. 19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. 22 So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. 23 But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.*

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING**

**PRAISE SONG:** (Osthus singers): Lord, I Need You

**SERMON TITLE: "LIBERTY AND RESPONSIBILITY"**  
**Romans 14:1-23; Pastor Tom Olson; September 13, 2020**

**DISAGREEMENTS:** Billy Graham grew up in a strict prohibitionist Baptist church where Christians were not allowed to touch alcohol. He was very surprised when he preached in England where conservative Baptists offer you their best drinks when you come as a guest. I grew up in a home where a woman was allowed to wear slacks and jeans for informal dress and we ate all types of seafood and pork. So, I was once surprised when I

got to know a Christian family who believed that women must always wear dresses in every circumstance, and they should follow the Old Testament dietary laws of prohibiting pork, shellfish and halibut. When I was young in hippie days the real dedicated Christian boys would be clean cut, shaved and wear suit and tie to church. How different it was for me to get to know Amish families where dedicated Christian men dressed for church with no tie, frumpy hair and especially long, uncut beards like the hippies had. Last week we mentioned the debates over masks and vaccines.

ACTS: It was no different in the early church...there was division over baptism, circumcision, communion, meat from idol temples, Gentiles in church, the Sabbath and obeying the Old Testament ceremonial laws. The Apostle Paul gives us some good advice in Romans 14 about how to handle secondary areas of concern in the best way possible. Romans 14...LIBERTY AND RESPONSIBILITY...let's talk about it!

## I. ACCEPT VARIETY

*Romans 14:1-4 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.*

INSPECTORS: Some people could have the title of “professional belly button lint inspector.” We just love to examine the lives of others and evaluate the little things. Paul says here not to “*pass judgement on disputable matters.*” I would not consider smoking. However, my dear Christian pastor friend, who is a Viet Nam war veteran, smokes to calm his nerves, ruined in that horrifying war. He has a close, close relationship with the Lord. Verse one tells me to “accept him.” It doesn't mean I have to smoke with him. I have Baptist friends who disagree on water baptism and I believe God wants me to “accept them” and enjoy fellowship with them.

NON-NEGOTIABLE: This does not refer to non-disputable matters like killing, stealing, coveting, gossiping, salvation by grace and the kinds of things outlined in the Apostles' Creed. We must be solid with them and “keep the main thing the main thing.”

MASTER: Paul says here “*to his own master he stands or falls.*” People have to work this out with God and not just do what is popular or change their views to please others. There is going to be variety in the church in liturgy, music, food choices, clothing styles, Sabbath keeping and so many other things. Our circle of friends will be pretty small if we can't learn to ACCEPT VARIETY.

## II. SETTLE YOUR CONVICTIONS

*Romans 14:5-12 5 ...Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ...9...For we will all stand before God's judgment seat...12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

IMITATION: When I was young, I tended to practice my faith the way adults around me did...I imitated them and didn't really think for myself. But over the years, I have had to work through many issues on my own through Bible study, thought and prayer. In these secondary areas of dispute, I have come up with my own, deep, personal convictions that my conscience can feel good about before God...even if others disagree with me.

BAPTISM: Water baptism was once “a disputable matter” in my mind...how much water, at what age, what does it mean? ...were the questions I had to work out in my mind. And I did, and it is settled, and I have peace and confidence that makes for stability in my life. People want to argue with me and I won't, because it is settled in my mind and I can move on to more pressing issues. It is very important we work these things out in our own hearts in order to be stable. *Ephesians 4:14 “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and*

*forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.” SETTLE YOUR CONVICTIONS.*

### III. CONSIDER OTHERS

*Romans 14:13-22 ...make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way...Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. 16 Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit...19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification...22 So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.*

PRINCIPLES: These are just short portions of this whole section I read. There is so much here to study in depth but for the sake of time, I have to focus on five points. This whole section is about CONSIDERING OTHERS as we make lifestyle decisions. I would like to glean a few principles from this section:

1. EXAMPLE: Don't do anything that unnecessarily hurts other people. You may feel the liberty to do something with your time or money but if it causes unnecessary distress in the lives of a friend or relative or neighbor, you may want to consider how and when and where you do that activity. I remember hearing about a pastor in my dad's home town who loved to dance with his wife. But dances were held in some pretty unsavory places and he felt that going there would not be a good example to the young people. So, he and his wife bought polka records and danced in the parsonage! They were trying to be considerate of others in the context of their situation.
2. LIMITS: Some people are what are called "the professionally weaker brother." They like to stifle and control our lives and steal our liberty and make us just as miserable and boring as they are. They like to imply that our example is hurting them spiritually and Paul warns here to "not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil." There are some people you cannot please so don't even try with them. Paul had plenty of them in his ministry called Judaizers in his life that insisted on adopting Jewish practices in order to be saved. Paul said that the cross of Christ is enough.
3. FOCUS: Try not to focus on these disputable matters about eating and drinking but focus on "righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit." A faith that is mostly "do's and don'ts" is not a healthy faith and drives young people into rebellion. Make it a point to emphasize what we are free to do in Christ and not what we can't do. That is the healthy approach. Keep it about Jesus, crucified, risen and coming again.
4. PEACE: The mature Christian life leads to peace and not to strife. Some people bring strife into a room and others bring peace. If you have strife surrounding you, it is time to do some soul searching about your own attitudes and words.
5. ACCOUNTABILITY: Paul says here that whatever you do, it is *between you and God*. The old saying puts it well. "You can please all of the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you can't please all the people, all of the time." I have noticed that people pleasers are always on the edge of burnout. People with sound convictions are at rest no matter what people think of them. Come to Jesus, his "yoke is easy, and his burden is light."

So, CONSIDER OTHERS but don't be controlled by others...only by the Holy Spirit!

### IV. STICK TO YOUR GUNS

*Romans 14:23 But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.*

ADIAPHORA: These gray areas are called adiaphora. It is a Greek word meaning “no difference.” It doesn’t make any difference. Here the topic is meat sacrificed to idols. It is just meat. Idols are not real; they are just wood and stone. The meat is meat but the context of how, when and where you eat it is significant. It makes no difference for salvation if you eat it or not. But what makes a difference is faith. If you have some faith in the idol and think that there is power in the meat...don’t eat it. But if you know that the idol is nothing and you have faith in the creator God who is over all and that the ritual spoken over the meat by the pagan priest is meaningless, eat it. And then no matter what anyone says, “Stick to your guns.”

You will be able to stick to your guns if you:

1. **ACCEPT VARIETY:** If you want people to give you space and freedom you must give them the same space and freedom. We are not going to agree on everything...we are human and have different preferences.
2. **SETTLE YOUR CONVICTIONS:** If you take the time to seek God in the Word and prayer and become convinced of God’s will for you with solid conviction, then you will be able to stand firm. But if you hold a Christian conviction without a foundation in the Word of God, you will vacillate and that will open the door to people trying to control you and cause you a lot of stress.
3. **CONSIDER OTHERS:** If we practice our personal liberty in a humble way, considering the affect on others and not “in their face,” then others will generally respect us, even if we don’t agree with them.

**CONCLUSION:** We must be careful to not let our faith in Christ become another Jewish religion of earning God’s favor through strict obedience to the law. The law is a tutor to bring us to Christ and the cross. When we meet the Savior and see him innocently dying in our place it should result in faith, righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. The hallmark of true Christianity is joy and peace and a life of loving kindness to others. It is a beautiful thing to know Jesus personally.

I would like to close with a *quote by St. Augustine that sums it up so well: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” Amen*

**PRAISE SONG:** *We are the Body of Christ*

**PRAYER & LORD’S PRAYER:** *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

**BENEDICTION:** The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

**CLOSING CHORUS:** *Let it be Said of Us*

**POSTLUDE:** Carol Gustafson