

Romans 6:12-23

Matthew 10:40-42

Recently the church sign message blew up again on social media. The message “Jesus had two dads” is so simple. In case it’s not apparent the two dads are God the Father and Joseph. Someone put a short video of the sign on TikTok and it has wracked up over 100,000 views. Of course this kind of algorithm push attracts both people who love the sign message and also those who do not love the sign message. And the reading today from Romans ties into the fuel of anti-queer hate we see especially from other Christians. The first verse of the reading, “Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, so that you obey their desires.” These are among the words from Paul that Christians weaponize against queer people and queer-affirming churches. But Paul is talking about people who are following their own desires, rather than following God. And this general idea of sin that Paul is describing includes the kinds of hate Christian spew when they rail against queer people. The same people who say the goal in life is just to leave everyone alone, so everyone can lead their own lives in freedom, are among the first to prescribe how others need to lead their lives. They want to prescribe acceptable gender identities, acceptable relationships, acceptable ways of reading scripture, etc. But we don’t need to let them dictate terms that fit their narrow ways of thinking and being Christian upon the world. Because if they truly believed we can just let everyone live their lives, they wouldn’t be commenting on other churches’ posts. They would be too busy enjoying their freedom, living their own lives. But Paul points to the root of the problem. The human desire to be in control, to play God, is the root of sin. This is a trap all human fall into, following our own desires and ideas, distraction from the love of God that yields love and equity for everyone. But it is not sinful to call out hate when we see it. In fact it protects the body of Christ and its vulnerable members, when we defend those who are being maliciously attacked.

And we know that trans people especially are being attacked in BC and throughout Canada as political leaders use them as a tool to divide and conquer. Whether they call it bathrooms, trans women in sport, hormone therapies, or however they pivot next, it's all the same – scapegoating a vulnerable population and their safety for political gain.

But we don't have to take it. Paul proclaims that in Christ we have been set free from sin. We are sanctified through baptism, upheld by the Holy Spirit. Not through hate but through love. This Pride month is a time of thanksgiving for this Lutheran theology that through God's grace we are set free. Not by our own egos, not by our being in control, not by anything we do. But by what we have received, for free, in faith, through Christ. This Lutheran sense of grace as gift directly connects to Pride. Because one part of Pride is people celebrating who God made them to be, not being hindered by human constraints of what is considered acceptable. Pride celebrates setting people free and Paul celebrates setting people free in Christ. These might not be the origins of Pride or Paul's theology, but they are one way to make sense of a challenging text. Discovering that the very scriptures often used to clobber people, can also be used alternatively to lift them up. And we know that the Holy Trinity is a godhead of liberation, not slavery or imprisonment, as Paul states. This is a gospel of liberation that is good news for everyone. Or at least it should be seen as good news when we get out of our own way. When Christ's love relieves us of the hardness in our hearts for control, to become God, to continue our assaults upon other people and creation.

In the gospel reading from Matthew Jesus offers concrete examples of living out a love of liberation. It is as simple and concrete as offering a cup of cool water to a child. It is as simple and concrete as using someone's pronouns and giving people access to healthcare. It is as simple and concrete as not waging campaigns of violence upon others in the name of Jesus. These simple and concrete actions flow out of the love of Christ. And when in place of acts of love, we see hate, we know that what has taken root in Christians' hearts is not the love of Christ but just the opposite.

The image of offering a cup of cool water to a child is timely reading about all the heat waves throughout the world. India experienced a terrible heat wave recently and at present Europe is going through one. I have family in the Netherlands reporting temperatures in the high 30's. France has seen temperatures over 40. France has taken unusual steps to ban public drinking and some liquor sales during peak hours to lessen medical emergencies given the pressures on hospitals and ambulance crews responding to all the reports of cardiac arrest. The Guardian reported that Europe went through a heat dome over twenty years ago and yet little has been done in the past twenty years to prepare hospitals, schools, office buildings, and homes to withstand heat through retrofits including shading and improved insulation. We see the effectiveness of heat pumps catching on in North America and I expect more of homes in Europe will be fitted with energy efficient cooling technologies.

Reflecting upon the theme of welcome and Pride in the gospel, I am inviting Skylar to share a few words as well...

When I first joined Church of the Cross back in March of 2025, I was really anxious. I grew up in a Baptist church and came from a conservative family. Pride flags weren't something I was used to seeing on a church wall.

Throughout worship, I found myself feeling more and more at home here. I felt comfortable enough to come out as trans on my first day, something I had struggled to do in other churches because of transphobic reactions.

The safer I felt here, the closer I became with God. I felt as though my eyes were being opened. For the first time, I no longer felt as though my existence was wrong. Instead, I began to understand that I was created with love and that there was a place for me. The friends I've made here gave me the freedom to explore my faith without fear, and for that I will always be grateful.

June is a month to remember both struggle and empowerment. It is a time to remember how queer people, led by trans women of colour, fought for the rights and dignity so many of us have today—and to recognize that many LGBTQ+ people around the world are still denied those same rights.

Pride is, and always has been, a protest against injustice and inequality. As Christians, we are called to love our neighbours, to seek justice, and to affirm the dignity of every person. That is why Pride matters to me, and why I am so grateful to have found a church where I can celebrate both my faith and who God created me to be.

- Skylar

Wrapping up, let us continue to be beacon of hope as a queer-affirming congregation. Not because we are better. I know I continue to fall short, and saved not by good intentions, but by the grace of God. We venture together in faith. This isn't about perfection, but about responding to Jesus' call to welcome neighbours. To give children a cup of cool water when they are thirsty. A gospel that celebrates everyone who needs a cup of cool water, being given one. Just as Jesus first gives us something to drink. Amen.