

**Sermon – 6-10-2018 Third  
Sunday after Pentecost  
2 Corinthians 4  
By  
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**Last week, we examined the first part of 2 Corinthians chapter 4, where Paul makes his famous declaration about being "jars of clay" in service of the Gospel of Christ and of his neighbors. I decided not to play any songs from the popular '90s Christian group, but they're out there if you want to look for them. Paul's declaration just before today's reading is a good place to pick up this conversation: death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. Those of us sitting here belong to both the "you" and the "us" of that statement. Death is at work in you when you are doing the work of Christ, and life is at work in you because of the work of Christ for you. We have that grace instilled in us, and that's what Paul is discussing as we begin today.**

***2 Corinthians 4:13-18***

**\*\*\*read 13-15\*\*\***

**Notice the order of things in verse 13. We believe, and therefore we speak. The faith comes first. Out of the heart, the mouth *overflows*. We have been trained in modern culture to have a whole lot of skepticism when someone says something. "Do they actually believe**

**this?" But very often, that is exactly the case. They do actually believe the things they are saying. And I pray that would be so for us, especially when it comes to speaking the words of Christ.**

**But that skepticism is still there, and unfortunately, Christians have often caused it. Recently, Ireland had a constitutional referendum about repealing part of their constitution that banned abortion. The referendum passed, by a sizeable margin. We could point to this as a marker of the decline of society, but the part I want to focus on more was some of the rhetoric surrounding the vote. There was a *lot* of conversation about this being a way to stop the influence of the church in Ireland. There was a political cartoon, which I will not show, of a medical procedure, the doctor saying "the removal is complete", and holding up a rosary. It's incredibly offensive, and saddening, and maddening, and unfortunately understandable. Ireland's churches have been roiled in abuse cases for decades. The people looked at what has overflowed from the heart of these churches, and decided that they will do the opposite, because look what that belief does. What the people of Ireland, and many of the people of the world, seem to forget is that these terrible actions can come from all hearts, because all hearts are sinful. But when we speak from the heart of faith instead of the heart of**

**humanity, all sorts of fruit of the Spirit flow forth. Love, joy, hope, self-control, forbearance, kindness, gentleness. That's what Paul is bringing forth in his ministry, and what we should be bringing forth in ours.**

**In order to do that, we don't focus on those works, we focus on the one who brings them forth. Look at 14 and 15. We know what Christ is going to do for us. We know what he has done for us. We are secure in that hope. We are assured of salvation, through the work of Christ. So we can bring this hope to others, for *their* benefit, because our benefit is already assured. But it's easy to miss our benefit. It's easy to believe that we're doing so many things for others, and we're getting nothing in return. But Paul has words for us in the rest of this passage.**

**\*\*\*read 16-18\*\*\***

**Do not lose heart. Because make no mistake, the work of ministry is *hard work*. And I'm not just talking about public ministry like what pastors do. We all bear Christ into our lives. We all bring him with us wherever we go. That's why the witness of our lives is important. But it will look and feel like we are being broken down for the benefit of others. And that old sinful heart will tell us, "You're too tired to keep going. These people aren't going to listen anyway. They won't ever care about you, or provide for your**

needs.'" And here's the scary part about that: those thoughts are absolutely right. That is how the world responds when we bring the hope and love of Jesus Christ outside these walls. But look at how Paul describes all of this, through the light of the eyes of faith: *light* and momentary troubles. Think of that: all the terrible things that you go through in your life, in your body, in your head, Paul declares them to be momentary. Here's an example.

*Mark 3:1-6*

Jesus finds someone with a trouble that seems like it's going to go on forever, and he does his work.

\*\*\*read\*\*\*

If something like a shriveled hand can be healed, so can your tiredness, your frustration, your sicknesses, your sin itself. Jesus was deeply distressed by the stubborn hearts of those around him, and even those are no match for his death and resurrection. So, why worry? Why worry about what's going to happen to you, when the one who takes care of you and all things watches over you, and does not slumber or sleep? Why worry about your troubles when the one whose yoke is easy and burden is light has joined himself to you in the waters of Baptism? Luther put it best when he said "A Christian does not live in himself, but in Christ and his neighbor." We are called to live our lives for the sake of our neighbors, and we have been made

**alive again and again in the work of Jesus Christ. Let's  
go share it. AMEN.**