

*“If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with You that You may be feared.” Psalm 130:3-4*

Iniquities. There are behaviors/activities which the God of Holy Scripture, the only true God who created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, does not like. Most of those activities are well-known: you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, etc. Jesus explains that “iniquities” include murder and hating, adultery and lust, stealing and covetousness. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul sums it all up in Galatians 5, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy . . .” and so on.

Now who can escape such sins? Indeed, no one. At least not by our attempts to “be good.” “For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.” (Romans 11:32) Jesus’ death on the cross paid for the sins of the whole world. Jesus’ resurrection is our justification before God the Father who sent His only-begotten Son to save us. (Romans 4:25) Jesus’ self-sacrifice and holy life of mercy are counted the sinner’s own, through repentance of one’s sin and faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness and life. Through faith in Jesus of Nazareth, God’s Son, anyone and everyone can escape one’s sin and its condemnation. Those who reject and despise Christ’s name and work, however, will find a place with the deceiver and father of lies: Satan.

Such good news is for everyone. Christ Jesus came to set mankind free from sin’s guilt and condemnation and to release all people from sin’s dominion so we can serve the living God. This is good news to all who will count themselves sinners, unworthy of God’s mercy in Jesus. The person who trusts in Jesus is set free from his or her sin. . . . But free for what?

“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

The behaviors and activities that God does not like, He teaches His people likewise to recognize as hurtful and unkind and to turn from them. God loves all people. He does not love what sinners do. The Christian likewise loves all, but cannot condone activities God condemns. Jesus does not only grant forgiveness and righteousness before God the Father. By the Holy Spirit Jesus also gives His people a heart of love and compassion, so that by showing mercy Christians will prove to be children of their Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:43-45/Luke 6:36)

The apostle Paul prays in 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, “*Now may the Lord cause you to abound and increase in love for one another and for all, just as also we for you, in order to establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.*”

“The Lord cause”—it is His doing lest anyone should boast—Christians everywhere “to abound in love . . . for all.” And so Christians mourn with those who are suffering and they pray for and love all women and all men of every race. How much more do they love them than by praying for a change of laws, by God’s grace, to save unborn babies from slaughter. Christians and all who claim to be lovers of the human race cannot condone the status quo as thousands upon thousands of infants, who are created by God in His own image, are being mercilessly destroyed.

God does not like certain behaviors. Look at “Christ crucified” and you will see what an understatement that is. For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our place. (2 Corinthians 5:21) There on the cross God proves He loves all sinners!

Now those who have received forgiveness of all their iniquities through faith in Jesus, are made to fear God. Therefore, while loving each and every one of their fellow human beings, Christians do not like those behaviors that God identifies as sin, especially as found in themselves! And out of love, Christians seek to help those who suffer because of such deeds. It is how God has “re-made” us.

Pastor Thomas Olson
Trinity Lutheran Church + LCMS