

# Sermon Text for June 4, 2017

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## ***Exodus 14:21-29, Romans 6:1-4***

### **“Getting out of the mud”**

Welcome to Pentecost Sunday. We call it the birthday of the Christian church because of the historic event which happens in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit descends powerfully upon the church and so it is then equipped with all that it needs to carry out God’s purposes here on earth. On Pentecost we celebrate the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Let’s take a little quiz, it will be rhetorical, you don’t have to answer out loud. If I were to ask you to describe and tell me who God the Father is, you could do it using words such as creator, judge, we probably all have an image of what God the Father looks like or certainly what he does. If I were to say tell me who God the Son is, we could easily switch and tell about Jesus and His work here on the earth and what he did and how He did it.

But if I say can you describe to me God the Holy Spirit...how would you answer. Do you give me the fact that we might just struggle a little bit more in understanding who that Holy Spirit is and what role the Holy Spirit plays and how the Holy Spirit is actually a vital part of our life, just as vital as having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has been called the shy member of the Trinity, the one who stays in the back room and doesn’t come out very often. So, if last week we left here in Romans proud to be a Christian, this week our understanding of the Holy Spirit is going to get us out of the mud.

I know just about every single one of you, I know the names of your children, your siblings, your struggles at work, with whatever you are facing, a troubled marriage, a sick mom or dad, financial woes, I know and share your joys, we share them together. You know me, my forgetfulness, my competitive spirit, and we all know that as we go along and live out our Christian lives together in this body that we call a family, there are times when we seem to get stuck in the mud. We fall off of the path that we know we ought to follow and we can’t just place our finger on why but all of a sudden we find ourselves in a bit of a rut as Christians.

Today, Paul tells us how to get out of that mud once we have lived in Christ. And I argue that it is exactly the presence of God in the Holy Spirit which is able to pull us out. Paul tells us to no longer live in sin and this will keep us mud free.

### **READ SCRIPTURE**

Did you know that if you take a gold fish who has lived for years in a fish bowl and has for years swam around in a circle the size of his bowl and then transfer him to a larger tank he will for a long time continue to swim in a pattern limited by his own learned habits in the previous fish bowl?

Likewise, I have counseled couple after couple before they get married that you had better get to know and understand your spouses bad habits because once you get married, they don't just disappear, but sometimes they get worse.

We are creatures of habit and when we choose to live for Christ, guess what? We change, we really do, but those areas in our lives that needed help in the past are going to continue to flare up and we will continue to need help in those areas.

Our first Bible story is the Exodus story of when the Israelites are being pursued by the Egyptians across the red sea, you get the image of Charlton Heston holding up the waters for the Israelites, and the Egyptians getting stuck in the mud without realizing that they were seconds from the waters of the sea crashing in around them dooming them to a watery death.

But what happens no sooner had the Israelites crossed over, been given a new life, released from their slavery that they start complaining about the food and the water, and the hard beds, its like a cross-country trip with adolescent kids. At one point they say we want to go back, back across the mud, to where we came. It is what they knew. It is like the mice in who moved the cheese who kept going back to where the cheese wasn't to the point of starvation.

As Christians, probably subconsciously we will put ourselves in a position or live in a matter that is self-destructive because it is all we know, or it is what we have always done, or it is what we once knew. We might feel that we are stuck in a rut and want to get out of it. Some call it a mid-life crisis, but I think it deals with Paul's primary point and that is his discussion here of sin and grace. Paul tells us that there is a way out of the mud and it is not the pursuit of more sin, or mud, but rather the pursuit of God's grace.

We are masters as Christians of the grey areas in life. I am one who believes that there are many grey areas in our Christian lives and we constantly are called to make decisions based upon what we understand is a Christ like decision. It is called Christian ethics or another generic term that we throw around is morality. We live our lives based upon not what rules are we commanded to follow but rather in Jesus Christ's great principles of loving God and loving neighbor. It is that simple. And there is a lot of room to wiggle between these two poles.

But we are masters at saying in view of all the circumstances in which I find myself certain things are permissible which really should not be. We often think that the more we grow spiritually the more God changes to meet our needs. We think that following God means keeping at all costs what we hold dear. Listen to Paul's question in verse 1 of Romans 6, he says what then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? Remember last week we said that no matter what sin we commit God will match it with an even more impressive show of grace and mercy. So why don't we, I've got an idea, why don't we when we know that we are going to sin, why not sin boldly so that even more grace will come our way.

Paul in verse 2 says: Yeah right, or You've gotta be kidding, you can't be serious. You're just asking questions like that to get what you want. Listen to Paul here call us out as we try to rationalize our sin, our wading in the mud, as we go through life with the waters parted for now, just barely without realizing that they're about to come crashing down on us, get out of the mud, out of the sin now and step onto the solid ground the solid rock of Jesus Christ upon whom we stand.

The example that Paul gives is the example of baptism. Paul states that all of us were baptized into the death of Christ. As that water is poured over the head of those being baptized it is as if all that mud, and dirt, and sin is being washed off. Those who witness it make promises and commitments to Christ that frees their feet from that miry clay, and in that moment as II Corinthians 5:17 states: so if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, everything old has passed away, see, everything has become new.

As Paul states here in Christ we may walk in the newness of life. I began today talking to those of us who have been Christians, have seen the proof of God's love, chosen Christ, lived a life proud to be a Christian, but for some reason or another find ourselves bogged down in the mud making excuses, really good ones.

Paul says get yourselves out of the mud by realizing that being a Christian is something that makes you completely new and you have claimed and can claim that new life and do not need anything else to guide and direct you except your Lord and Savior.

This last verse tells us to walk in newness of life, with our eyes upon the solid rock, until when one day God's kingdom will come. You know I don't know when the glory is coming, but I don't care because Jesus didn't know either and it didn't seem to bother him. And maybe we keep the Holy Spirit in the back room not because she is sy, but rather because she is dangerous and we really don't want to grab a hold of us and change us, that might be too risky. Get out of the mud, onto the solid path, and walk in the newness of life, again.