

Christ's Love Compels!

A sermon based on 2 Corinthians 5:14,15 – ***“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”***

This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

Why are you here? Drake, why are you here today? I think that’s an easy one to answer...you’re here to be confirmed in your faith in Jesus, to become a member of our family here at Light of the World. But why? Why did you come to Catechism class for the last 3 years? More than likely, your parents made you, especially on those days when you weren’t too particularly excited about coming. Why did you do the hours of service labor, which, yes, at times seemed like such a slog? More often than not, because you were required to. Am I right?

And for that matter, not just you, Drake, but everyone else...why? Why are you here? Why do you wake up when a lot of other people are sleeping in on Sundays to come listen to me talk for 20 minutes? Why do you give of your hard earned money for projects and ministries here that may not directly impact you or your life? Why do you spend time here, working, volunteering, doing labor at church when you could be relaxing or doing something you would enjoy more? Maybe a little deeper, why do you live your life so very different from a lot of others around you, others you know, who treat morality as if it’s fluid and subjective. Why?

Do you ever stop to think about your motivation in doing that? I mean, we do it so often in other areas of our lives. I’m going to this college so I can get this particular degree. I go to this college because it’s close to home and I can still have Mom do my laundry. No?!? Maybe just me???

Why buy this car? Well, they’re giving me a great finance plan. This one has a five star safety rating. It’s got a great towing capacity.

Why go out to this restaurant? The wife wanted to (that’s all the motivation we husbands need!). They have the best and freshest fish. The atmosphere is so inviting. Their HooDoo cheese fries are amazing!

I mean, we always have reasons for why we do what we do...why we make the choices we make, whether we’re stating them out loud or if they’re only in our heads. So again, it’s only fair to be asking the same for when it comes to serving Jesus and living for Jesus. Why are you doing it?

And the important follow-up question...do you have the right motivation or not? Did you know there’s a wrong motivation for serving Jesus? I hope you do. You can be doing the right thing, the seemingly godly thing, for the wrong reasons.

So what are some of those? Well, for example, you’re driving down the Richardson to North Pole, the speed limit is 60, right, or is it 65? I forget, but let’s say it’s 60, you’re going 68, you pass the weigh station, where sometimes there’s a State Trooper camped out...or you see one cruising up the other side of the highway. What do you do? You slow down to the speed limit. You’re doing the right thing.

Why? I don't want to get a speeding ticket; I don't want that on my driving record; I can't imagine much trouble I'll get in with my parents if they see this. It's really fear, isn't it?

Doesn't that drive a lot of our behavior? I obey the laws because I know the consequences if I don't, and I don't want to face them. I do my work faithfully because I'm afraid I'll get fired if I'm late too often or if my work is subpar. It's the way we parents often get good behavior from our children, right? Drake, or any other of the younger adults or children here, you cleaned your room because you didn't want to lose TV privileges. You came home before curfew because you were afraid you'd get grounded and wouldn't be able to hang out with your friends...because Mom said, "If you miss curfew, you're grounded." Or, the common, "Do this, or else..." Well, I don't want to find out what that "or else" is.

And that same mindset sometimes affects or motivates our living for Jesus. I do this because I'm afraid of what God will do to me if I don't. And friends, that's the wrong motivation. It's sinful motivation.

Or another motivating factor...have you ever heard the phrase "Soli Deo Gloria"? It's Latin, meaning, "For the glory of God alone." It means we do something in order to bring glory to God. Is that what you're often thinking when you're doing something, "Is this bringing glory and praise to God"? Or, do you do it for your own glory...so others will praise you? "I love getting the recognition after preaching a good sermon. I love the feeling like these people would be lost without me, that I'm the mover and shaker here (I hope I've never given off the vibe!)."

Can you see why that's wrong and sinful motivation, thinking along the lines of "I help out here or do this here at church so people see me and recognize what I'm doing and appreciate me and praise me? I mean, it's me wanting the attention to be on me so much it's taking away from where the focus needs to be...Jesus.

Or...I do this because I have to. That's one I hear a lot, "Do I have to do this?" "I feel like I have to serve on Council or help out with VBS because no one else will do it." Or closely related is the word "should." "I should go home and spend time with the family instead of going out with friends after work, although I'd rather grab a drink." Or, even, there's, "I know I'm not supposed to be using that kind of language – God wouldn't approve of it, but I really rather would." Feeling forced to do something, especially something God wants you to be doing, is that proper and godly motivation? Of course, it's not.

"But I'm here, doing it. As much as I'd rather be somewhere else, I'm here. Isn't that what matters most?" You tell me, does a parent whose child gripes and complains the entire time doing a chore, like raking the leaves...does that kind of attitude gladden the parent's heart? When we serve Jesus and live for Jesus, but we'd rather not, does that, is that an attitude that gladdens God's heart?

Or, maybe you're about done serving. Why? What's your motivation? "Jesus can't use me"? "Jesus doesn't need me"? "I don't need to because I did it for so long"? It's not what I wanted or how I would have done it, so I don't want to get behind it"? What do you think...dangerous thinking or not? Sinfully motivated thinking or not?

So again, does the right motivation matter? Does it matter to God? I hope you see it does, how the "God, I'm doing this because I'm afraid of you," or "God, I'm only here because I have to be here," or, "God, I'm here, but I'd rather be anywhere else doing anything else (with the underlying tone "because it's more important than you")," or even the, "God, I'm not going to do this for you"...none of those are

God-pleasing motivations. All of those are wrong. All of those are spiritually immature. All of those are sinful. And we've all those attitudes, at least one, at least once.

So, then, what's the right, godly motivation? Drake, I was hoping you could tell us; actually, you'll be to tell us again in a little bit...because your confirmation verse says it all. Friends, hear it again, ***"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."***

"Christ's love compels us." That's your answer! Now there are two awesome thoughts in that short phrase; so let's focus on Christ's love first.

Christ's love. That's it! That's the motivation. And, it's not the love we have for Christ. It starts with the love Christ has for every one of us.

Paul describes it in such a wonderful way...with the phrase, ***"one died for all."*** In Catechism, we called that Christ's "vicarious atonement." You see the word "vicar" in it, which means, "in the place of," or "substituting for." You also see the word atone, which you can explain with two words, "at one." So, "one died for all" means Christ died as our "substitute" to make us "at one" with God...to restore our relationship with God.

Maybe you recall how the Jewish religious leaders, before Jesus' death, had said, ***"It is better for [the people] that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish" (John 11:50).*** God thought the same thing, except on an even greater scale...for the whole world...for all people of all time. And so, Jesus, perfect, sinless Jesus, died on the cross as our substitute. He carried our sins, as our substitute. He suffered the punishment of hell, as our substitute...because he loves us. That was his motivation....his only motivation...love for us.

And the fact is, because Christ love us enough to die in our place, we died, too. In a very real sense, with Christ's death, our death penalty –the debt of the death we deserved - was paid.

And now we live, because he lives. Our Easter victory celebration here a couple of weeks ago was a resounding reminder of that. Jesus' resurrection is our resurrection.

And so now we live, with this new life of saving faith given to us by the Holy Spirit...for you Drake, for many of you, when you were brought to the baptismal font and the waters of God's grace washed over you...and God made you his dear children. We live, as opposed to those who are still only walking around in the darkness of sin and unbelief, "dead people," as one of my Seminary instructors use to call them. And again, that's all because of Christ's love for us.

And what does Christ's love do now? Again, ***"Christ's love compels us."*** It compels us. You've probably used that word before; do you know what it means...compels?

Another pastor once share this great illustration to describe it; I'll try not to butcher it. So, on our own, we are stubborn, hard-headed sinners, who, when God says, "I want you to do this," we say "No" and try to stand our ground. That's what we'll do in our sinful nature.

So, God comes in this huge bulldozer – this powerful machine that will move whatever it wants to wherever it wants. So, you can imagine if God wants something done, we won't be able to stand in the

way. He will move us to do what he wants. But attached to the bucket of this bulldozer is the softest, feathery pillow you've ever felt. So, God comes in his bulldozer, slowly and gently pushing obstinate sinner to do what is pleasing to him.

That's what Christ love does. God gives us instructions for our living, and the bulldozer of Jesus' love moves us to follow those instructions. Yes, it's forcing us in that direction – we can't resist, but it doesn't feel that way. The soft pillow of his grace makes it painless. In fact, God's Word says the same, ***"This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).*** And they really aren't.

Christ's love motivates us. It naturally motivates our New Man – this new life we have in Christ. The truth we have a Savior who lived for us and died for all and lives again is what drives us to now live for Christ and love for Christ and serve Christ. And it's a joy and a privilege.

So, you have the motivation – the only proper and godly motivation – Christ's love. So, what do we do with it? We find that joy in living for Jesus and serving Jesus.

Drake, you'll make that your vow, your promise today...to live for and serve Jesus, inside and outside of this congregation. Most of you have done the same, and today will be the great reminder for you...how you use this life, which one commentator describes as being a "borrowed life." I like that. It's not yours. It never has been. How will you return it to Jesus better than you've received it? When it comes to your worship attendance? When it comes to continuing to make use of the ways God provides you for growth in your faith in Jesus, like Bible class and regular devotions? When it comes to serving God's family here with your talents and your gifts?

Well, if you are growing weary, if you've grown weary of service in Christ's kingdom...if you sense a decline in the fervency of your love for Christ, you would do well to come back again and again to the fountain, to the source of a Christian's love and service. Think about your motivation. We need to return to Calvary and view again and again the love Christ demonstrated for us where one died and therefore all died. And then, with Christ, we rise to newness of life, living a "borrowed life," his life, to his glory, in everything.

Why? Why do all of that? Well, it's easy. We can't help it! We want to. We love to live for Jesus and serve Jesus always. Christ's love compels us. What a joy! Amen.

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