**7th Sunday after Pentecost**

**Sermon**

**Text:** Romans 7: 15-25

**Theme:** The war within!

 Have you ever said, "I don't know why I did that? I should have known better." Or, "I could kick myself for that." Or "I had it coming. I should have known better. It was a stupid thing to do and now I am going to pay the price!

 That is what Paul is talking about here. He is talking about the struggle. The tug of war within all of us. **The war within**! He wanted to do what was right. But the wrong thing comes out. He knew it was wrong. Yet somehow, he did it anyway. And the good that he knew he should do, he couldn't get himself to do.

 Do you ever feel this way? Pulled in two directions? It is the war within! The one force pulls you toward God's will. The other force pulls you toward sin and darkness. It is a frustrating experience. We all go though it. And it is a daily experience. An epic struggle, with wounds and casualties. How can we endure it? Paul gives us the answer in our text today. The answer to the **War within!**

 Paul tells us what is on his mind. You can sense his emotion in these sentences. The epic struggle. **The war within.** **15For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not keep doing what I want. Instead, I do what I hate. 16And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17But now it is no longer I who am doing it, but it is sin living in me. 18Indeed, I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out. 19So I fail to do the good I want to do. Instead, the evil I do not want to do, that is what I keep doing. 20Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who am doing it, but it is sin living in me.**

 In one way it almost sounds as if Paul is trying to escape responsibility for his actions when he says, "**it is no longer I who do it, but the sin living in me."** Have you heard it before? “The devil made me do it” We say "I can't help it." "It's just a part of who I am."

 The world has tried to offer us many solutions that explain our inability to say **"no"** to sin. We have tried to analyze sin. We have become a society of victims. "I can't help the fact that I who I am, I am a victim of my circumstances in life. "

 Our society has also done a good job at downplaying sin. "It's not sin what were doing, after all it doesn't hurt anyone." Or this one, “Shoplifting, and destruction of property is justified if I have been sidelined or feel cheated by society.”

 But, what he is really saying is that by his own power he is bound to fail. "I can't do it myself.” He says. “Sin is much more powerful than all my good intentions." Paul know this. We should to. If we try to fight the battle with sin on our own, we will lose. That is where the wounds come. And the ultimate casualty. Death! Not just physical death but everlasting death. And we cannot blame others, it is all our fault. As James point out so vivid in his letter. **When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.** (James 1:13-15)

This is were we begin to feel it stir in our bellies. That awful feeing. The feeling a dread. Foreboding. And Panic sets in. We **are** **doomed!**

The tubes and rafts were all inflated. We climbed into them on the shore of the Menominee river. It was Sunday afternoon, 4th of July weekend. We were about to begin our 3-hour river float. Family and friends, tied together in our tubes, enjoying the sunshine and the hot weather as we slowly floated down stream. Suddenly, off in the distance a dark cloud began to form. Then the wind started to blow. I could see the reaction in my wife Lisa’s face. This is not good. Then the rain started. And off ion the distance and thunderclap, followed by a streak of lightening coming down form the dark cloud down river, right where we were headed. Just then, my brother in-law, said his catch phrase. “Don’t Panic!” He uses it often and we laugh when he says it but this one hit home. Panic! That is what I am doing now! We are out, in the open, expose, helpless. What can we do? We are in an extremely dangerous situation!

 Sound’s like what Paul was trying to tell us in our text. “I am doomed” **24What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?**

 But wait! There is a solution. **Don’t’ Panic!** Paul’s situation is similar to what was happening on the river. The fear of a lightning strike was real. His struggle with sin was real. And we all heard what can last week about the consequences of continuing in sin. If we deliberately keep on sinning, there is only fearful expectation of judgment. The feeling of dread and doom.

 Like Paul, we have a constant struggle when it comes to doing the right thing. We know what is right, but when it comes to doing what is right, we often fail. **Don’t Panic!** What is impossible for us to solve on our own has been solved by God’s grace. Jesus has freed us from the damages caused by this inner war, the war within. **I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

There on the river, we were helpless. There was not even a cabin to be found on the bank of the river where we could turn for shelter. So where did we go? To God. In prayer. And within an hour, the sky cleared. The storm stopped. We were safe. The crisis was over.

 Our war within is a crisis. But not for us. It’s a crisis for sin, because sin’s days are numbered. Christ gives us the victory over sin. Jesus conquered sin. He crushed Satan’s head. He forgives us instead of condemning us. He gives us his perfect life as credit though faith in him. He promises to be with in the struggle till we are with him forever. In our Gospel reading he call us to come to him and find rest! We are not alone in this struggle. In faith, then when we hear Paul talk about this inner conflict between God and sin he calls out , “**Protect me from what I want!”**

 It’s not a time to panic when temptations come our way. Paul tells us the way to fight the war within. We need armor and weapons and he tells us where to find them! In God’s Word! **10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.  (**Ephesians 6:10-18)

 Paul brought this up so that we could know that we are able to bring these things before God, bring our sins and struggles before Him, and ask for His strength, guidance, and support as we learn to do good no evil. **So, don’t panic!**

**Amen.**

**Second Lesson**

**Romans 7:15–25a**

15For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not keep doing what I want. Instead, I do what I hate. 16And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17But now it is no longer I who am doing it, but it is sin living in me. 18Indeed, I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out. 19So I fail to do the good I want to do. Instead, the evil I do not want to do, that is what I keep doing. 20Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who am doing it, but it is sin living in me.

21So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is present with me. 22I certainly delight in God’s law according to my inner self, 23but I see a different law at work in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of sin, which is present in my members. 24What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!