**16th Sunday after Pentecost**

**Sermon**

**Text:** Romans 13:1-10

**Theme:** The debt of love!

Last Sunday in Romans chapter 12 Paul told us to worship. We were encouraged to put our wholes self in. To offer ourselves to God as a thangs giving offering in all we do. Then, in the last verse of chapter 12 he says says this. “**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** Why did he say this? He was preparing his listens for what was coming next.

**Everyone must submit to the governing authorities. For no authority exists except by God, and the authorities that do exist have been established by God. 2Therefore the one who rebels against the authority is opposing God’s institution, and those who oppose will bring judgment on themselves.**

This must have comes as a shock to the first readers of his letter. Obey Ceaser? Obey Rome? Obey and submit to the very government that is encouraging its citizens to attack Christians. Turn them in. Hand them over for possible punishment and even torture. Obey? Really?

They lived in a world where people said anything goes. Hate against Christians was encourage, conflict applauded and executions celebrated, yes by the government. Those in authority! Go wild on the Christians, your words and actions will have no consequences here!

Fast forward 2,000 years. We are hearing the same message they heard long ago. Oh, how this hits home today!. The same things appear to be happening here. Yes, right here in our country, our State, even our community.

So, the question that comes to mind in all of that is this. Where is God in all of that? Why should I submit to any authority. It seems to be against me! My freedom. Yes, even my freedom to worship God the way I want!

Stop for a moment with me and listen to what was just said. Against me! My freedom, what I want! Where is God! Right here right now telling us who we The main word here in conscience. are. **Therefore it is necessary to submit, not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience.** The main word here in conscience.

Submit to it out of reverence for God—not reverence for the ruler. God has stripped rulers of His final authority. That's what verse one means. They are not God. God is God. When you submit, you submit for God's sake. “Be subject *for the Lord's sake* to every human institution” (**3Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. 1 Peter 2:13-15).**  The problem here is the reality. We by nature do not want to submit. It started even before our birth. That inner problem we all have. Sin! No one had to teach me to fight with my brothers and sister. No one had to teach me to disobey my parents. Breaking the 4th commandment. It is second nature. No, actually first nature.

So why is it so important to obey? Look at Jesus. He did. For you and me. He submitted. Look at him standing before Pilot. God himself. All powerful with legions of angels at his disposal, yet he submitted. For you and me. To save us. He paid for that sin of disobedience. He love for us, set us free so we can respond with his love.

Now, submit, why? For his sake, so we have the peace and safety to share the message of our Lord who is the risen Lord Jesus who is King of Kings and to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given. In other words, keeping the speed limit is Christian worship. Obeying the Governor is Christian worship. Obeying is love. God’s love in action. Yes, love is worship! **Respond, repay debt of love!** **8Do not owe anyone anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9For the commandments—do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet (and if there is any other commandment)—are summed up in this statement: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 10Love does no harm to a neighbor, so love is the fulfillment of the law.**

Across the border from Laredo, Texas is the city of Laredo, Mexico. The town has lost its civil authority and is ruled by gangs. Mr. Dominguez was the only person brave enough to be police chief. Hours after he took office, gang members riddled his body with dozens of bullets. The city was in a turf war between Mexico's two main drug gangs. The streets were empty Thursday, a day after the killing. No police in sight. The National Government sent in the army. “We are defenseless,” an attorney said at City Hall. “It's obvious that the criminals are better organized (than the authorities.) They sent the national army and even they weren't respected. Who else can we ask for help?'” (Article in the Laredo StarTribune June 10, 2005, p. A3)

That's a small snapshot of what the world would look like without God's grace of civil authority. What would you do if 911 didn't answer? If there were no police. No firemen. No national guard. Only gang members stealing and murdering without any restraint or retribution.

Get this picture? It seems even more clear to many of us today, right here in our own country, and even our own State there is the danger of us falling into the same situation as Laredo Mexico. That is why God says, “**He [the civil authority] is God's servant for your good.”** When there is peace—since it will not always be so—let use the example of God’s Love to share the gospel of Jesus with everyone while we still have time.

A new pastor was installed in the Church. For his first sermon the congregation members were not disappointed. His text was from John 13:34: **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just like I have loved you…** The sermon was great. The new pastor proclaimed God’s Word with enthusiasm and grace. When it was over, everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Looks like we have a winner here were the comments as people talked together after the service.

The next Sunday, the people gathered in anticipation of another great sermon. To their surprise, he repeated the sermon from the week before.

At first, the folks were stunned. “Didn’t we just hear this sermon last week?” they thought to themselves. But the members were not quite sure.

Then the third Sunday the people gathered as before and, the new pastor preached the exact same sermon.  **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just like I have loved you…”** This time there was no mistake – he was clearly repeating himself.

The elders gathered after church and demanded an explanation. “What is going on?” they asked. The new preacher replied, “Going on? What do you mean? Jesus was clear: ‘That you love one another, just like I have loved you.’ Well, when you do this, I’ll give you my next sermon.”

It’s just a story, but it contains an element of truth: Unless we’re willing to love one another, how can we be a light to the world, salt of the earth, truly worship our God! Love is the basis of the Christian life. If we don’t live in love with one another, there is only ugliness and evil—the devil’s play ground!. Respond to God’s love for us. Repay the debt of love we owe to one another. Salt the earth! Let your light shine!

**Amen**

**Second Lesson**

**Romans 13:1–10**

Everyone must submit to the governing authorities. For no authority exists except by God, and the authorities that do exist have been established by God. 2Therefore the one who rebels against the authority is opposing God’s institution, and those who oppose will bring judgment on themselves.

3For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to evil. Would you like to have no fear of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will receive praise from him, 4because he is God’s servant for your benefit. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because he does not carry the sword without reason. He is God’s servant, a punisher to bring wrath on the wrongdoer. 5Therefore it is necessary to submit, not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience.

6For this reason you also pay taxes, because the authorities are God’s ministers, who are employed to do this very thing. 7Pay what you owe to all of them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, and honor to whom honor is owed.

8Do not owe anyone anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9For the commandments—do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet (and if there is any other commandment)—are summed up in this statement: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 10Love does no harm to a neighbor, so love is the fulfillment of the law.