

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 9 [a])

Trinity, Alamogordo

July 5, 2026

ROMANS 7:14-25

MATTHEW 11:25-30

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In the Name of Jesus.

What is our flesh trying to do?

Paul knows the problem as well as we do. Paul writes,

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.

[Romans 7:15]

Paul would've made a terrible employee, a terrible student.

He can't follow simple directions. As an employee, his boss would've ended up asking him something like,

"Why did you ship the boxes to Phoenix? I told you to ship them to Atlanta."

And Paul would say,

"I don't understand my own actions. I wanted to send the boxes to Atlanta, but I did not. I sent them to Phoenix, which is the very thing I hate!"

"Nothing good dwells in me,"

says Paul, [Romans 7:18]

"that is, nothing good dwells in my flesh, for what I will to do I cannot do in my flesh."

Paul, you're fired.

Of course, in real life Paul wasn't a bad employee—he made tents for a living and we can assume that many people would buy his tents or he would've starved to death. For

that matter, Paul wasn't a bad student either. He had been a first-class pupil of Gamaliel, a preeminent teacher of the Pharisees.

But Paul isn't talking about his abilities as an employee or student. He's talking about his life before the face of God, he's talking about his life in the flesh where he is given to love the Lord his God with all his heart and all his mind and all his soul, and to love his neighbor as himself, and in this life before God and as a servant to his neighbor, Paul says,

"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

Paul is describing, as he calls it, our life of flesh. Elsewhere he speaks of this as the old Adam, or the old Man of our sinful flesh. Elsewhere, as the outer man. Paul is describing our life of flesh as being so given over to sin that it cannot be reformed or rescued.

We want to think our life of flesh is somehow reformable—that there is somehow a little spark of good, and we just need to fan the spark into flame to improve ourselves. This would mean that the answer to sin is the right instruction so we could know how not to sin anymore or to be coached out of it, like a baseball pitcher being coached out of a bad throwing motion.

But Paul is saying that our life of flesh is so given over to sin that even when we are trying to do good, we do evil.

What is our flesh trying to do?

Our flesh is trying to justify self. That is the essence of our sin.

Our flesh, when caught in sin, is trying to make up for it by doing outwardly good works to redeem itself. It's trying to save itself by Law, so that even when sinning against God's Law, we're trying to use works of Law to improve ourselves.

Our flesh is using the Law to point at others and show their sin, as if accusing others of sin somehow rescues us from our own.

Our flesh, when caught in sin, and seeing the salvation freely given by Christ Jesus, does not want to be justified by Jesus, but wants to justify self. In this way, in our sinful flesh we end up turning from the salvation given by Jesus, as if salvation is something we can accomplish on our own.

What is our flesh trying to do? It's trying to save self by works, it's trying to justify self, and this sinfulness is so deep-seated, so much at our origin, that we cannot rescue ourselves from it.

When we ask the question, What is our flesh trying to do?, the answer is not pretty.

What is *Jesus* doing?

That is the question.

For he is the Savior, we are those he is saving. He is the justifier, we are those being justified. He is the merciful one, we are the ones receiving mercy.

Jesus turns our eyes from our flesh. He has us look outside ourselves to him and his grace, and in seeing Jesus, we finally find rescue from our sinful flesh.

"Come unto me,"

[says Jesus,]

"all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

[Matthew 11:29]

Jesus makes no appeal to our flesh. He doesn't give us his Law in order to tell us how to improve our life of flesh, how to reform it, how to rescue it.

Rather, Jesus gives us his Law in order to tell us that our life of flesh is over. It's daily to be repented of, daily to be put to death in the water and promise of Baptism.

The heavy yoke of the Law finally grinds our life of flesh to nothing—no hope, no justification, no rescue. And then the Law has done its work.

Now, it's the new yoke. The yoke of Jesus. The yoke of the Gospel. A yoke easy and light, a yoke gentle and lowly and giving not burden, but rest. It's a yoke which is really no yoke at all.

It is Jesus redeeming the sinner with his own blood and calling us out of works into faith.

It is Jesus speaking not the Law, but grace, so that, being done with our life of flesh, we now are daily given our life of faith.

It is Jesus putting us not under burden (for that is the work of the Law and no life will ever come from that), but under grace (for that is the gift of the Gospel, and in the Gospel, there is only gifts and life).

This Gospel is fully gift. Only gift. It is not according to our works, not according to our efforts or understanding, as if we can grab onto the Gospel with the wisdom of our flesh or the understanding of our minds. Matthew 11:25:

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."

This Gospel is only gift, given to the sinner as a parent gives gift to a little child.

This is what Jesus is doing: he sees us in our life of flesh, and he doesn't try to improve the sinful flesh into somehow being strong enough to bear the heavy yoke of the Law, but he gives his Law to daily drown the sinful flesh in repentance.

Then he is daily putting you and me under the yoke of the Gospel, which is so light and gentle that it is really *no yoke at all*, but only gifts.

In this yoke of the Gospel, this life of faith, this life living in grace, you find rest for your soul.

In the Name of Jesus.