

Galatians 2:15–21; 3:10–14

June 12, 2016

“Two Kinds of People”

Our Redeemer

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday af. Pentecost

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Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior  
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

**[Introduction]**

“There are only two kinds of people in this world.”

You’ve all heard that before, but there are countless ways to finish it.

Some are an attempt at humor:

“There are only two kinds of people in this world:  
those who count and those who can’t.”

“There are only two kinds of people in this world:  
those who think the Three Stooges are hilarious . . . and women.”

“There are only two kinds of people in this world:  
those you want to have a drink with . . .  
and those who make you want to drink.”

Others attempt a shorthand philosophy:

“There are only two kinds of people in this world:  
thinkers and doers.”

“There are only two kinds of people in this world:  
those who work hard, and those who hardly work.”

**[Paul]** The division of the world into two types . . . seems so natural – them and us.

In the Old Testament, there’s Israel and the nations—one or the other.

And that “two kinds” of thinking is not just in the Old Testament.

Think of Jesus’ word about Judgment Day.

There are the sheep and the goats.

In Revelation,

there are those gathered round the throne and those outside eternal joy.

So here’s Paul’s initial take on “two kinds”:

There are only two kinds of people in this world:

Jews by birth and Gentile sinners.

But in Galatians 2 and 3, St. Paul wants us to see something more,  
even though he started with that two-fold view of Jews and Gentile.

Paul was born a Jew;

- his roots were anchored deep in a particular, special history
- a family tree that stretched back to Abraham.
- He was proud of his roots because they were intimately connected with his religion.

Judaism was a religion

- anchored in human obedience to God's laws,
- given at Sinai,
- pronounced in the books of the Old Testament, and
- explained by the rabbis.

Anchored in a divinely given set of moral standards,  
the Jews realized the void that existed  
between them and the rest of the world, the Gentiles.

Because the Gentiles were either ignorant of God's laws or rejected them,  
they were sinners.

The Jews who lived out the laws—they were righteous.

An easy distinction: a moral minority versus an immoral majority.

But now hear this: ***“We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified”*** (2:15–16).

We might say that Paul has shifted his perspective.

There are still two kinds of people,  
but the division isn't into Jews and Gentile sinners,  
but into those justified by faith and those trying to justify themselves.

**[One Type]** BUT, *in a most basic way, there is only one kind of person:*  
transgressors, sinners, people under a sentence of condemnation.  
It is as old as Adam and his fall—the one kind of person.

This was not a great philosophical insight that Paul had;  
it was the result of an experience . . .  
an encounter with the living Lord Jesus.

Paul's easy distinction between Jews and Gentile sinners breaks down in the face of Jesus. Christ Jesus blows our standards out of the water.

We can all find people who have so screwed up their lives that it makes us look good by comparison. That is the basis for all our self-justification. We set a standard that enables us to explain how good we are by comparison.

But that doesn't work when you meet Jesus,  
who isn't merely "moral," but utterly holy—  
the man who is beyond anything humanity had ever seen.  
Sinless. Pure.

Totally different from us even though he is fully human, just like us.  
Yes, perfect. What humanity was before the fall.

So who measures up to that? No one.

If there are two kinds of people, then it actually works like this:

<i>there is Jesus Christ, the true man who is what man was meant to be, righteous and holy before God.</i>	<i>And there's all the rest of us: sinners.</i>
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It hit Paul like a ton of bricks.

Proud Paul went from a person convinced of his righteousness  
to called himself the chief of sinners (1 Tim 1:15–16).

So we are all sinners. All of us.

And now, in a strange and somewhat frightening way,  
those who are most into "morality" are in the most spiritual danger.

They are Paul before he met Jesus,  
justifying themselves on the basis of their morality—on "works of the law."

They are the Pharisees who scorned Jesus and his compassion for the mass  
of people who had wrecked their lives with open sin.

Today,  
they may be those who justify themselves because they are so tolerant.

Or, “they” may be us: people who so abhor the moral chaos around us that we justify ourselves, foolishly counting ourselves as the exceptional ones who are pleasing God with our lives.

No matter what course it takes, self-justification before God is a dead end.

Yes, it ends in death—eternal death—because it refuses the only one who can justify us, Christ.

**[One Savior]**

So Paul points us to Christ and Christ alone and says that,  
in him, in Christ, we have been crucified and,  
in him, we are now alive with his very life.

Listen (2:20, emphasis added): **“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”**

It’s either being who we are, dead men and women  
trying to justify ourselves,..... or it is Christ.  
Christ Alone!

And Christ comes with a promise!

The promise is forgiveness.

Not advice.

Not direction on how to be more righteous.

Not new rules for us to fix our lives.

No, because we, in ourselves, are dead.

It’s forgiveness. Period.

That is the promise spoken to us in Baptism, when our sins are washed away.

That is the promise repeated in Absolution, your sins are forgiven.

That is the promise whenever Christ speaks his word over bread and wine.

It is *his* promise, and it is sure.

**[Conclusion]**

So maybe it is true. There are only two kinds of people.

Those who are dead in their transgressions and	those in Christ, who are forgiven and given a new life. <b>Amen.</b>
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Let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Amen.