EXITE! GAUDETE! CAVETE!

June 17, 2018 2 Cor. 5:14,15

 Greater love has no man than this---that he lay down his life for his friends---John 15:13. Men in time of war have been known to do this very thing. Without thinking, a man might fall on a grenade or do some other act of courage to save his friends from harm.

 A life for a life. We know someone who did just that. Our dear Savior Jesus Christ. He went the way of the cross, not just for one or two but for the whole human race. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

 Now, if someone has just saved your life, would you not be forever thankful? Remember that pilot who had just taken off from the airport in New York and lost both engines when he hit a flock of birds. They were going down and he didn’t think he could make it back to the airport so he put the plane down in the Hudson River, not something that you practice on your days off. Suli Sullenburger put that big plane down perfectly and all got off safely. He became the hero of all those passengers that day.

 Listen again to Paul’s words. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that One has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

 Because Jesus took upon Himself our punishment for sin, we are now free from the guilt of sin. The blood of Jesus has cleansed us from all sin. 1 John 1:7. We have no sin since God, thanks to Jesus, has forgiven all sin.

 We are, not can be, but we are saved from the fires of hell. So, should there be a response on our part? Most certainly. If sulli Sullenberger is a hero for what he did for a few people that day, our thanks and praise to Jesus should be never ending.

 To that end, I take you back to the title for today’s message. Three Latin words; “EXITE-----Like the word exit, meaning come out of the world of the darkness of sin. We are forgiven. Don’t let yourself be trapped in the guilt that God has taken away with the sacrificial death of Jesus.

 The second word is GAUDETE!. Rejoice. Be happy. There is no reason to be sad or mopey. You are on your way to heaven. Paul, in Philippians 4 tells us; “Rejoice and again I say Rejoice”.

 The third word is CAVETE! Which means, ‘beware’. In ancient Britain this word was spoken to pardoned prisoners for their warning. It is the-go and sin no more, which is what Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery as recorded in John 8.

 It is a foolish person indeed who would return to the prison cell of guilt, not accepting the free forgiveness from Jesus.

 One night a condemned conspirator on the life of the premier of Ceylon sat alone in his cell waiting for dawn and his own execution. Suddenly he roused himself from apparently somber despair to ask that a certain Christian missionary he named be summoned to his cell as quickly as possible.

 When the astonished missionary arrived, knowing that the condemned man had been a Buddhist monk all his adult life, he was even more surprised to hear the man ask that he might be baptized immediately in the Christian faith.

 Assured that the man knew and understood the basic implications of his request, the missionary finally asked why he wanted to be baptized at the moment. The man replied with patent conviction that, since he must die, he ‘wished to die in a faith by which he could come freely to God----unrestrained by personal unworthiness and confident that he could receive forgiveness simply out of love and mercy’.

 This man had come to understand what the Apostle Paul called the Ministry of Reconciliation. If two people are reconciled, it means that they no longer are enemies. They have made up. They are friends. Jesus says that we are His friends if we do as He commands.

 This is found in John 15 where Jesus says that He is the True Vine and we who believe are the branches off the vine. As long as we abide in Him, we will produce much fruit---things like love, patience, long-suffering, witnessing, joy, peace and the like.

 Because we are reconciled to God the Father thru the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ; and because our Spirit-created faith believes this to be true, we are enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to bear much fruit.

 We show patience because it is a gift from God. We exude joy and happiness that others see and it too is a gift from God.

 As others see our fruits of faith, our Christian behavior, we are living for Him who died for us. And most certainly as we give witness to the faith that is in our hearts, we are living for Him who died that we might live with Him in heaven for all eternity.

 The best advertisement of Christianity is a Christ-like life. People read you and me more than they read the Bible. If someone sees you pray before a meal in public, it reminds them to do likewise.

 When people hear only good words come from your mouth, it is a reminder that God condemns profanity.

 As others hear you speak the praises of God for all He has done for you and your family thru Jesus, lives can be changed and souls saved.

 A key point in these two verses is what Paul says at the beginning of verse 14: “For the love of Christ controls us.” Why is that? Paul had an attitude of gratitude, a gift from a loving God.

 We too, should be truly thankful that Jesus took our punishment, felt God’s anger against sin, experienced the horror of hell in our place. God turned His back on His own Son to save the likes of us.

 We, who are far too often selfish and self-centered, doing and living as we want, not as God wants. Ever since Adam and Eve, man has gone his own way, ignoring God’s goodness, bringing pain and suffering upon himself. It’s so easy to sin-----but oh so hard to say no to sin. For we are, by nature, sinful creatures.

 We don’t always consider things we do sinful because we think of them as normal. Paul names these things in Galatians 5:19: “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, factions, drunkenness and the like.

 Paul says, ‘those who do these things will not inherit eternal life. How then can any of us be saved? Only by the grace of God who has accomplished this thru His Son Jesus Christ.

 Question 36 in the Catechism is this: “How has Christ rescued you from death?” Through His suffering, death, and resurrection, Christ has triumphed over death. Since He now gives me eternal life I need not fear death.

 Death is our most feared enemy, is it not? We are all headed that way and there is nothing any of us can do to stop it from happening. But our loving God, like the pilot, sulli Sullenberg, has brought us safely thru and promises us a gentle landing in our eternal home.
 Thank you Lord.