

8 Pentecost A—July 6, 2008  
Romans 7:15-25a  
Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30  
The Rev. David R. Wilt

**You have got to love Paul. Rationalization skills honed to a sharp edge- “I do not understand my own actions.” “Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.” This passage makes Paul the Flip Wilson of the first century. The late comedian whose signature line for doing bad things was, “The devil made me do it.”**

**Paul demonstrates the conflict within our souls. Waking up each day, renewed and inspired to do good things. Sort of like that old prayer, “Thank you God that today I have said nothing bad about anyone. I have not done any thing that I will regret or should be ashamed of. I have not even had bad thoughts about a single person. Now, dear Lord as I get out of bed please be with me through the rest of the day.”**

**Jesus somewhat reflects on the same theme when he says “To what will I compare this generation?” “John came neither eating or drinking and you said he was possessed, I came eating and drinking and they said “Look there a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Then he delivers the punch line for us, “Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.” All of our good intentions. All of our wonderful thoughts of kindness and openness and acceptingness are**

**often dashed by one action or one movement of our lips and tongue working together to make sounds that sound like unkindness or unopenness or unacceptingness.**

**We are no less a generation in conflict than the generation that Jesus spoke to or to the generation that Paul was speaking to. We are a generation for the most part seeking to do our best and often tripping over our own feet or tongues or trying to speak with our feet in our mouth.**

**This week our youth, 18 strong will be going over to the Okeechobee area on a mission trip. They will be working on a real farm, interacting with foster children in real homes. They will be doing God's work. And, God will be revealed through them and somewhere along the line I think for most of them God will be revealed to them.**

**And I am sure as they prepare to leave this afternoon with other youth from Holy Spirit and St. Patrick's that there are some apprehensions going through their heads.**

**I mean, it's a mission trip right? We are going out there to do God's work, right? Everythings we say or do will be judged by those we are with and will impact their lives. That is some heady stuff! That is almost to overwhelming to consider!**

**Well to those youth going out on this mission trip and for the chaperones who will be going along, hear me when I say that yes, if you are going out there feeling like you are on**

**the bubble, pop the bubble before you go. Simply go as yourselves and it will be a perfect week. Each of us would be much better off in life if we just recognized that God didn't give us all the talents but God gave each of us something special to share with others.**

**I constantly get myself into predicaments because in my mind I am still in my teens or maybe twenties and last weekend I decided that I could still ride a raft behind a ski boat at about 30 mile and hour driven by a brother-in-law with years of paybacks on his mind. So what I thought in my mind was the right thing to do turned out to be the devil within me talking, as I quickly found out when the raft went kkimming over the water, then it reversed direction but I didn't. But our God is a God full of grace, because I did not have time to lay in the water and feel the pain in the rush to recover my swimming trunks that were being ripped from by body.**

**You go on this mission trip as God's special emissaries. Put the conflict away as to how you have to act or as to what you have to do. And, think of yourself as the Zebra who found himself at the pearly gates says to St. Peter, "You know I've wondered my whole life whether I am white with black stripes or black with white stripes?"**

**And St. Peter looked at the Zebra and said, "I can't tell you whether you are white with black stripes or black with white stripes. Only God can answer that question for you"**

**The zebra said, "But I must know if I am white with black stripes or black with white stripes. May I go speak personally to God."**

**St. Peter said, "I think I can arrange that."**

**So an angel comes and takes the Zebra away and shortly thereafter he finds himself standing face to face with God.**

**The Zebra says, "Please God, I must know. Am I white with black stripes or black with white stripes?"**

**God without hesitation replied, "My dear Zebra why do you fret so much, you are what you are."**

**So for each of our youth going out into the mission field, do not fret about what you are to do, or who you are to be. "You are what you are." And if that is good enough for God then make it good enough for you.**

**That is good advise for all of us. Whether we are in our teens or just think we are.**

**And, that does not mean that you wont be changed by this week. There is another old adage that says, "God loves us just the way we are, in fact God loves us so much that God will not allow us to stay that way."**

**"Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."**

**Paul's struggle of knowing what's right and doing what's right is as real today as it was for Paul. But keep in conversation with God and follow your conscience and you will do what is right in God's eyes.**

**You are what you are, and wisdom will be vindicated by your deeds.**