Reading: Philippians 3:17-21

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk
according to the example you have in us. **18** For many, of whom I have often
told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of
Christ. **19** Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in
their shame, with minds set on earthly things. **20** But our citizenship is in
heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** who will
transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that
enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Meditation:

A majority of Virginians voted to ***glory in their shame*** by enshrining no-limit abortion and same-sex marriage in the Virginia constitution. With ***minds set on earthly things*** they have approved the ***destruction*** of our children and families. Perhaps some were deceived by good sounding words. Others believing these amendments to be a matter of fairness, or a matter of rights. And still others insisting that these things are, in fact, *good*.

The apostle Paul faced similar challenges in his day and age. Abortion and same-sex activity is nothing new. And what was his response to this? *Tears*. For as he wrote to the Philippian Christians, ***For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you*** **even with tears*****, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ***. Strong words. But true. For the cross of Christ is not about taking life, but giving life. It is Jesus laying down His life for the life of the world. But in a world where the fleshly desires of belly and heart are not only king but god, self-preservation, self-satisfaction, self-justification, self-righteousness, self-approval, and self-gratification are going to win the day.

So what do we do? Paul had good advice for us today, when he said, ***Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us***. Paul could write those words because he was imitating and walking according to the example of Christ Jesus. And what example was that? *When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten. No deceit was found in His mouth. He bore our sins in His body on the tree*. And to what end? *By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls* (1 Peter 2:21-25).

You see, Paul knows what it means to walk as an ***enemy of the cross of Christ***. He did in spades! Persecuting, imprisoning, and probably also responsible for the killing of Christians. And we, too, were not only born dead in our trespasses and sins, but have walked those well-worn roads as well, following the destructive desires of our bellies and hearts instead of the life-giving Word of God. But instead of hating Paul, Jesus loved Paul, appeared to Paul, took Paul to be His own, and used him to proclaim His Word of life! And He was done the same for us. Washing us clean in baptism and making us ***citizens of heaven***. And from there we await the Day when Jesus comes again in glory and we and our world are transformed. A new heaven, a new earth, and a new you and me.

So until that day, we will imitate Paul who imitated Christ. We will shed tears at the destruction of our world by sin and those who glory in their shame, but we will also proclaim *and live* the Gospel of life. We will be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). We will love and forgive, we will care for and lay down our lives for others - whether they are in the womb or near the tomb. We will pray for those who persecute us and revile us (Matthew 4:55). Not because we have to, but because the Christ who did so for us now lives in us and through us; because His love controls us (2 Corinthians 5:14).

It won't be easy. Those who won the vote yesterday are rejoicing and most

certainly will not stop trying to advance their agenda even farther. But the victory will not come by legislation or vote or Law - for the victory has already been won by Christ risen from the dead! It may not look it, but in the end we will see and we will know. So we will not despair or lose hope. Sin might have its day, but eternity belongs to Christ. And we belong to Him.