

Fifth Sunday After Epiphany
February 5, 2023

Light shines in the darkness for the upright, the psalmist sings. Isaiah declares that when we loose the bonds of injustice and share our bread with the hungry, the light breaks forth like the dawn. In another passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, the light of the world, calls his followers to let the light of their good works shine before others. Through baptism we are sent into the world to shine with the light of Christ.

Greeting

The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.
And also with you.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who makes all things new,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One, source of our renewal,
**we confess that we are wrapped up in sin,
and cannot free ourselves.
We have not practiced your righteousness.
Our hearts have turned away from you.**

**For the sake of the world you so love,
forgive us,
that we may be reconciled to one another
for the glory of your holy name.**

Amen.

Thus says our God:

“The former things have come to pass
and new things I now declare.”

God's mercy makes us new.

We are forgiven in the name of † Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“Christ, Be Our Light”

#715 vs. 1,3,4,5

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 58:1-9a

¹Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

²Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

³“Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers.

⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

^{9a}Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

Children's Message

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-20

[Jesus said:] ¹³“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

I am a part of a group on Facebook that is specifically for ELCA Lutheran Pastor Dads, and earlier this week one of the dads came to the group with a quandary. He has a baptism this Sunday, and the child's name is Cash. Part of the Baptismal Liturgy says, “when you bring *child's name* to receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism...” and he pointed out that it goes against everything that we believe as Lutherans for him to say:

“As you bring Cash to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism...”

We'll return to that momentarily, but it is good to remember as we dig into this Gospel text.

There seem to be two parts to this text. And, unfortunately we have to read the text in order, and in doing so we get the second part second, but more specifically, the last line of the second part.

And it sticks with us.

“²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

We have come to understand that Jesus doesn't necessarily preach in favor of the scribes and Pharisees all too often, in fact he will frequently say “don't be like them.”

Yet, here it would seem that Jesus would want us to strive to be as righteous as them, and then some. This just doesn't seem right.

The scribes were strict interpreters of the law and the Pharisees applied the law to ordinary, daily life, and not necessarily in a good and nice way.

But.

If we go back and read the first part of this Gospel text, we start to see this second part in a different light.

Have you ever had salt go bad? I found myself wondering earlier this week if that is something that can actually happen. I don't know of anyone that has ever had a salt supply sit long enough to actually go bad. And, even if we don't use salt all that often, our guests do, because it gives flavor. And flavor is good.

Jesus goes on to say that you would never light a lamp only to hide it under a bushel basket. Of course not, you light a lamp to serve the purpose of providing light.

Salt and light have a purpose. Jesus calls us to use them.

He even goes as far as to give us what would become a part of that very Baptismal Liturgy that we previously mentioned. And this is where we find God's grace and mercy in this text.

Jesus explicitly tells the crowd to which he is speaking that they carry with them the salt and light that the world needs. In his using the scribes and Pharisees as an example, he isn't saying that we should strive to be like them, but the exact opposite. If we strive to follow the laws that they strictly adhere to, and only do that, we are doing it wrong. Those laws are good, yes, but they must be viewed through the lens of love for your neighbor.

When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus is quoted as saying we should indeed strive to love God with every fiber of our being (which to the scribes and Pharisees meant to follow the rule of law to the T)...but Jesus adds that the second is like. "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

God's law realized in Jesus Christ is about more than the strict rule of law found in the books that they cling to, it is about living out the love of Christ in the world that we freely receive in baptism.

Baptism, and God's grace therein, is indeed not something that we need to bring cash to receive. Rather, it is the opposite. In baptism God's grace and mercy is freely given to us.

But.

There is also a call.

"Let your light so shine before others that they might see your good deeds and give thanks to your God in heaven."

It isn't about us. It never is. God in Jesus Christ, through baptism, calls us to be the salt and the light that the world so desperately needs. No one sets the salt on a shelf to go bad, or lights a candle to hide it. No. Those things are done and intended to be shared. So share them.

And here is the good news for you. I happened to find some expired salt in a cupboard, and I can assure you, salt that has passed its expiration date is still salty.

Perhaps you feel that you no longer have salt to give this world, or a light to shine, but the world still needs the salt you bring and the light you have to share. Even if the world says the salt you bring is expired and you think your light is too dim to do any good.

God in Jesus Christ, through our baptism, calls us to share it. Those laws that we so dearly cling to are all good and wonderful, but if we look at them as the end all to any discussion around God's kingdom, and don't look at them through a lens of love for neighbor, then we are doing it wrong.

To exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is to love first and foremost.

Go and be the salt.

Go and let your light shine.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Call your people to seek your wisdom in difficult conversations and action. Give the church everywhere courage to repent for the ways we have tolerated and practiced injustice. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Inspire our wonder at creation, from the light of dawn to the beauty of the dark night. Sustain the unseen depths of the ocean to the plants and animals we know well. Bring healing to lands and communities experiencing natural disasters. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Instruct the powerful in your ways. Provide upright leadership in business and industry, that workers are not oppressed. Throughout the world, inspire voters and raise up politicians to heed your call for nations to practice righteousness. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Loosen the bonds of injustice in our midst. Grant peace to endless quarrels, put an end to hunger, and break every yoke of oppression. Shelter all who flee abuse in their homes or violence in their communities. Satisfy those afflicted in any way (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Verna, Irene, Connie, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Don and Betty*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Shape our congregation to be salt for the earth. Give us delight in your commandments, that we are generous with those in need. Make us steadfast in our trust in you, ready with tangible mercy and compassion for our neighbors. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

The cross and resurrection bring redemption from sin and death. We praise you for *and*) all whose unshaken faith in Christ shines forth in their witness. Keep them in our remembrance and bring us with them into the kingdom of heaven. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.
Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Liberating God,
you break the bonds of injustice
and let the oppressed go free.
Receive these offerings in thanksgiving
for all your works of merciful power,
and shape us as people of your justice and freedom.
You we magnify and adore, through Jesus our Savior,
Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Communion

Prayer

Holy One,
we thank you for the healing
that springs forth abundantly from this table.
Renew our strength to do justice,
love kindness,
and journey humbly with you.
Amen.

Blessing

The God who faithfully brings forth justice
and breaks the oppressor's rod
✠ bless, strengthen, and uphold you,
today and always.
Amen.

Sending Song

"This Little Light of Mine"

#677

Dismissal

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.
Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!
And all of Good Shepherd said,
AMEN!

Announcements

This Sunday, February 5, we will be celebrating Scout Sunday as we will have scouts from Troop 124 helping lead worship and serving a wonderful brunch following worship!

Prayer Pals!

With Valentine's day just a couple of weeks away, and being a church with the mission to make "Each person known - seen - loved" we are launching cross-generational prayer partners.

Parents, there is a form for you to fill out for your children.

Adults, there is a form for you to fill out for yourselves.

Children will then be matched with an AAA Adult (Authentic, Affirming, Available) to have as a prayer partner.

In the event that we have more adults than children, we will match adults with adults hoping to still cross generations. Matches will be made February 19. If you would like to be matched with someone, please contact the church office.



After the first Sunday of our Living Into Our Mission Stewardship Appeal, we've already had 29 families respond with a statement of intent. Of those families, nearly 70% indicated that they are growing in giving! That's amazing generosity. To the families who have responded so far, thank you! If you haven't had a chance to join them, we encourage you to do so by February 12!

2023 Financial Snapshot

Total Revenue	\$35,318
General Offering	\$34,025
Other Revenue	\$1,293
<hr/>	
Total Expenses	\$27,631
YTD Difference	+\$7,646

2023 Expense Breakdown

Staff	\$12,557
Administration	\$1,303
Hospitality	\$0
Property	\$12,043 *\$7,000 Xcel Bill
Worship and Music	\$11
Faith Development	\$263
Evangelism	\$0
Missions	\$0
Mortgage/Interest	\$810
Stewardship	\$644