

Sixth Sunday After Epiphany
February 12, 2023

In today's reading from Deuteronomy we are called to choose life by loving and obeying God. Much of today's gospel reading echoes portions of the Ten Commandments. Jesus' instructions to the crowd reveal a pattern of behavior that honors both God and the neighbor, resulting in life and health for the whole community. We too are invited to embrace these commandments, not out of fear of retribution, but because God has promised that to do so means life for us.

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

“Lord, I Lift Your Name on High”

#857

Prayer of the Day

O God, the strength of all who hope in you, because we are weak mortals we accomplish nothing good without you. Help us to see and understand the things we ought to do, and give us grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

[Moses said to the people:] ¹⁵See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Children's Message

Gospel: Matthew 5:21-37

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”

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

Jesus tackles some hot button issues in this section of his sermon on the mount. Murder. Adultery. Divorce. Breaking your word.

These topics are all topics that had widely held beliefs, but as he works his way through, the shared feelings on each becomes less and less. There was much more commonality around the topic of murder, than there was around the topic of breaking a vow.

Jesus is speaking into the issues that the church of his time faced.

And we know that the church of this time can relate. There are issues where we are closely aligned such as murder, while there are other issues that have splintered the church because of the many varied feelings around them.

It does us well to realize how Jesus goes about discussing these topics, because in that, we hear our call as church.

“You have heard that it was said....but I say to you.”

We are a week removed from Jesus reminding us through his talking to the crowd about the laws that they hold so dearly, that those laws are all good and well, but we also must look at them through the lens of love for our neighbor.

Jesus continues this idea of taking into consideration the “other” in this portion of his sermon. Jesus uses these examples, and shifts the understanding to be more about the larger element of upholding trust and compassion in human community.

Yes we all agree that murder is bad, so let’s maintain a certain level of trust and compassion in human community where quarrels are settled before murder becomes the seemingly only remaining option.

Jesus does more than just talk to the people of his time. As with everything that Jesus teaches there is a message for us as well.

As Jesus uses topics that the church of his time can easily connect with, his “you have heard that it is said...but I say to you” applies to the church and time we live in now.

What if we let ourselves get away from the large difficult topics that want to dominate our attention, and think about the things where “we have heard that it was said?”

What are those things that we have heard that we cannot do as church? Who are those people or demographics that we have heard it said that we cannot reach? Who have we heard that it was said cannot partake in the Lord’s Supper because of XYZ?

And now, what do we hear when Jesus says, “but I say to you?”

Again, Jesus is about upholding trust and compassion in communities. That is his desire. Jesus is all about relationship.

So, do we hear Jesus’ “but I say to you,” as a “keep doing what you’re doing? Or, do we hear it is a “this is where you’re missing.

It is a challenge. It is a challenge to hear “you’ve heard that it was said that the way it has always been done is enough, but I say to you this is what more you could be doing.”

Jesus calling us into unknown places is scary territory. But, he does it for the building up of the Body of Christ.

And maybe, just maybe, this is Jesus speaking directly to you saying, “you have heard that it was said that this love is not for you. But I say to you that it is.”

People of God, no matter what the institutions that the church has become tells us about who can and cannot receive God’s grace, Jesus tells us it is for us all. That means you, and the people you might not think it includes.

“You have heard that it was said” that there is a way that things ought to be done. “But Jesus says to you” that, indeed, is not the only way.

God in Jesus Christ continues to call us out of our comfort zones, the comfort of doing it how we have always done it, and into a life where God in Jesus Christ is taking us to new places, reaching new people, sharing God’s love with those who’ve always felt it was not for them.

That is what this Gospel text is about. No, of course we shouldn’t murder. But it is about more than that. We should strive to live in the transformational love of Christ to foster communities where healing and wholeness is the first step. Where reconciliation is the end game and not being the one that is right.

That is what God calls us to as people of faith. Let us live that calling, being open to learning where God in Jesus Christ is leading us.

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.

Inspire your church that it may be a sign of life throughout the world. From the exploration of faith with children and new believers to missionaries and bishops, shape lives of faithfulness, so that all find abundant life in your ways. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Nourish your creation. Accompany all who plant and water. Bless the work of farmers; provide for subsistence farmers facing drought and climate change. Guide the work of agricultural scientists toward sustainable ways to feed the world. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Give growth where there seems to be no hope for life. In nations and regions where reconciliation seems impossible (*especially*), empower peacemakers with your Spirit. Where death holds sway through violence, disease, and hunger, equip relief workers to bring hope. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Nurture all in need (*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*). Bring healing to all who experience trauma caused by systems of injustice and destructive relationships. Give courage to those struggling to repent and those seeking reconciliation. Sustain all who work for restoration (*local restorative efforts may be named*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Encourage this congregation. Call us to a common purpose and keep us from quarrelling. Turn our hearts toward you and guide our leaders, so that our choices may be lifegiving for all. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Thanks be to you for the lives of all who have died in Christ. Teach us to follow them in your ways and gather us with them into the promise of eternal life with you. 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

"Go, My Children, with My Blessing"

#543 vs. 1,3

Dismissal

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

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.

February Financial Snapshot

The numbers thru February 8:

Total Revenue **\$5,108**

Total Expenses **\$10,694**

Current Difference
-\$5,586

What's to come:

3 more Sundays Offering
1 more payroll

Last February Offering:
\$20,667

Budgeted Expense/Revenue
\$29,017



It's Culver's night for Roosevelt Elementary

Please join Roosevelt families and staff at the Folsom Street Culver's from 4-7 p.m. The Roosevelt PTA will receive 10% of all sales. These funds will go into their general fund to help support all the programs the PTA offers.



Feb. 14



Soup Supper from 4:30-6 p.m.

Our prayers and sympathies go to former members, the Hangartner family, in the death of Betty on Feb. 4. Her funeral will be at Trinity Lutheran Church on Friday, Feb. 17 at 11 a.m. with visitation from 9-11. If you would like to send a card to the family, please contact DeAnne in the office (715-834-2959).