

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost - September 24th, 2023

This week marks the beginning of our five week Worship Series looking at our values. We ask the question: Who are we? This week starts to answer that question. The Strategic Plan team, through much discernment, listening, and conversation, has identified the statements that we will dig into each of the next five weeks. Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd values deep & meaningful relationships that cross generations for the sake of the Gospel.

Greeting – The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be God,
the one who forms us,
✠ Jesus who bears the cross,
the Spirit who makes our joy complete.

Amen.

Let us bow before God in humility,
confessing our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Steadfast and faithful God,
**you have revealed the ways of justice,
yet we fail to follow you.**

**We are overwhelmed
by the world's violence and suffering.
We are afraid to risk what we have
for the sake of others.**

**For the harm we have caused,
known and unknown, forgive us.
For the unjust demands we place on others
and your creation, forgive us.**

**For the ways we turn away
from you and our neighbor, forgive us.**

**Lead us back to you
and set us on the right path;
in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior.**

Amen.

Beloved in Christ,
God's justice stretches beyond all understanding.
God's compassion is beyond compare.
In Jesus, God is always making a new way for us.
In ✠ Christ, you are already and always forgiven.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“Praise and Thanksgiving”

#689 vs. 1,2,4

Prayer of the Day

Ever present and renewing God, you call us to this time and this place for your purpose. Help us to see your purpose for us in our lives as people of faith and together as a community of faith. Help us to remember that it is YOU that is active in all that we do. **Amen.**

Reading from Deuteronomy 6:1-9

6 Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, 2 so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. 7 Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, 9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Children's Message

Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark 12:28-34

²⁸ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³² Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; ³³ and 'to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

Sermon

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

Leading up to this story in Mark's Gospel, Jesus has ruffled some feathers. He has been questioned about paying taxes, he has discussed the resurrection, and folk, surprisingly, are none too pleased with him.

So, one of the scribes came to speak to him.

As often is the case, you might say that Jesus is tested here. But this scribe also knows that Jesus is going to answer the questions that he asks. He knows there will be a conversation. He knows he won't be shut down.

So, he asks: Teacher, which commandment is the first of all?"

This scribe knows the answer. As any devout Jew would know that the answer to this question is the very text we heard from Deuteronomy. It is known as the *Shema*, which in Hebrew translates "hear."

Jesus, being a devout Jew himself, also knows this. And gives him the answer he was looking for. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our god, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

That is the right answer. The answer the scribe was looking for. But Jesus doesn't stop at giving that first commandment.

He goes on. "The second is this, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Jesus does not put one of these above the other. Other Gospels having Jesus saying that "love your neighbor as yourself" is *like* the first. Meaning, to love your neighbor as yourself is to love God with every fiber of your being and to love God with every fiber of your being is to love your neighbor as yourself. You can't have one without the other.

Jesus knew this because of tradition. Some 1500 years after Moses would have given this commandment to his followers, Jesus recites it. It is ritual for Jews to recite this when they rise in the morning and lay down at night. It is their faith tradition. It is their command to pass this on so that their children and their children's children may come to know God.

We all have our own traditions like this. If I were to ask you to fill in the blanks of this statement, *My family does _____ because we have always done _____*, I'd bet you'd have little difficulty coming up with a response. We've all got our traditions that have been passed on from generation to generation.

Today we are kicking off our 5 week series hearing about our values as a congregation. These values are a result of the extensive listening that the Strategic Plan team has done through congregation conversations, congregation surveys, and community conversations. These values are the things that we as Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd will not waver on. And, the umbrella statement that defines Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd is that we value deep and meaningful relationships that cross generations for the sake of the Gospel.

Think about your history at LCGS. How many of you have spent time here with multiple generations of your family? How many of you started at Good Shepherd with a generation of your family above you, and have come to see the next generation of your family be a part of this faith community?

It is our call as a community of faith to pass along that faith to generations to come. To share it with our children and our children's children, so that they come to know that the love of God in Christ Jesus is for them, and for their neighbor, too.

The scribe that questions Jesus is pleased with the answer he receives. He applauds him for naming BOTH of the commandments as what is important to their faith, and he takes it a step further in what is perhaps a cautionary tale for us as church today.

Loving God with every fiber of our being and loving our neighbor as ourself is "much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And, Jesus is pleased to hear that. "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."

We so often base our worth in God's Kingdom on the offering we give. But Jesus calls us, urges us, to think about those things we might not be so willing to sacrifice in order to ensure that our neighbor comes to know God's love through us. This conversation tells us that if our focus is on the offering we make and not the love that we share with and for others, then we are straying from God's desire for God's kingdom.

Jesus calls us to a new tradition as communities of faith. The scribe senses that the traditions of the church in his time are becoming more and more tied to the offering they give, and less and less about the love they offer for the other.

People of God, let us allow ourselves to wonder what the future of God's church and the world it exists in might look like if the tradition that we pass on to our children and our children's children is how we love our neighbor.

Let us ask ourselves what traditions we ARE passing on to the next generation, and what traditions we should be passing on.

Let us wonder together what we are doing to ensure that ALL of God's children are experiencing the love of God in Christ Jesus because of our actions as this gathered body of Christ.

Let us strive to ensure that all experience God's Kingdom on earth.

Let us continue to be a church that values deep and meaningful relationships that cross generations for the sake of the Gospel.

Thanks be to God.
AMEN

**Baptism of Bentley Robert Britten
Son of Ryan and Kelsey Britten**

Apostle's Creed

Prayers of Intercession

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

A brief silence.

Holy God, you give the law that your people live by it and flourish. Write your law on the hearts of all who bear your name, and teach us to love your commandments, that we live as you intend. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Holy God, you plant the earth and water it and bring forth a fruitful harvest. Send favorable weather, just wages, and the bounty of your abundance to all who are engaged in the labor of harvest. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Holy God, you watch over the ways of the righteous and judge your people with fairness. Guide judges, courts, elected officials, and all those tasked with upholding the law, inspiring them with your wisdom and zeal for justice. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Holy God, you hold your people in love and surround them with your mercy. Draw near to all who are in need (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Verna, Irene, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Cherri, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Ada*). Be their rest and comfort. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Holy God, you call us to love one another as we love ourselves. Give us the will and patience to love those who are difficult to love. Bless all the ministries of this congregation through which we show love for our neighbors (*especially*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Holy God, you have broken the chains of death and daily make all things new. We give you thanks for the witness of those who've come before us, passing on the traditions of our faith. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

God of power, God of plenty,
all things belong to you.

We bring your gifts to the table,
that all might be fed.

Form us into the body of your Beloved,
Jesus Christ, 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 #471 and #483

Prayer

Blessed be your name, O God,
for we have feasted on your Word,
Christ Jesus, the joy and delight of our hearts.
Strengthened by this food,
send us to gather the world to your banquet,
where none are left out and all are satisfied.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. God is at work in you.

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!

And all of Good Shepherd said...

AMEN!

Sending Song

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”

#543 vs. 1,3

Blessing

The God of glory,
✠ Jesus Christ, name above all names,
and the Spirit who lives in you,
bless you now and forever.

Amen.

September Financial Snapshot

Your Generosity in Action:

This Sunday, if you can believe it, is the final Sunday of the 3rd quarter, which means it is the final Sunday of our Mission Well Offering going to Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services.

Get that loose change and dollars ready for those kids!

THANK YOU!!

Through September 20

Total Revenue **\$15,452**

1 Sunday offerings remain

Total Expenses **\$17,831**

Last year: \$19,931

Difference to date:

-\$2,379



Why new signs, you ask?

A couple of reasons:

A couple of times in our relatively recent history we've had a building consultant (professional visitor/opinion giver) come and take a walk through our building. One of the things we heard in both of those visits was that, "the more hurdles I have to clear (in my mind) to come into fellowship time, the lesser the chance that I do. So," they said, "if I think that your main entrance is the carport entrance (nowhere near the fellowship hall) then chances are that I'm not going to come down to fellowship (at the other end of the hall from where I want to exit)."

Our Strategic Plan Process (your responses to the survey) told us that people who engage in fellowship time on a Sunday morning find it hugely impactful (one of the most impactful things we offer at Good Shepherd) however, the number of people who go to fellowship time is very low. Hugely impactful. Low engagement. So, how do we address it? Well, we listened to the building consultant and we think that it would be AWESOME if the entrance by the fellowship hall (the Fellowship Hall Entrance) became our main entrance/exit. Thus, people will walk past fellowship time on their way to their vehicles and maybe, just maybe, they'll come in and be a part of a HUGELY IMPACTFUL time of fellowship.

Now, we can't make you follow the signage that directs you to use the large part of the parking lot on Sunday morning and directs you to the Fellowship Hall Entrance, but we can tell you that we really want you to. And, we hope you'll listen.

Why? Because we think it is worth your time in your life of faith to take part in fellowship on Sunday morning.

We know it will take some getting used to, and we know we can't force you to do anything, but we do believe the more we can steer folks towards Fellowship Time, the better off we will be as a congregation!