

Sunday, October 4, 2020

Parking Lot Worship Services: Sundays, 8:45 a.m. at Trinity and 10:15 at St. John's – Weather permitting. We will hold services in our church parking lot. You may sit in your cars or bring a lawn chair.

18th Sunday after Pentecost Devotional

Greeting

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

Prayer of the Day

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalm 80:7-15 A community prayers for restoration

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

You have brought a vine out of Egypt; you cast out the nations and planted it.

You cleared the ground for it; it took root and filled the land.

The mountains were covered by its shadow and the towering cedar trees by its boughs. R

You stretched out its tendrils to the sea and its branches to the river.

Why have you broken down its wall, so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?

The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it, and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.

Turn now, O God of hosts, look down from heaven;

behold and tend this vine; preserve what your right hand has planted.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.

[Paul writes:] If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-46

Jesus tells a parable to the religious leaders who are plotting his death, revealing that their plans will, ironically, bring about the fulfillment of scripture.

[Jesus said to the people:] “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Message: “Remember Who We Are”

Sometimes I forget things. Just ask my wife, my secretary, or anybody who works with me. And it scares me when I remember that I forgot. So much so that I actually find comfort when I remember what I forgot. So, in the meantime, I ask you to be patient with me. If I forget something, please don’t get angry with me just remind me, especially if it is important to you. And when we do this with each other we just might find a bit of heaven here on earth.

With that in mind, do you remember the Ten Commandments?

- I am the Lord your God you shall have no other gods.
- Do not take the name of God in vain.
- Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
- Honor your parents and your elders.
- Do not kill, commit adultery, steal, lie about your neighbor,
or covet or desire to have your neighbor’s possessions.

Do we remember these, but most of all do we practice them? How many times do we put God’s words second or third, or not at all in making life decisions? Or do we just plain forget that we are children of God? Let’s put ourselves in God’s shoes when it comes to the commandments that’s if God wears shoes. How do you like it, when others put you last when you should be first? Like, when your husband forgets your wedding anniversary and when you remind them, they say, oh yea, but you know that I love you, don’t you? How do you like it when others use your name in vain like, children asking their dad if it is alright to go to a party and he responds, have you asked your mother? To which they say, “I’m sure that it will be fine with her, dad, we don’t have to ask her!” How, do you like being dishonored by those younger than you, especially your children? You bring them into this world, give them all they need and then when you ask them to do a few chores around the house they won’t. And when you remind them, they get mad at you. How would you like being killed for any reason? How do you like it when someone sees you for only what they can get from you? How would you like to be robbed, or be taken advantage of for any reason? How do you like it when others gossip about you? Especially, when they say things that are not even true? How do you like it others are jealous of what you have?

According to our Christian traditions, the Ten Commandments are the basic rules for life. They are very simple. They are easily understood. They are hard to argue with. And I would say that most people agree with them, but they are also easily forgotten. Why, because we want to be the god of our own lives and everyone else's.

Because of this we so easily forget the Ten Commandments and most of all, Jesus. Why, because we want to own our lives, our property and everything else. We want to be in charge of our lives. If I were in control of my life, I know that I wouldn't be going bald. You can see how that is going. But, look at how the world operates. Just about every advertisement says, "Take control." "For just a few small payments, you can own this." It's all about control and power even over those little guys who live under your toenails. Or worse yet, that mucus guy that live in your sinuses. We desire possessions and to have control them too and we will do almost anything to get them. We will even cheat, steal and even kill for somethings. Yet when we die, somebody else will possess whatever we thought that we owned. I have seen children just waiting for their parents to die just to get their hands on their parent's money and property. I have read the history of armies going to war in the name of God ending up controlling all the land that they conquered. In South Africa there was an old native saying that came about after the invasion of the Europeans, "They came with Bibles in their hands when we had the all land. Now, we have the Bibles in our hands and they have all the land."

When we hear such stories, we can understand the wrong that has been committed. In the first Star Wars movie, remember what Darth Vader wanted Luke Skywalker to do? With his gravely, deep, authoritative voice he tries to lure Luke Skywalker to the, "dark side." And what were we thinking, "No Luke! You're a Jedi. You are a good guy, remember the Jedi force is with you."

In those situations, we all know right from wrong, but we so easily forget it in our own lives. When God calls us to keep the commandments, there is always a small voice saying, "It's OK to overlook one or two." We may expect this voice to sound like Darth Vader, but the voice is usually much more subtle. Or, like the song by Terri Gibbs:

Somebody's knocking should I let him in
Lord it's the devil would you look at him
I've heard about him but I never dreamed
He'd have blue eyes and blue jeans

When God tells us not to use God's name superstitiously, or to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, so many times, we just forget. Awhile back I dropped one of my tools on my bare foot. To me more specific, my big toe. Even though my first rule when working with tools is always wear shoes - and guess how I came up with that rule - I didn't heed my own rule and it hurt really bad and without thinking I took God's name in vain.

When it comes to God, we forget because we believe, without thought, that we are the gods of our own lives, or that God is on our side just because we are Christian. Whenever we say that we have more important things to do than listen to God's word, or when we use God's name without respect, we do so because we believe that God isn't really going to send us to hell over something so trivial. But when we forget God, which is living without God, we are already on the door steps of hell. And then when someone reminds us that we are not God, or that God may not be on our side, like our parents, spouse, pastors, or especially foreigners, **what do we do?** We get angry and sometimes angry enough to do evil things.

Why do we get angry? because someone dared to challenge us with the truth.

The truth, that we are not God, only children of God.

The truth, that, we do not really own my own lives.

The truth, that, everything we have belongs to God.

The truth, that we are only human beings who owe everything to God.

The strange thing is that we already know all this and we understand all this. It's only when we forget God that all this happens and that is why Jesus calls us over and over again, saying repent and follow me.

That is why Jesus was crucified.

We don't want to follow God,

We want to own God,

We want God working for us when we should be working in the vineyard for God

Like the movies we see we know who the good guys are and we cheer them on to do good especially when they start to forget why they are the good guys. Jesus too, calls us to be the good guys. But too often we forget that we are children of God. All Jesus is doing, is calling us to bear good fruit. All Jesus is doing is reminding us who we are and whose we are. That is why we hear those words in the institution of Holy Communion, "Eat this bread and drink this wine in the remembrance of me."

Remember Jesus, who reminds us that we are children of God, nothing more, nothing less. And when we do, we can then say what the thief on the cross said, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." To which Jesus will say, "Today, you will be with me in paradise."

Prayers of Intercession

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Holy God, you call us to work for peace and justice in your vineyard. Refresh the church with your life, that we may bear fruit through work and service. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Thank you for the abundant harvest of the earth. Bless and care for those whose hands bring the fruits of the earth to the tables of all who hunger. May we be inspired by your servants who cared deeply for your creation especially Francis of Assisi, whom we commemorate today. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Curb the impulses of greed and pride that lead us to take advantage of others. Grant that world leaders to seek the fruits of the kingdom for the good and welfare of all people. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Sustain all who suffer with the promise of new life. Assured of your presence, heal our pain and suffering, and equip us to embrace all bodies aching for wholeness of mind, body, and soul. We call to mind those who are struggling today (please pray for someone in need of healing). Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. Thanks be to God.