

Sermon for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost October 5, 2025 jj
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✠ sdg ✠

Martin Luther had a keen insight into our habit of self-examination, didn't he? Touch your body! You have no choice but to admit you have real, honest to goodness flesh and blood! Look around you! There is no way to disprove the fact that you are living in the world.

But then the Blessed Reformer, and this is October, remember, so we're going to hear a lot about him by the end of the month, Dr. Luther adds one more step to his spiritual prescription for us: now read what the Scriptures say about your flesh; consider the Bible's testimony about the world.

That one tends to miss our attention, or at least it is not as instinctive as it should be. When we touch our body to see that it is there, our instant reaction is to hold that attention on ourselves. Our hunch is to tell ourselves some way we could improve what is going on with our flesh. Or if our flesh is leading us into a temptation of some kind, we might have found a creative excuse for it to do so: the devil is always floating those suggestions to us, and we readily bite like a fish to a shiny spinner lure.

As we consider the world around us, we find ourselves interpreting it like some brainy or popular expert talking head on the so-called news station. Have you ever wondered why "Hitler" is the overwhelming comparison standard that's found in conversations and social media posts? Our world has gone from holding up a universal positive example to which we should strive, like Jesus, because clearly, it's too politically incorrect to revere Jesus, to instead going

the other way and creating an almost-mythological monster, never mind that he actually lived during the previous century and led a country that still exists today. History is not the point of using "Hitler;" the point is Hitler stands as a symbol of the totally repugnant opponent, who is not you, who threatens you, who just because of who he or she is doesn't have a right to say anything, and some may get so worked up as to say they are doing a service to all if they get rid of such a so-called Hitler.

Luther says don't fall for this worldly tactic! Look around you and see that you are in the world, THEN look up in the Bible what God says the world is! This way, you will interpret correctly what the world is all about and what it, along with the other enemies, the devil and your own flesh, are constantly attempting to do to you to tear away your trust in Christ Jesus, and set you into a frenzied flight away from whatever is branded as totally repugnant, but never fully described or identified.

The world is constantly in love with death and grudges. Christ offers you true freedom in Him; a love of life and of unconditional forgiveness, paid for by what He came to do: take your place, suffer and die for your sins, and rise from the dead to declare you fully accepted, precious in His sight. Jesus said, forgive your neighbor seven times in one day, if it needs to come down to that. You know He came back to this topic over and over again, because in another place Jesus is recorded as saying, you must forgive a brother a total of not just seven times, but seventy-times-seven.

The point is, forgiveness is not something you have to dig inside of yourself to try to find it, then you can give it out to people who hurt you. Forgiveness comes from the Forgiver, God the Father, and He forgives because He punished the One and Only Son instead of all the Sinners. So then the Father and Son send the Spirit to be a breath of forgiveness, washed in the water of Baptism, to proclaim that forgiveness to you and then through you to those whom you forgive. No more ledger-keeping, no more scores to settle. Jesus paid it; all is complete. That you will not find in this world. That's actually repulsive and bigoted in the eyes of the world.

That is why the Prophet Habakkuk looks around, initially aghast at the terror, the violence, the perversion of justice. He worries and even complains that the world looks like God is sitting back idly while evil rules the day, and he didn't even have Facebook or TikTok or cable news! But then God speaks into the whirling storm of Habakkuk's anxiety, also into your confusion that can try to take your eyes off of Jesus, and He says, the righteous shall live by faith, that is, by trusting in Me, the author of your salvation.

That's how the enemies of devil, world and flesh are conquered, not by doing better, being better, trying harder. Trust in Jesus, hear His invitation to come to Him and drink of His living water, eat His feast of Body and Blood for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall live in quiet confidence and hope for a bright future, one day rid of sin and the curse that afflicts you, totally gone.

This is how you prepare yourself adequately for the Sacrament of the Altar, like it's your greatest and best feast you've ever tasted or

ever will taste, like it's a glowing pearl of Divine life, under a common, ordinary wafer and in a simple chalice of wine. It's forgiveness so good, you can taste it.

And when you touch your body, when you look around at the world, Go ahead and do the next step that Martin Luther suggests, and read those Scripture passages about what God says about those enemies you have to face in your life. Read also what Jesus Christ has done to defeat those enemies definitively, and claim for you the ultimate victory when He rose from the dead on the third day, physically, with His human body.

Then as you eat and drink at the Lord's Supper, you are reminded that coming soon for you, nobody knows when, will be that forever feast that you've tasted here at the Communion rail in bits and pieces, but there will be life in its fullest, God given glory, all for you.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.