



THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 29, 2021

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Jesus protests against human customs being given the weight of divine law, while the essence of God's law is ignored. True uncleanness comes not from external things, but from the intentions of the human heart. Last week Jesus told us "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63).

Now James says God has given us birth by the word of truth. We

who were washed in the word when we were born in the font return to it every Sunday to ask God to create in us clean hearts.

✝ GATHERING ✝

OPENING HYMN *Gather Us In* #718 (blue)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS on screen

GREETING on screen

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P. O God, we thank You for Your Son Who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by His example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow His commands; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. Amen.

✝ WORD ✝

FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

The Israelites believed the law was a divine gift that provided guidelines for living out the covenant. Moses commands the people to obey the law and to neither add to nor subtract from it. The Israelites are also to teach the law to their children and their children's children..

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you.

⁶You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" ⁷For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the

LORD our God is whenever we call to Him? ⁸And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

⁹But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

L. The Word of the Lord. C. Thanks be to God.

PSALM 15

LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle?

LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle?

Who may abide upon your holy hill?

²Whoever leads a blameless life and does what is right,
who speaks the truth from his heart,

³there is no guile upon his tongue; he does no evil to his friend;
he does not heap contempt upon his neighbor.

⁴In his sight the wicked is rejected,
but he honors those who fear the LORD.

⁵He has sworn to do no wrong
and does not take back his word.

⁶He does not give his money in hope of gain,
nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

⁷Whoever does these things
shall never be overthrown.

SECOND READING: James 1:17-27

The letter of James was intended to provide first-century Christians with instruction in godly behavior. Here Christians are encouraged to listen carefully and to act on what they hear, especially by caring for those least able to care for themselves.

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸In fulfillment of His own purpose He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of His creatures.

¹⁹You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. ²¹Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

²²But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

L. The Word of the Lord. C. Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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HOLY GOSPEL: St. Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Mark's gospel depicts Jesus as challenging traditional ways in which religious people determine what is pure or impure. For Jesus, the observance of religious practices cannot become a substitute for godly words or deeds that spring from a faithful heart.

C. Glory to You, O Lord.

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around [Jesus], ²they noticed that some of His disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. ³(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) ⁵So the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" ⁶He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

'This people honors Me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from Me;
⁷in vain do they worship Me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.'

⁸You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

¹⁴Then He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

²¹For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, ²²adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. ²³All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

P. The Gospel of the Lord.

C. Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways

#480 (grn)

SHARING THE PEACE OF THE LORD

ANNOUNCEMENTS

✠ PRAYER ✠

OFFERING/OFFERTORY



Re - mem - ber and re - joice, re - newed by floods of grace.
God, bless us by your grace; re - mind us of your care.



We bear the sign of Je - sus Christ, that time can - not e - rase.
Re - new - ing Spir - it, fill us now, in - spire our work, our prayer.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

P. Merciful Father,

C. we offer with joy and thanksgiving what You have first given us – our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of Your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of Him Who gave Himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

THE LORD'S PRAYER

✠ SENDING ✠

BENEDICTION

P. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. May you be rooted and grounded in His love.
Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C. Amen

CLOSING HYMN

For the Beauty of the Earth

#561(gm)

DISMISSAL

P. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

C. Thanks be to God.

A Feast of Grace

Five loaves of bread. Two fish. Thousands of hungry people. Baskets and baskets of leftovers. Today's gospel is a story of startling juxtaposition and miraculous transformation.

It is a story in which God comes in the way God always does—in ordinary elements and imperfect circumstances. Jesus gathers up perceived scarcity, holds questions and fears of inadequacy, and turns meager offerings into a feast of grace for all. And there is enough—enough for everyone to have as much as they could ever want, with plenty to spare. It's a feast that meets physical needs and nourishes physical bodies, and through the mystery of faith also unites the feasters with God and one another.

As we hear these words from John, we too are invited to this ordinary and holy feast. It's a feast that crosses time and space to welcome us in and to send us out. We too get to rejoice in the transformation that happens when we show up to worship, with hands open to receive and a deep hunger for new life.

We recognize our hunger in confession and prayer. We feast on the promises of God's word. We taste God's abundance at the communion table. We are drenched in God's generous love in the waters of baptism. We are joined with the other perfectly ordinary and holy banquet-goers as we raise our voices together in song. And we extend this exuberant lovingkindness to the world when we go forth from worship, filled with hope and prepared for service in Christ's name.

With Christ as the host, there is forever enough food for all. Christ's table is one brimming with grace. All of us are invited, just as we are, with whatever meager offerings we have. For we can trust that in Christ, it is more than enough.

Upcoming Commemorations

Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, bishop, renewer of the church, died 1872

Thursday, September 2, 2021

Grundtvig was, with Søren Kierkegaard, one of the two great Danish theologians of the nineteenth century. As a pastor, he battled the prevalent idea that Christianity was more a philosophy than divine revelation. He wrote over a thousand hymns.

Acknowledgements

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