

Worship
The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 6, 2020

Introduction

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

P. = Pastor

W. = Worship Assistant

A. = All in attendance

Gathering/Announcements

Prelude: "Improvisation on "Hymn to Joy"

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

P. Let us confess our sin in the presence of God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P. Gracious God,

A. have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

P. God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

A. Amen.

Opening Hymn # 836 "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"

Hymn to Joy

- A.** 1. Joyful, joyful we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love!
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before thee, praising thee, their sun above
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the gloom of doubt away.
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.
3. Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our brother, all who live in love are thine;
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine!

Greeting

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

A. And also with you.

Kyrie (said)

W. Have mercy on us, Lord, and hear our solemn prayer.

A. We come to hear your living word; it saves us from despair.

W. Have mercy on us, Christ, and wash away our sin.

A. Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may begin.

W. Have mercy on us, Lord, make sin and shame depart.

A. Renew us with your saving pow'r; create in us new hearts!

Canticle of Praise (said)

W. Glory be to God in heaven; peace, goodwill to all the earth.

**A. Mighty God of all creation, Father of surpassing worth:
we exalt you, we adore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.**

**Saints and angels bow before you; here on earth our songs we raise.
Glory be to Christ forever, Lamb of God and Lord of love.**

**Son of God and gracious Savior, you have come from heav'n above;
on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.
Hear our prayer; restore, forgive us; in your promise firm we stand.**

**Holy One we now acclaim you; Lord alone, to you we call;
Holy One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:
Jesus Christ, with God the Spirit, in the Father's splendor bright.
For the peace that we inherit, glory be to God on high!**

The Prayer of the Day

P. Let us pray.

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A. Amen.

First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-11

God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.

W. ⁷So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

¹⁰Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" ¹¹Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

W. The Word of the Lord.

A. Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 119:33-40

W. ³³Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes,
and I shall keep it to the end.

A. ³⁴**Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching;
I shall keep it with all my heart.**

W. ³⁵Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for that is my desire.

A. ³⁶**Incline my heart to your decrees
and not to unjust gain.**

- W.** ³⁷Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood;
give me life in your way.
- A.** ³⁸**Fulfill your promise to your servant,
which is for those who fear you.**
- W.** ³⁹Turn away the reproach that I dread,
because your judgments are good.
- A.** ⁴⁰**Behold, I long for your commandments;
by your righteousness enliven me.**

Second Reading: Romans 13:8-14

The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.

- W.** ⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

- W.** The Word of the Lord.
A. Thanks be to God.

The Gospel

Gospel Acclamation

- A.** *Alleluia.* In Christ God was reconciling the world | to himself,* entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. *Alleluia.* (2 Cor. 5:19)
- P.** The holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 18th chapter.
- A. Glory to you, O Lord.**

Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.

P. [Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

P. The Gospel of our Lord.

A. Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon: “A Call to Reconcile”

It was on his 16th birthday that a boy approached his father and asked, “Dad, I’m sixteen today! Can I get my Driver’s License in a few weeks and start to drive the family car?” – sound familiar?

His dad looked at him with a rather serious look and responded, “Son, driving a car takes more than having 16 candles on your birthday cake. It takes maturity, and first you must prove to me that you are mature and responsible enough to drive a car. There are three things you must do to satisfy me before I let you drive the car.

First, you must bring your grades up. Second, you must read your Bible every day. And finally, you’re going to have to get that long hair cut! It looks awful!”

The boy, realizing his father was serious in what he said, began to prove that he was mature and responsible. He brought his report card up to all A’s and a few B’s. He read his Bible every day. However, he held out on getting his hair cut. All of his peers wore their hair long, and that was a difficult concession to make.

HE WAS SURE HE COULD TALK DAD OUT OF THAT QUALIFICATION FOR DRIVING. Sometime later, the boy approached his Dad and asked if they could talk for a few moments, and when Dad said he had plenty of time, the young lad of 16 told his father of his success in fulfilling the first two qualifications for being allowed to drive.

When it came to the third, he said: "Dad, I'm 2/3 of the way home on what you asked of me. About the third things, Dad, my hair. . ? Well, Jesus had long hair."

Dad replied, "Yes, son you are 2/3 of the way to being allowed to drive the car. And yes, apparently JESUS DID HAVE LONG HAIR, - BUT - HE WALKED EVERYWHERE HE WENT!!

I share this story with you because it is a true-to-life example of how our gospel lesson says we should deal with one another when we have differences: WE SHOULD TALK TO ONE ANOTHER, ONE ON ONE, FACE TO FACE.

You see, relationships are important. How we relate to one another is important. You need to believe that or you cannot appreciate Jesus' words for today. Relationships matter. In fact, in the long run, the only thing that really matters in life is relationships.

Now listen again to Jesus' words: "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

Yes, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone . ." In other words, if someone you care about hurts you, make an attempt to heal the relationship as quickly as possible even if you are not at fault.

What sound, practical advice this is! Wouldn't it be great if everyone who was estranged from a brother or sister, or friend, or co-worker, or spouse would pick up a phone and make an appointment to sit down with that person to iron out their difficulties? Am I a dreamer?

I guess so! If you think this is an easy teaching of our Lord, you have never had anyone hurt you. Feelings of betrayal, anger, hurt, bitterness, resentment can sometimes overwhelm. Some of you have probably been there, haven't you? And after a while, it may become a matter of pride.

Gilbert and Sullivan are two of the great names of musical theater. Their operettas have thrilled millions. But for years they were estranged from each other. Oh, they still collaborated.

For years, Gilbert would send Sullivan the lyrics of the operetta they were working on by mail, and Sullivan would send Gilbert the music back by mail.

But when they had an opening night, they would stand at opposite ends of the stage and bow facing forward, so that they would not ever need to look at each other.

Believe it or not, the problem was that they had a falling out over the purchase of a new carpet in one of their theaters, and they never settled that grudge? Can you imagine that?

Yes, it does happen! The sad thing is that the closer the relationship, often the more intense the anger, the resentment, the bitterness. And it is very, very difficult to take the first step. But Jesus tells us, that is what we must do. Relationships are important! Relationships matter!

Later in this Gospel lesson Christ then said this: "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

With these words, Christ obviously thought of the church as a symbol of spiritual authority in the life of the people. For him, the church was to be, among other things, a reconciler of people. It was also to be an authority so respected that men and women would listen to its declarations and not spurn or ignore them.

Yes, for Christ the Church was a reconciler of people: it reconciled people both with God, and with their neighbors. Christ saw the Church as God's agent on earth, calling people to love, but also reminding individuals who spurned that love that they were subject to the judgment of God.

Christ goes on to say: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." These words of Christ are frequently quoted. But more often than not they are quoted as if they stood alone, without any thought of the context.

What a forceful way to alert us to the fact that when two or three seek reconciliation - sincerely - they can count on our Lord's presence!

The Lord is there when people seek earnestly to settle their differences and to gain understanding of each other. Our Lord is there when two or three are forced to deal with people problems. The Lord is even with those who, having exhausted the possibilities, face a parting of the ways.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives serves precisely to motivate us to act. Go and do; it may be that we can never get things completely righted with others.

What we can do, however, is to actively seek resolution of our problems. When this is impossible, then we may let the matter rest with God. We are the people of God - part of Christ's body - the Church.

May we always strive to reconcile ourselves and others with God and with our neighbors! Amen.

The peace of God that passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Hymn of the Day # 864 "Praise My Soul, the God of Heaven" *Praise My Soul*

- A.** 1. Praise, my soul, the God of heaven; joyfully your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore God's praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praises everlasting ring!
4. Angels sing in adoration, in God's presence, face to face.
Sun and moon and all creation, all who dwell in time and space.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise with us the God of grace!

Peace

P. The peace of Christ be with you always.

A. And also with you.

The Apostles' Creed

P. Let us now confess our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**A. 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 into hell,**

**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

W. Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

W. Unite your church, O God. Grant us the gifts of repentance and reconciliation. Bless the cooperative work of churches in this community. Strengthen ecumenical partnerships; guide the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. Protect your creation, O God. Teach us ways that do not harm what you have entrusted to our care. Renew and enliven places suffering from drought, flood, storms, or pollution. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. Turn nations and leaders from ways that lead to death. Shape new paths toward peace and cooperation, teaching us to recognize one another as neighbors. Guide legislators, civil servants, judges, and police toward laws that protect the well-being of all. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. Tend to all in need of your compassion. Hear the cries of those awaiting justice and those yearning for forgiveness. Give community to the lonely and neighbors to the outcast. Shelter all who are vulnerable in body, mind, or spirit *especially the brother of Merlinda Bisese, **Mitch Kasenic; the family and friends of Bill and Barb Henninger, the family and friends of Marlyn Carle, Dave Whitlinger, Pat Brick, Denise and Pat Wylie, Kenneth Shoemaker, and Carol Miller, those suffering from the coronavirus, and those whom we now name in our hearts before You*** . . . Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. Sustain us in our work, O God, and give work to those who need it. Shape societies to ensure fair treatment for all who labor. Help us to love our neighbors in and through our work. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. Be with us in these days when gathering together as often as we would like is not possible because of the coronavirus pandemic. When we must be apart for reasons of safety, we trust that you surround us with your sheltering wings. Encourage us in connecting as we are able, reaching out to our neighbors in need and being persistent in prayer. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

W. We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in faith. As you equipped them, equip us with your protection and power, until with them we see your salvation. Lord, in your mercy,

A. hear our prayer.

P. All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.

A. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

P. Lord, remember us in your kingdom and continue to teach us to pray:

**A. 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

P. 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.

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

Dismissal

W. Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

A. Thanks be to God.

Postlude: "Trumpet in Dialogue" [Basse et Dessus de Trompette]
-Louis Nicolas Clerambault

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-11-

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