

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
AUGUST 29, 2021

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA



PRELUDE

Come, Thou Almighty King

Setting: 1. Jeffery Blerch, 2. Richard Proulx

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN (Stand) #905 Sts. 1-3

Come, Thou Almighty King

- 1 **Come, Thou almighty King,
Help us Thy name to sing;
Help us to praise;
Father all-glorious,
O'er all victorious,
Come and reign over us,
Ancient of Days.**
- 2 **Come, Thou incarnate Word,
Gird on Thy mighty sword;
Our prayer attend.
Come and Thy people bless,
And give Thy Word success,
And let Thy righteousness
On us descend.**
- 3 **Come, holy Comforter,
Thy sacred witness bear
In this glad hour!
Thou, who almighty art,
Now rule in ev'ry heart,
And ne'er from us depart,
Spirit of pow'r.**

CONFESSON AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

(We observe a moment of silence for self-reflection.)

Together we pray:

Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

Almighty God, merciful Father, in Holy Baptism You declared us to be Your children and gathered us into Your one, holy Church, in which You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

1 To God on high be glory

**And peace to all the earth;
Goodwill from God in heaven
Proclaimed at Jesus' birth!
We praise and bless You, Father;
Your holy name, we sing—
Our thanks for Your great glory,
Lord God, our heav'nly King.**

2 To You, O sole-begotten,

**The Father's Son, we pray;
O Lamb of God, our Savior,
You take our sins away.
Have mercy on us, Jesus;
Receive our heartfelt cry,
Where You in pow'r are seated
At God's right hand on high—**

3 For You alone are holy;

**You only are the Lord.
Forever and forever,
Be worshiped and adored;
You with the Holy Spirit
Alone are Lord Most High,
In God the Father's glory.
"Amen!" our glad reply.**

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty and merciful God,

defend Your Church from all false teaching and error that Your faithful people may confess You to be the only true God and rejoice in Your good gifts of life and salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON (Be seated)

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

“Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the just decrees that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.

Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and just decrees so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 119:129-136 (Read responsively)

Your testimonies are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.

**The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.**

I open my mouth and pant,
because I long for your commandments.

**Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your way with those who love your name.**

Keep steady my steps according to your promise,
and let no iniquity get dominion over me.

**Redeem me from man’s oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.**

Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.

**My eyes shed streams of tears,
because people do not keep your law.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ALLELUIA VERSE (Stand)

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 7:14-23

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark the 7th chapter

Glory to You, O Lord.

[Jesus] called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus begins his teaching by saying something that most of us would probably question. He says: "There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him." Right away we think of examples that seem to contradict this. For instance, with our eyes we can take into ourselves graphic images of violence and sex that seem to have a very defiling influence. Surely Jesus is not saying these are no big deal, is he? And what about all those awful words we hear or those mind-altering drugs we could take. Don't these come into us from the outside and defile us? Even our secular society seeks to

put limits on these for the sake of people's health, especially our impressionable young children. Isn't Jesus on board with this? Doesn't he understand the dangers?

We must recognize, first of all, that these words of Jesus are spoken in the context of a particular issue. Last Sunday we read about this in the verses immediately preceding today's text. There we saw Jesus being challenged by the established religious teachers because his disciples didn't follow all their accepted purity traditions, in particular the ceremonial washing of hands. Jesus made clear at that time that these traditions were different than God's commanded Law given in the scriptures and that following them so rigidly had actually drawn the people away from God's Law.

Here in today's verses, Jesus continues to teach on that subject. His statement is meant to elaborate on his previous words and to lead his people in making another application – one which Mark the Gospel writer points out by saying: "Thus he declared all foods clean." Jesus' words, we see, were clearly aimed at the religious practice of abstaining from certain foods.

Jesus had previously spoken against other traditions of his time which he felt were too restrictive, such as the Pharisee's view of the Sabbath observance and fasting. Now he is paving the way for the removal of the kosher laws, which, we should note, were not only a part of the people's traditions but also given in Scripture, making this an even bigger step.

Jesus, we see, was introducing radical changes into the religious life of his followers. And in many cases, the exact nature of these changes would need to be worked out as time went on. Note that Mark the Gospel writer refers to Jesus' words as a parable – "his disciples asked him about the parable." This indicates that there was greater meaning to be had in these words than just some kind of blanket truth. The disciples would need to continue to listen to their Lord for guidance on these issues, and to follow the Spirit's leading once he was gone.

Reading through the New Testament scriptures, we see that this particular issue of food restrictions would be further clarified for followers of Christ in the book of Acts, chapter 10. There Peter would hear the voice of the Lord saying: "Rise, kill and eat. What God has made clean, do not call common." Peter's vision about eating animals that the tradition had called common or unclean confirmed this understanding alluded to by Jesus. And we recall, too, how the vision also opened Peter's heart to our Lord's Gentile mission.

Looking back at what Jesus taught, we now understand that Jesus was distinguishing between what we today call the Moral Law and the Ceremonial Law of the Old Testament. The Moral Law – those laws meant to describe how we treat one another and how we honor God with our heart – remains. This is the Law best summarized by the Ten Commandments, and the Law which we see maintained in the New Testament. The Ceremonial Law, on the other hand, could be dropped. These were the Laws – some written in the scripture, some passed down by tradition – which prescribed particular religious acts meant to keep Israel separate and safe until the time of the Messiah.

Jesus' re-working of the Law introduced significant changes. And he made these, in part, based on teachings of the prophets, who had often pointed to sacrifices and traditions as secondary to heartfelt devotion to God and action-based love for neighbor. But we Christians also believe that Jesus made these changes as God Himself, coming to reveal His New Testament with all people.

Based on Jesus' teachings, we today maintain an attitude of freedom toward religious traditions and disciplines. We recognize that these can be helpful in many ways, but we don't see them as the Law itself.

Having said all this, we must understand, too, that this text is not simply about Jesus' attitude toward tradition. It is also, and even more so, a statement about the human condition. Jesus wants us to see the real issue at stake with people. And he wants us to see this very personally. His words – “there is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him” – are true because each of us is already defiled. We're not defiled by what comes from outside us. We're defiled because of the condition of our heart.

Jesus is speaking here about our sinful human nature. Ever since our father Adam's first sin, each of us is born with not only the capacity but also the inclination to sin. David, in Psalm 51, speaks to this by saying: “In sin did my mother conceive me (51:5).” And Jeremiah the prophet says: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it (17:9).”

There are times when we put up a good fight against the temptation to sin. And sometimes we prevail. But none of us prevails every time. Sooner or later each of us falls into sin. And for most of us, it's usually sooner than later.

Jesus speaks very candidly about our problem. In our text, he mentions quite a list of sins people commit, making it clear that these sinful actions come as a result of a defiled heart.

Today's text ends without offering a solution to our sin problem. But Jesus would eventually address it. He would do this by dying on the cross as an offering for our sins. There he paid sin's penalty – doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

As redeemed people of God, we followers of Jesus now seek to live pure and holy lives in honor of him and because we know that this way of living is helpful to both ourselves and our neighbors.

The keeping of traditions can certainly help in living lives of purity. To that end, Israel understood its traditions as a fence around the Law, designed to assure greater Law keeping. The problem, however, as we discussed last week, was that the fence often frustrated and divided people. And it kept people out. The traditions became a barrier to God rather than a conduit to God. The traditions often became the focus itself, even leading to hypocrisy.

In today's Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy 4, God encourages His people Israel in the keeping of the Law by reminding them of its great beauty. He says: “What great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?” Keeping the Law is beautiful and right. But Israel could not do it. And even when they did, it became a source of pride, not a beacon of hope for others.

When God sent His Son Jesus, it was as if He were re-writing this statement from Deuteronomy. “What great nation is there, that has a Savior so righteous as the One I set before you today?” Jesus is that Savior. Jesus is the One who brings true purity. The whole world is invited to be that nation which is great because it knows of its Savior.

And we should note, too, the words from Deuteronomy which precede those I just read. “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us.” We should see Jesus here too. And we don't even need to change a word. Jesus the Messiah is our God made near to us. He took on human flesh and lived among us. He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and is among us still – in Word and Sacrament. How great are the people who know that God comes near to us—to teach, to lead and to forgive. As Christians, our life is not an endless and impossible quest for purity, but a life that knows its Savior, and knows He is near.

In today's Gospel, Jesus makes a provocative, attention-getting statement about that which defiles us, saying that we're not defiled by what comes from outside of us, but by that which is there within us. We've talked about this statement's application regarding food laws, and we mentioned its description of the human condition.

What's also important to point out is what his statement is NOT saying. Jesus is not saying that we don't need to worry about that which comes into us. We do. Food may not be spiritually unclean, but there are other things we take into our hearts and minds which are. And although we may already be defiled because of our sinful condition, we still have a responsibility to fight against that which tempts us.

Today's Epistle reading encourages us in this fight. It tells us: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

I don't know what all of those schemes are. No one does. But I do believe that much of what we see and hear in our culture today, especially those voices and images which are constantly inviting us to pursue personal pleasures which are beyond healthy, God-given boundaries, can be considered schemes of the devil to tear us down, individually and collectively.

In our Gospel text, the battle was with those voices which said you were no good unless you kept all the traditions of the elders. That battle is surely among us today as well. But even more in our day, the greater battle is surely with those voices which tell us we are no good unless we conform to the latest marketing standard of power, sexuality, and freedom in all things.

St. Paul advises us to "put on the whole armor of God." Time does not allow us to delve into that armor in detail right now, but I encourage you to read and meditate on the Bible's description of it this week. Here you will find greater protection than a fence around the Law. Here you will find greater help than any traditions. And here you will certainly find greater assistance than any moral fiber you can muster on your own.

When we today think about armor, we might think first of our soldiers and those in law enforcement who benefit from certain armor protections. We're grateful that those who put themselves in harm's way for our benefit have certain shields to help them.

Or, perhaps we think about football players – especially as that season is just about upon us. I only played one year of football, but that was enough to learn the value of the pads and helmet a player wears. It's a rough enough sport on its own, but it would be brutal without these.

In the same way, life would be brutal without the armor of God. We need this armor in our battles against temptation. We need it in our battles against the assaults of the devil. These battles are long and difficult, and we dare not fight them without God's armor. Survival is at stake.

God encourages us to put on His holy armor. And if we'd like to add some traditions, that can help as well. We Lutherans have certainly found that to be true.

Above all, however, we are to put on Christ and His salvation. We do this when we say: "I believe." We do this when we pray. We do this when we repent of our sins and receive God's holy forgiveness in Christ.

God is faithful. He will provide. He is working in you to preserve you in faith for the sake of your salvation. May he also continue to turn your hearts to His holiness and purity. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

- 1 Oh, how great is Your compassion,
Faithful Father, God of grace,
That with all our fallen race
In our depth of degradation
You had mercy so that we
Might be saved eternally!
- 2 Your great love for this has striven
That we may, from sin made free,
Live with You eternally.
Your dear Son Himself has given
And extends His gracious call,
To His supper leads us all.
- 3 Firmly to our soul's salvation
Witnesses Your Spirit, Lord,
In Your Sacraments and Word.
There He sends true consolation,
Giving us the gift of faith
That we fear not hell nor death.
- 4 Lord, Your mercy will not leave me;
Ever will Your truth abide.
Then in You I will confide.
Since Your Word cannot deceive me,
My salvation is to me
Safe and sure eternally.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His 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. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

In peace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the gift of the Holy Spirit at work in the Word of truth, that by His direction we would not stray from the way of God's commandments nor forget the wonderful blessings He has given to us, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the full armor of God, that clothed in truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation, and bearing the sword of the Spirit, which is His Word, God would protect us from every assault of the devil, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For protection against everything that defiles in heart and soul; to keep us from all evil thoughts, immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness; and to create a pure heart and renew a right spirit in us, that we may be holy as He is holy, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all pastors and teachers, parents and grandparents, and all who teach the faith, that we may grow in wisdom and the knowledge of God's love in Christ, and that the Gospel may continue to spread throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who struggle with doubt and temptation, that God would assure and deliver them, showing Himself a refuge for the powerless and strength for every weakness, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all in need of health, healing and mercy, [*including _____,*] that the Lord of life would strengthen them with His Word of grace to look to Him for comfort in the midst of suffering and pain, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For hearts purified by God's cleansing Word, and for aid to lead godly lives before Him, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who commune this day, remembering with thanksgiving the salvation accomplished by Christ's cross, that we may proclaim His death and resurrection with joy as we receive Christ's very body and blood in this Holy Sacrament for the forgiveness of our sins, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**



THE LITURGY OF HOLY COMMUNION

PREFACE TO HOLY COMMUNION (Stand)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, for the countless blessings You so freely bestow on us and all creation. Above all, we give thanks for Your boundless love shown to us when You sent Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into our flesh and laid on Him our sin, giving Him into death that we might not die eternally. Mercifully forgiven and restored as Your people, we now seek restoration with others for whom our Savior gave His life and with whom we gather at His Table. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS

**Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of Sabaoth adored;
Heaven and earth with full acclaim
shout the glory of Your name.
Sing hosanna in the highest,
sing hosanna to the Lord;
Truly blest is He who comes
in the name of the Lord!**

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

In Your righteous judgment You condemned the sin of Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit, and You justly barred them and all their children from the tree of life. Yet, in Your great mercy, You promised salvation by a second Adam, Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and made His cross a life-giving tree for all who trust in Him.

We give You thanks for the redemption You have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may faithfully eat and drink of the fruits of His cross and receive the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that come to us in His body and blood.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

THE 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.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

PAX DOMINI

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

AGNUS DEI

**O Jesus Christ, true Lamb of God,
You take the sin of the world away;
O Jesus Christ, true Lamb of God,
Have mercy on us, Lord, we pray.**

**O Jesus Christ true Lamb of God
You take the sin of the world away;
Have mercy on us, Jesus Christ,
And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.**

DISTRIBUTION (Be seated)

The Communion Assistant will come forward to receive first, then those from the pulpit side – by order of pew, front to back. Communicants will come up the center aisle and return via the side aisle. When all from the pulpit side have communed, the baptismal font side will commune in the same manner. Distancing must be maintained between all communicants. Masks should be kept on except for the moment of consuming the elements. We ask that the wine be consumed away from the tray table. Empty cups should be dropped into the baskets.

COMMUNION MUSIC Adagio molto, Organ Sonata No. 3 Alexandre Guilmant

NUNC DIMITTIS (Stand)

**1 O Lord, now let Your servant
Depart in heav'nly peace,
For I have seen the glory
Of Your redeeming grace:
A light to lead the Gentiles
Unto Your holy hill,
The glory of Your people,
Your chosen Israel.**

**2 All glory to the Father,
All glory to the Son,
All glory to the Spirit,
Forever Three in One;
For as in the beginning,
Is now, shall ever be,
God's triune name resounding
Through all eternity.**

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

BENEDICTION

SENDING HYMN #664

Fight the Good Fight

- 1 Fight the good fight with all your might;
Christ is your strength, and Christ your right.
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Your joy and crown eternally.**
- 2 Run the straight race through God's good grace;
Lift up your eyes, and seek His face.
Life with its way before us lies;
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.**
- 3 Cast care aside, lean on your guide;
His boundless mercy will provide.
Trust, and enduring faith shall prove
Christ is your life and Christ your love.**
- 4 Faint not nor fear, His arms are near;
He changes not who holds you dear;
Only believe, and you will see
That Christ is all eternally.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Be seated)

DISMISSAL

POSTLUDE

*Fight the Good Fight
Setting: Ryan Meyer*

Those serving:

Sunday, August 29, 8:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Jim Easterly

Comm. assist: Dede Dixon

Reader: Aaron Siebrass

10:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Marian Robinson

Comm. assist: Judy Koucky

Reader: Lynn Jacquez

Acknowledgments

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