

Pentecost #17

9-27-2020

J.V.Trautwein

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Jesus’ parable about two sons who don’t do what they say reveals surprises in the reign of God. In the reading from Ezekiel the people claim the ways of the Lord are unfair, while God offers repentance and new life. Paul urges us to look to Christ as a model of humility, putting the interests of others above our own. Nourished by the broken bread and shared cup, we offer our lives for the sake of our needy world.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“All Hail the Power of Jesus Name”](#)

Psalm 25:1-9

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

² O my God, in you I trust;

do not let me be put to shame;

do not let my enemies exult over me.

³ Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

⁴ Make me to know your ways, O Lord;

teach me your paths.

⁵ Lead me in your truth, and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all day long.

⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,

for they have been from of old.

⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

according to your steadfast love remember me,

for your goodness’ sake, O Lord!

⁸ Good and upright is the Lord;

therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,

and teaches the humble his way.

Hymn of Praise: [“Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, Keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32](#)

2nd Reading: [Philippians 2:1-13](#)

The Gospel: [Matthew 21:22-32](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“When Peace Like a River”](#)

The Message: ([Audio Link](#))

Sometimes it seems as though life is a game of credentials. What schools we attend and what degrees we have seems to determine how life treats us. Many will look towards pedigree and elevate someone because they are from distinguished families. Others will judge by financial status. While still others, especially among the youth, will judge according to the clothes worn, the circle of friends and even activities involved in. Things such as cars, homes, and jobs are important credentials to many which drive the credential seekers into debt so that outwardly they can be looked upon with acceptability.

When we go to the doctor we expect to see his diplomas, degrees and certifications on the office walls or else we may question his authority to practice medicine. It’s the same with colleges and universities whose faculty is judged by how many PhD’s are on their staff and how many of them have contributed research and writings in their field of expertise. Lawyers are not able to practice law without their certificate from the bar. Many of the mainline denominations only recognize their clergy after a seminary education, examining committees, and ordination.

We could go on and on as to the importance society places upon credentials since they are supposed to indicate the authority we have to live our lives as we do. Mankind is always skeptical without some kind of proof. We need to say prove it, prove yourself.

This is exactly what we find in our Gospel lesson today. Jesus was not only healing the sick and performing miracles but, more importantly he was teaching like a Rabbi even in the temple and was seen by many as a prophet. Of course this was in violation of traditional standards for he had no acceptable credentials. Certainly he was not given such credentials and authority from the established Jewish authorities. Therefore, figuring to expose and embarrass Jesus in front of his following in the temple, the chief priests and elders confronted Jesus. “By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority?” Of course Jesus

did not have the required background and credentials as practiced by the Jewish traditions. His authority came from God. If Jesus had given this answer then they could have had him arrested on the spot for heresy. God given authority only came through the traditional channels of the Jewish ecclesiastical order.

It is important to note that Jesus was not yet ready for the confrontation and the cross so he quickly sidestepped the question. "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?"

Jesus knew that this question would be impossible for them to answer. Asking such a question in front of the people gathered in the temple placed the chief priests and elders in a very precarious situation. To answer "from heaven" then the people would have questioned them as to why they didn't believe in him. On the other hand if they had said "by human origin" then the people who saw John as a prophet and special messenger from God would lead the crowd against them. They were caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Like most of us, when in such a predicament, they decided to opt out by being dishonest to their feelings and play dumb, "We do not know." This gave Jesus his out and the upper hand by saying, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." If you don't come clean with me then why should I come clean with you?

But Jesus then took advantage of his situation or, in today's terminology, put spin on it. He followed up with another question. A man had two sons. When each was asked by him to work in the vineyard that day their responses differed dramatically. The one son said outright and flatly that he would not while the other agreed to do so. As it turned out what happened was just the opposite from the responses. The one who said no had a change of heart and worked the vineyard while the other who said yes was a no show.

How many times have you seen this happen? There are those who will volunteer to do everything but end up doing nothing. They leave everybody else scrambling in the last minute to do what they said they would do. On the other hand, there are those, who for some reason said they wouldn't do it, end up doing it even if it is a sacrifice in doing so.

Jesus turned this situation with the chief priests and elders into a revelation about them and about those they considered to be outcasts, prostitutes and tax collectors. He asked them which of the two sons did the will of the father? No brainer, there was no escaping this, they answered the first son who actually worked in the vineyard. Jesus responded, "Truly I tell you the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you." Ouch, he equated the do nothing hypocritical son with the chief priests and elders. The prostitutes and tax collectors whom Jesus was referring to were those who had been baptized by John and became Jesus' followers. Although they originally rejected God's will by choosing their profession they ended up following and living His will. On the other hand, the chief priests and elders started out by superficially accepting God's will and ended up rejecting it in that they rejected God's special messenger, John. They rejected God's will because it may have hurt their

personal authority and power. They proclaimed the right words only but their lives displayed something else. In reality they ended up saving their perceived credibility but losing their souls.

There is an expression for this “words come cheap” or the street version is, “If you talk the talk, you must walk the walk.” There is no better example of this than what we are experiencing in the political arena today. Politicians love to talk for words come cheap, but to actually walk the walk is a different reality. Their hypocrisy shows who they really are and their word no longer is trusted.

But, in many ways, the political arena is only a reflection of our society. When push comes to shove many of us do not want to be held accountable for what we say no less for those disastrous consequences which may result. When confronted we put spin on it or act like the chief priests and elders and plead ignorance or shift the blame on to someone else.

It is important to note that this lesson finds relativity also within the church and Christianity. How many have equated the life in Christ with the correct words and knowing what is perceived as correct theology and then living something else day in and day out. This is only fooling oneself with no better results than found in the chief priests and elders. Living the life in Christ means that, no matter what our past may have been, we must now live his message of love and forgiveness. It means that once the example and teachings of Jesus’ life become a reality in our day to day living we then are working in God’s vineyard for life. Therefore, it is not what we profess or say but how we back it up, how we “walk the walk” The life in Christ has no room for empty words and hypocrisy but rather living out God’s love in how we treat our brothers and sisters.

Anthem: [“How Great Thou Art”](#)

Offering*

We give thee but thine own, what-e’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Father and creator of all, we live in a time when egos blind us from truth which only deepens the turmoil which becomes more and more prevalent each day. Open our eyes, our minds and our hearts so that we may begin to understand what your love means in our lives and to our troubled society. Help us to see that the way of divisiveness, extremism, bitterness, greed, and hate have only brought suffering to so many and deeper divisions. Help us to realize that each new day is not only another day of crisis but a day in which we may help bring healing through the example of your love. We need all the wisdom, courage, honesty, and perseverance which you can instill within us. We are helpless without your guiding hand. Reach out and touch our troubled lives with your healing love.

Continue to be with all those on the front lines of helping those who have been stricken by the pandemic and the natural disasters. They are giving so much of their lives while placing themselves in danger. We continue to pray for their safety and well-being.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Pam Ash, Chad Bittinger, Heidi Brackbill, Danny Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Kirk Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["O God, My Faithful God"](#)

All are welcome to our outdoor Sunday morning service at 9:30 AM weather permitting. Social distancing and face masks are required. Bring a lawn chair.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church

9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills

Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org/>