

Epiphany #7

2-20-2022

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Mercy, Mercy, mercy, Joseph lives it in Egypt, Jesus preaches it in the gospels. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God’s glory revealed in Christ.”

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

Opening Hymn: [“O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts”](#)

Psalmody: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

“Fret not yourself because of the wicked,
be not envious of wrongdoers!
²For they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.
³Trust in the Lord, and do good;
so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security.
⁴Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
⁵Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.
⁶He will bring forth your vindication as the light,
and your right as the noonday.
⁷Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over him who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!
⁸Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.
⁹For the wicked shall be cut off;
but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land.
¹⁰Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look well at his place, he will not be there.
¹¹But the meek shall possess the land,
and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.
The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord;
he is their refuge in the time of trouble.
⁴⁰The Lord helps them and delivers them;
he delivers them from the wicked, and saves them,
because they take refuge in him.

Hymn of Praise: [“All People That o Earth Do Dwell”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that, we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Genesis 45:3-11,15](#)

2nd Reading: [1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50](#)

The Gospel: [Luke 6:27-38](#)

Hymn: [“Lord, Speak to Us, That We May Speak”](#)

The Message: ([Video](#))

One of the most self-defeating things in life is to carry a grudge against someone, certain people or groups of people. To be so consumed may very well, and often does, take control of our lives. It becomes almost like a cancer which slowly eats away our very being. In many cases a grudge turns into hate and the seeking of revenge or retribution. It is then that we turn into a person whose perspective in life changes and we may just lash out against even those who may not be involved at all. The world just becomes an ugly place to live and we become one of the reasons it is so ugly.

That is all symptomatic of believing that life centers around self. We become that perfect creature which life owes us everything - nothing can and will go wrong or violate our precious but all too often limited life and thinking. When we are violated in some way, when we may be challenged by being asked to see life beyond our own little world, or even if we are asked to sacrifice for the good of others, our bubble is broken. That is when we then seek to lash out in revengeful ways. That is when truth is jeopardize for what becomes truth may just be what we think supports our lives and grudge-filled thinking. Therein is the sign that life no longer has any meaning and is on the path of destruction. Forgiveness is an unknown quality'

This is exactly where we are today as a people and society. In so many ways we have been drawn into a battleground which is fueled by grudges, hate, prejudices, and revenge in which verifiable and acknowledged truth has increasingly become the victim. Tragically this has all been fueled by the selfish game of politics which has taken control in destroying our lives instead of being an instrument of helping to enhance our lives through justice and equality like the prophet Amos' proclaims, “:But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

With the realities all around us of people being so caught up in themselves today's gospel lesson becomes a most difficult lesson to perceive and understanding as being realistic. We just have to hear the first sentence to react by saying "What a daydream!" "But I say to you that listen, love you enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." In light of everything that is going on, how in the world is this possible? How can I ever love someone who thinks and acts totally different than me? How can I love someone who totally disregards my well-being because of any inconvenience that it may cause them? How can I love someone who in my opinion is totally irrational in their thinking and actions? How can I love someone who bullies me? How can I have respect and love for those who post their negative rants on the internet especially when they may be totally proven to be false?

It is so natural and easy to react with hate or negative thoughts back upon these people or situations. Our lips almost instinctively respond with demeaning words which only fuels and gives credibility to negativism. This is to fall into the trap of saying Jesus' words are totally unrealistic for in our thoughts and actions reinforce being enemies governed by hatred. Revenge then begins to fill and take over our lives. We want to win and with our bruised egos we may ask who can hate me and dare to think that I may be wrong in my thinking? Forgiveness at this point is considered out of the question. One of our big problems is that the internet has become such an integral part of our lives giving us an easy way to enter into nameless and faceless confrontations. Our total circumstances have placed us on a downward pattern with no end in sight. Even if covid-19 would end today the downward spiral will continue and Jesus message in today's gospel will only be to some kind of pipedream.

But the truth is that the only way out of what we are living is to carefully implant these words of Jesus and the words of an ancient people, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." Add to this, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Again, this is easier said than done. In these statements Jesus is basically asking us to examine who we are and how we look at life, the world and others around us. If we are blinded in viewing life with judgmental mindsets then we are not going to get very far for we will be viewed in that light in return. Judgment most likely will ultimately lead to condemnation not only of others but ourselves. Listen to these words of wisdom, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged, do not condemn, and you will not be condemned." So where does that place us? We become a person who is unforgiving and thus cannot accept forgiveness, a person who is riddled with all the negatives in life, and a person who dwells in the land of guilt.

It is all determined by how our lives are being motivated. Motivation is the secret or hidden aspect of life which determines how we think and act. It is developed from very early on in our lives by the environment and circumstances which we face in life. The truth is that we are all born as a loving child of God with the ability and probability of doing both good and evil. We are born with no hatred, bitterness, prejudice, or judgmental thoughts. Early on values and motivational thoughts are implanted or taught to us by those people and circumstances in life which surround us. I can't help but to return again to that most powerful song in the musical "South Pacific":

“You've got to be taught to hate and fear; You've got to be taught from year to year; It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear; You've got to be carefully taught. You've got to be taught to be afraid of people whose eyes are oddly made, And people whose skin is a diff'rent shade. You've got to be carefully taught, You've got to be taught before it's too late, Before you are six or seven or eight, To hate all the people your relatives hate. You've got to be carefully taught.”

The tragedy is that when a mindset is implanted with negativism during the early years it becomes extremely difficult to change. Thinking and thought processes are always clouded distorting how not only life is viewed but how we view ourselves. Therefore love is most directly affected and distorted. It is sad to see those who are never able to see life without any real clarity. They may never have had the opportunity to experience and understand what good life can offer. Furthermore they may never been able to see the truth although it may be right in front of them for they only can see their distorted view of life.

Jesus in today's lesson is directly telling us that we just may be the ones to help someone out of the pain of negativism and a false sense of love and life. It is out of the motivation of love and forgiveness that we are able to show someone the real joy of love and compassion. It means reaching out to those who we may find disagreement or even hate or dislike for us. This means that we must try to get beyond the façade judgments in order for the motivation of love to come forth and forgiveness to be extended which has the power to bring forth a new life.

This does not mean that we must agree with the other person but it is to say that we must be that positive example of love which Jesus presented in His life. We are not to expect that we will change anybody else. “But” as Jesus said, “love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.” That is to say lend your life, put forth your love so other may have your example but expect nothing in return. What is returned or not returned is not within our power. If we ever expect life in this society to return to some kind of normalcy or have any concept of what it takes to love and care for the well-being of others we must first be that example of what it means to love and to sacrifice out of this love. It means getting beyond ourselves and seek the truth beyond our own wishes. Therefore, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Anthem: [“Forgiveness”](#), Matthew West

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

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

Merciful Father of us all, we live in troubling times in which there is great division among us as a society. It is so easy to stray from your command to love your neighbor as yourself since the lives of all of us are at stake from misguided actions of some.. Forgive us for failing to heed your command by letting bitterness and hate enter our lives and take control. Open our lives to see that although we may not agree with someone, they are still one of your children and are to be treated as such. Never let us waiver from living the witness to your example of mercy.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Eugene Ash, Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, Leo Dickel, Dotty Gibson, Kraig Greff, Nancy Griebel, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, David Kieffer, Pam Lambert, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, the McNamara family, Jane Marczewski, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Brenda Penyak, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Esther and Buck Trautwein,, Pastor Jack,
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 comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Spread, Oh, Spread, Almighty Word"](#)

Announcements

Next Sunday, 2-27-2021, is Scout Sunday at Epiphany.
Please note that Masks are required while in the church building.

*Offering to be sent to
Robert Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291