

6th S. after Epiphany 2/16/14
Matthew 5:21-37 A

SERMON TEXT IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON FROM THE 5TH CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

WC Fields was a well-known boozier and womanizer, who cared nothing for living a Christian life, so a man was quite surprised one day when he caught Fields reading the Bible. "What are you doing?" he asked in puzzlement. "Looking for loopholes," growled Fields.

Ever since the devil first whispered his lie in the garden, "Did God really say," we have doubted, disbelieved, and distrusted God's Word. And, so we take what God says in His Word and twist and turn it to make it say what we want it to say.

Take our Gospel this morning. Our Gospel this Sunday is once again from the Sermon on the Mount. In it, Jesus talks about anger, adultery, the careless severing of marital bonds, and frivolous oaths. He is teaching us that these reveal what is in our heart towards our neighbor. Jesus is teaching us that we are to have a holy heart, filled only with love for our neighbor.

Notice the words of Jesus in our lesson this morning: "You've heard it said..., but I say to you..." Jesus applies the law to our thoughts, words, and deeds so that none of us can escape its accusation and condemnation. You have heard it was said, "You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment...But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment." You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery...But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." You have heard that it was said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him

give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery.” You have heard that it was said, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all...Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.”

Rather than see ourselves in the mirror of the law, we foolishly turn these words of Jesus into a checklist: “Murder, never did that, [√]check.” “Adultery, never did that, [√]check.” “Divorce, never been divorced, [√]check.” “Swore a foolish oath, never did that, [√]check.” We turn the law into a checklist to justify ourselves and become Pharisees, “Look at me, what a good little boy, girl, am I. I’m so glad I’m not like so-and-so.”

Think about your heart for a moment. Consider what your words and deeds reveal about what is in your heart. Does your love measure up to the standard set by Christ?

Maybe you haven’t murdered someone, but have you called them – or thought them -- a fool? Have you remained angry – keeping a record of your neighbor’s wrongs, refusing to forgive, to be reconciled and live at peace with all people? Maybe you haven’t committed adultery, but have you laughed at off-color humor? Have you lusted after someone other than your spouse, enjoyed pornography on your computer in the convenience of your own home? Maybe you haven’t left your spouse in the heat of passion for another, but have you honored and cherished your spouse? Maybe you have never sworn a foolish oath, “God if you will do this for me, then I will do ... whatever for you;” but have you broken a promise you made? Have you gossiped about your neighbor? Have you told lies, perhaps to make yourself look all the better?

Wow! There are no loopholes in Jesus' words. No compromises, no "I did the best that I could." Jesus' words are not a checklist to show our righteousness, but a mirror to show us our sin.

How the words of Jesus apply to us, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness (Mt 23:37)." We can put on the mask of self-righteousness to look good in the eyes of the world, but inside, we are by our very natures dead in sin.

The author Edgar Allen Poe wrote a story called "The Tell Tale Heart." I hesitate to dwell on the gruesome, especially so close to Valentine's Day, but it's a story about a man who murders his neighbor and then buries him under the floorboards. But, the murderer hears the man's heart beating growing louder and LOUDER and **LOUDER**, until the beating of the dead man's heart drives him insane.

What's in your heart? Jesus' words this Sunday tell us what's in our hearts. Yes, we try to hide our sin under the floorboards, out of sight of the world. But, the guilt and shame of our sin haunts and hounds us, so that we can only say, "I have sinned. I have sinned against my neighbor and against God. I am sorry for what I have done."

II. When we see what is truly in our hearts, we can rejoice in this: Jesus ascended a mount to deliver a sermon. And, He ascended another Mount called Calvary. He went to that Mount carrying all our anger, our refusals to forgive, the times we've wished harm and disaster upon our neighbor; all our lust and sins against marriage; all our lies and gossip, all the times we didn't keep our word; all the times we failed to love one another.

He took all our sins and nailed them to His cross. There, He bled all over them and died for them. It is His bleeding and His dying which forgives your sin. It is that forgiveness that makes you His Bride, the Church.

III. After David's sins with Bathsheba, Nathan showed him his sin and he repented in the well-known words of his Psalm, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord." God did. And, He gave you a clean heart in the new birth of your baptism, the holy heart of Christ Himself that has no love of sin, only love for God and love for neighbor. Dear Saint of God, you have the heart of Christ. So, we ask that most Lutheran of questions: What does this mean?

Baptized and living in Christ, living with the holy heart of Christ as our very own, it means that we have no desire, no craving, for sin. And, our lives reveal what is in our heart.

We honor all life as a gift from God to be ended by Him, including the life of the unborn and the elderly and infirm. We do not stay angry at our neighbor, even one who has sinned against us and hurt us, and we do not hate and wish to "get even". As God is reconciled to all, we seek to be reconciled to all and live at peace with all people. We honor marriage as a good blessing from God, the lifelong union of one man and one woman, which needs to be emphasized in our day. We lead a sexually pure life even in our thoughts and words, avoiding all sexual temptation, understanding that adulterous thoughts lead to adultery. We don't swear frivolous oaths with God, bargaining with Him to get our way, so that He will do something that pleases us -- that we want -- with the promise that we will do something.

And we are merciful, kind, and forgiving towards our neighbor. God has had mercy on us in Christ even when we failed to keep the law, and that is the mercy that we show our neighbor. This is why we learn the 10 Commandments -- they teach us how we are to love God and love our neighbor.

The holy heart of Christ that beats in us, Dear Saints. We reveal that heart by reflecting Christ to the world, His forgiveness, His mercy, His love.

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Concordia Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

801 Beacon Lane

Beulah, North Dakota

Rev. Toby H. Heller, Pastor

February 16, 2014



*Walk in love,
as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us,
a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Ephesians 5:2

Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20 (ESV)

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Gradual

Praise the Lord, all nations!

Extol him, all peoples!

For great is his steadfast love toward us,

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;

bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 (ESV)

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through

whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

“Alleluia”

p. 156

Holy Gospel: St. Matthew 5:21-37 (ESV)

[Jesus says] "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

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| Apostles' Creed | p. 159 |
| Hymn of the Day | # 704 |
| Sermon | "What's In Your Heart?" |
| Prayer of the Church | |
| Offering | |
| "What Shall I Render" | p. 159 |
| Service of the Sacrament | p. 160 |
| Distribution Hymns | # 610, 625, 632 |
| "Thank the Lord" | p. 164 |
| Post-Communion Collect | p. 166 |
| Benediction | p. 166 |
| Closing Hymn | # 707 |

Today we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion in which we joyfully receive Christ's Body and Blood, under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of our sins. As we celebrate the Sacrament, we also give public witness that we are in complete agreement with the denomination's doctrinal teachings at whose altar we commune. Therefore, we ask that only communicant members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod commune with us. All guests are asked to talk to Rev. Heller before coming to the altar to receive the Sacrament.

In our thoughts and prayers,

† Carmen Dschaak, Delores Korbyn (Lowell's mother), Kyle Miller (Nona Blaisdell's brother), and Agnes Wiedrich.

Welcome to worship as Jesus reveals Himself to us as the Son of God in this season of Epiphany. In this season, when we see and hear Jesus, we see and hear God. Visitors, please sign our guest book and worship with us again soon.

Mission Update: Please join us after worship this morning for an update on our mission project. There will be a free-will offering.

1 Peter: Please join us as we continue our study of 1 Peter this morning.

Our Annual Meeting is next Sunday February 23rd, following worship. Following the Voters Meeting, we will have a potluck brunch. Everyone is invited to join us!

The February Human Care Project is collecting tuna for Women's Action & Resource Center. Please put your donations in the shelf unit in the entryway. Thank you.



Weather cancellation: In the event that worship services or other activities need to be canceled, especially because of weather, please check the church's website, www.concordiabeulah.org. We will also send out an email notification when worship is cancelled for those members who have provided the church office with an email address. You should also be able to call the church, 873-4388, for information on cancellations.

The February calendar, birthday and anniversary sheet, Pray for Us Calendar, December council minutes, unapproved minutes from the November 17, 2013 Voters Meeting, and *Happy Times* for the children are in the black stacking trays in the social hall.



Stewardship of Offerings & Attendance

Attendance: 157 Offerings: \$3,415.00

“So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” Isn’t that the truth! And it’s not just true about preachers like Paul, but about all of us in all of the Christian life. God can do such wonderful things with our feeble efforts. This is so very true of our gifts to the Lord’s work in the Church. From His generous giving to us, we learn to give generously; and then the Lord blesses this response to His grace in turn and uses our very giving to continue to bless us in the Church where we hear of His gracious generosity to us. And the cycle repeats, and the Lord gives growth!

We are the North Dakota District...

How many of you woke up this morning thinking, “It is the commemoration of Philip Melancthon Day.” Melancthon was a friend of Martin Luther’s who also taught at the University of Wittenberg. Melancthon is the author of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, two of the confessions we hold to as Lutherans. We are a confessional Church, and this is our great strength in our District and Synod, even as all our confessions lead us to Christ, our Savior.

President Baneck



† This Week at Concordia †

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| Sunday | 8:30 am | Divine Service |
| | 9:30 am | Sunday School/Mission Update/Bible Class |
| | 11:00 am | <i>Worship @ Glen Ullin</i> |
| | 2:30 pm | Pastor @ KRCC |
| Monday | 7:00 pm | Sarah Guild |
| Tuesday | 2:00 pm | Bible Class |
| Wednesday | 3:30 pm | 1 st -year Catechism |
| | 4:30 pm | 2 nd -year Catechism |
| | 7:00 pm | Chime Practice |
| | 7:30 pm | Bell Practice |
| Sunday | 8:30 am | Divine Service |
| | 9:30 am | Sunday School/Voters Meeting |
| | 10:30 am | Potluck Brunch |

Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Church: 873-4388 Parsonage: 873-4223
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Website: www.concordiabeulah.org

*Please use a pew card to record your worship and/or
Communion attendance this morning*