



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for February 12, 2023, celebrating the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

Pastor Jack Dressler (**519-250-7210**) is our interim Pastor. Please contact him for any pastoral needs.

Upcoming Services:

Date	Comment	Pastor / Lay Leader	Reader
February 19		Anne	
February 22	Ash Wednesday–1030am @ Trinity	Pastor Jack	Carol
February 22	Ash Wednesday – 7pm @ St. Mark's By The Lake in Tecumseh	Pastor Jack	
February 26	Communion	Father Brian	Carol
March 5		Greg	Kathy
March 12		Dagmar	
March 19			
March 26	Communion	Pastor Jack	
April 2	Palm Sunday		
April 7	Good Friday – 1030am Service Communion	Pastor Jack	
April 9	Easter Sunday – Communion	Pastor Jack	
April 16		Father Brian	
April 23	Communion	Father Brian	
April 30		Father Brian	
May 7			
May 14	Mother's Day – Communion	Pastor Jack	
May 21		Father Brian	
May 28	Communion	Father Brian	

We need your help to assist in the above services – readers and lay leaders.

Thank you again for your support for Trinity. Please continue to mail in cheques, or drop them off in the church's mailbox or make your donation either through PAR or through the Donate button on the church's website, at "www.trinitylutheran.ca".

Introduction

In today's reading from Deuteronomy we are called to choose life by loving and obeying God. Much of today's gospel reading echoes portions of the Ten Commandments. Jesus' instructions to the crowd reveal a pattern of behavior that honors both God and the neighbor, resulting in life and health for the whole community. We too are invited to embrace these commandments, not out of fear of retribution, but because God has promised that to do so means life for us.

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who makes all things new, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin. Holy One, source of our renewal, **we confess that we are wrapped up in sin, and cannot free ourselves.**

We have not practiced your righteousness. Our hearts have turned away from you.

For the sake of the world you so love, forgive us,

that we may be reconciled to one another for the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Thus says our God: "The former things have come to pass and new things I now declare." God's mercy makes us new. We are forgiven in the name of ☩ Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Worship

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you!**

Prayer of the Day

O God, the strength of all who hope in you, because we are weak mortals we accomplish nothing good without you. Help us to see and understand the things we ought to do, and give us grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. You are the light of the world. A city set upon a hill cannot be hid. *Alleluia.*

First Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

The LORD sets before the people of God a clear choice. Life and prosperity will come to the faithful; loss of the land will be the consequence of disobedience. Choosing life entails loving and holding fast to the Lord. Life in God's presence presupposes the promise made to the ancestors.

[Moses said to the people:] ¹⁵See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Psalm: 119:1-8

Happy are they who follow the teaching of the LORD.

¹Happy are they whose way is blameless, who follow the teaching of the LORD!

²**Happy are they who observe your decrees and seek you with all their hearts,**

³who never do any wrong, but always walk in your ways.

⁴**You laid down your commandments, that we should fully keep them.**

⁵Oh, that my ways were made so direct that I might keep your statutes!

⁶**Then I should not be put to shame, when I regard all your commandments.**

⁷I will thank you with a true heart, when I have learned your righteous judgments.

⁸**I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.**

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Human leaders in the church are not the ones who control ministry. Rather they are coworkers who belong to God, the one who truly controls and continuously empowers the ministry of the church.

¹Brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? ⁴For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. ⁹For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

Gospel: Matthew 5:21-37

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts his followers to embrace standards of righteousness that exceed legal requirements and traditional expectations.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ²¹"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into

hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”

The gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon: When Your Convictions Collide With Culture (preached by Pastor Jack Dressler at Trinity on February 12, 2023)

The climax of the entire book of Deuteronomy is found here in the conclusion of Moses’ third and final sermon to the people of Israel. In many ways, this message is also the culmination of all that Moses’ life has represented. Moses has more to say, but those words, found in the next two chapters of Deuteronomy, have to do with issues of transition and leadership. Here, in this final section of Chapter 30, Moses summarizes the covenant that has been established between God and Israel: “Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.” And where does this life come from? Not surprisingly, according to Moses, it comes by “loving the Lord your God, obeying him and holding fast to him.”

This is a clear call to all who hear these words to make a decision. If you choose to love God, you will have chosen the way of life. Ignore God and your choice will lead toward the opposite of life. The sermon recorded in today’s text of Deuteronomy is similar to other ones in Exodus 19 and Joshua 24 where a decision is also asked for by Moses. The difference here is found in the fact that this text does not report the response of the people. The others report that the people responded positively to the call of a covenant with God, but this text is left open-ended. The words are ancient, but their call for a decision is spoken to us today. In other words, now that you have heard the

ancient covenant which God has established with God's people, including you and me, what are we going to do?

A common reaction to a sermon from the Old Testament, especially one that is focused within the law like this, is "Well, all of that is legalistic stuff from an ancient culture and it doesn't have much to say to me today," and there is some validity to that opinion. Laws and regulations about animal sacrifice or purification practices are no longer words we need to put into practice in our lives. Many of these laws had a practical application in Moses' and David's day, but they don't say a whole lot to us anymore. In fact, more often than not, they are used in self-serving ways. Sometimes they are used to promote bad theology. Other times they are just abused.

To many they are silly, and representative of how many people view the ancient laws of Israel. They are often seen as old codes that have little to do with our lives today. At times, that may be true, but what they represent is the serious and, in many cases brilliant, attempts of those ancient Israelites to figure out how to put the love of God into practice in their own lives. The law was meant to be a servant of the people of God. It was designed to give practical advice concerning how to live every day within the choice of loving God.

When I taught confirmation here years ago, I often had a confirmation retreat weekend where we would go to a camp for our learning and growing. On that first night when everyone had arrived we would open with a camp covenant. I might begin by saying, "We have two rules this weekend for camp: Love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself. Any questions?" At first it's quiet for a few moments, then inevitably someone asks, "Wait a minute, does that mean we can go into the girls' cabins?" And at first there is a loud cry, from most of the boys saying, "Yes!" And then almost as surely one of my girls will raise her hand and say, "You know, that doesn't seem like a very loving thing to do. I mean, you know, it is an invasion of privacy, or something." And so underneath the two major rules I might write, "Subunits of the Covenant" and from there we would record the specific restrictions and rules that the young people might come up with or from my adults that also attended. This might take up an hour or so, but it was a wonderful way of building community and making sure we understood what matters most to a young community of faith.

This routine did more than list the rules for the retreat. It also pointed out that there is always a need to be sure of what the guidelines are. There was always a desire to keep clear what the rules were for the people of God. What I realized later was that we always built a safe place for the kids to come to, a place where they could be themselves

and be safe – nothing like what they would experience in a schoolyard playground. The theological call to love God always needs a practical guide to help determine how that is carried out. And when something happened at camp that was not loving your neighbour as yourself, we would immediately stop and ask what just happened and then dialogue about it and express our feelings.

This place here is where society and faith may come into conflict. This is the point where our convictions may collide with the culture. These words of Moses were communicated within a community that was constantly being bombarded from the outside by the siren call of human desire and false need. Moses' sermon is clear: there is no way but God's way. There are no other paths other than God's paths.

Sometimes the rules are not clear. The world and the cultures we find ourselves in today are a confusing mix of many competing voices and paths. The decision to follow our convictions when our faith runs into the culture is not an easy one. There may be derision. There may be scorn, but it is the way of life.

We are called in the community of faith to live our lives within the boundaries of our convictions. Saint Francis said, "Preach the gospel every day; when necessary, use words." Saint Francis is reminding us that the word love is a verb! If we have chosen to live out the gospel of love as a verb then we must live within the convictions of our choice to follow God. All else that proceeds from our mouths is nothing more than trying to look good while having no intention of making the choice to love and obey God.

Back in the mid-80's, when greed was good, an investment firm used the slogan, "to know no boundaries." When the stock market collapsed in 1987, they quickly removed that theme from the airwaves and the newspapers. Life has always had boundaries. To ignore this is to invite disaster into our lives and especially in the church.

There is a story that comes out of WW II about B-17 bombers. Whenever the planes would return from bombing raids, they would immediately be brought into maintenance. From experience, the crews had found that the flak shells always did some damage, and it was very important to perform a thorough inspection. A part of this inspection was to look for unexploded shells. Once in a while there were shells that imbedded themselves within the plane without exploding.

On one particular day the inspection crew was going through the planes when they came upon not one but five unexploded shells! One non-detonation was a miracle, five was beyond miraculous. The team decided to inspect each bomb carefully and see if they could discover what had happened. Inside of each shell they found a note written in Czechoslovakian. A translator was found. This was what was written: "these bombs

were built in Czechoslovakia. They are not armed. This is all we can do for you now.” They said “no” to the evil machine of Hitler and “yes” to the freedom that unites all people. When we bring the gift of ourselves to the altar of love, God is able to take whatever gifts we have and explode them into marvelous love.

Sometimes, though, fighting against evil or some malevolent cause is easier than knowing how to live each and every day within a free society such as in an organization or church or home. The choices that we are bombarded with from every direction in our culture are, in their own way, just as dangerous as those flak shells from WW II.

The truth is this: it is never easy. Have you ever been in love? After the heart-pounding days fade away, is it easy to feel “in love”? Have you ever had children? There may be nothing more precious than the touch and feel of your child resting in your arms moments after she or he has been brought into this world. But later, when you’ve gone through three days without sleep, it’s 3 a.m. and the baby still refuses to quit crying, does it still feel precious? Do you want to record the moment on film?

Love is never easy. The call to love God does not always lead to the smoothest and easiest road. But in the end, it is the only road that leads to the abundant life. **AMEN.**

Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

The Prayers of Intercession

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Inspire your church that it may be a sign of life throughout the world. From the exploration of faith with children and new believers to missionaries and bishops, shape lives of faithfulness, so that all find abundant life in your ways. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Nourish your creation. Accompany all who plant and water. Bless the work of farmers; provide for subsistence farmers facing drought and climate change. Guide the work of agricultural scientists toward sustainable ways to feed the world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Give growth where there seems to be no hope for life. In nations and regions where reconciliation seems impossible, empower peacemakers with your Spirit. Where death holds sway through violence, disease, and hunger, equip relief workers to bring hope. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Nurture all in need. Bring healing to all who experience trauma caused by systems of injustice and destructive relationships. Give courage to those struggling to repent and those seeking reconciliation. Sustain all who work for restoration. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Encourage this congregation. Call us to a common purpose and keep us from quarrelling. Turn our hearts toward you and guide our leaders, so that our choices may be lifegiving for all. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

God of presence, bless those of this community who cannot be with us this morning, and those who walk with them, especially:

In Residence: Margaret; Maria; Stan; Katie; Katherine; Cordelle; Dorothy

Needing our prayers: Ed; Donna; Sharon B; Jeffrey; Art; Joan; Olga; Jack Stark; Vern; Bunny

Friends and Family of our Members Needing our prayers: Audrey; Mary; Anna; Jean; Randy

...and all members who may have needs unknown to us

And all those we name in our hearts...

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Thanks be to you for the lives of all who have died in Christ. Teach us to follow them in your ways and gather us with them into the promise of eternal life with you. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

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

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

The God who faithfully brings forth justice and breaks the oppressor's rod
✠ bless, strengthen, and uphold you, today and always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Follow the way of Jesus. **Thanks be to God.**