



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

September 1, 2024
15th Sunday after Pentecost

Announcements

Juice boxes are still needed at Street Help Shelter. The Welcome Centre Shelter for Women needs granola bars, fruit rollup-type items and another snack item for snack packs for children at the centre. Please leave donated items on the table in the Narthex.

Brown Bag Bible Study recommences on October 9. The noontime study sessions will look at the coming Sunday's readings. Bring your lunch and we'll supply the coffee, tea or water. Join us for a deep and lively discussion.

Coming Up

September 8 – Back to Church Sunday. After a summer filled with activities, it's time to reset for the Fall and all that it offers. This is a fun family-friendly service based on the writings of Dr. Seuss (there will be a lot of rhyming this morning). As well, there will be a BBQ fellowship after the service. What a great way to start the Fall.

We Remember in our Prayers

In Residence: Cordelle, Dorothy, Katie, Sharon.

Members: Bunny, Donna, Ed, Joan, Susan, Connie, Lorraine.

Friends & Family: Anna, Asdis, Audrey, Dot, Jean, Mary, Randy, Roger, Rose, Frank, Tanya, Jeremy, Rachel, Nash

Introduction to the day

Jesus protests against human customs being given the weight of divine law, while the essence of God's law is ignored. True uncleanness comes not from external things, but from the intentions of the human heart. Last week, Jesus told us "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). Now James says God has given us birth by the word of truth. We who were washed in the word when we were born in the font return to it every Sunday to ask God to create in us clean hearts.

ELW # 819 Come, all you people
ELW # 717 Let justice flow like streams
ELW # 806 O God, my faithful God
ELW # 879 For the beauty of the earth

Prayer of the day

O God our strength, without you we are weak and wayward creatures. Protect us from all dangers that attack us from the outside, and cleanse us from all evil that arises from within ourselves, that we may be preserved through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord..

AMEN

First reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

¹So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you.

⁶You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" ⁷For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? ⁸And what other great nation has

statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

⁹But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

Psalm 15

¹Lord, who may dwell in your ^l tabernacle?

Who may abide upon your ^l holy hill?

²**Those who lead a blameless life and do ^l what is right, who speak the truth ^l from their heart;**

³they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil ^l to their friends; they do not cast discredit up- ^l on a neighbour.

⁴**In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honour those who ^l fear the Lord.**

They have sworn upon their health and do not take ^l back their word.

⁵They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take bribes a- ^l gainst the innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be ^l overthrown.

Second reading: James 1: 17-27

¹⁷Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

¹⁹You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. ²¹Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

²²But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

¹Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around [Jesus], ²they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. ³(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) ⁵So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" ⁶He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

'This people honours me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me;

⁷in vain do they worship me,

teaching human precepts as doctrines.'

⁸You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

¹⁴Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.

²¹"For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, ²²adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride,

folly. ²³All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”



Sermon

What marks us?

May you know God's abundant love and grace today and always...

It has been a little over a month since I was last in the pulpit.

The pastor side of me took a month's holiday to get some work done around the house, unpack a few boxes, to travel around the area and see what's where and to recharge my batteries before a busy Fall begins.

Today, I feel a bit like a kid heading back to school after a long summer.

When I was in elementary school, the first homework assignment of the year was usually to write one page on "what you did during your holiday."

Of course, there were those who were able to write about what an interesting summer they had travelling or whatnot ... and others struggled to make up something to fill the page ... after all, how much can you say about riding bikes and playing with friends?

I remember one of my fifth-grade classmates, Larry.

Larry was not a fan of school or schoolwork. When our teacher, Mrs. Hoyt, gave us such an essay for homework, he handed in an essay that had his name at the top and the words, "I did nothing" as his entire essay.

Larry did not do well with Mrs. Hoyt.

So, please allow me to start this morning's sermon with "What I did during my summer holiday."

Well, I already said that I worked around the house, unpacked boxes and drove around the area. The big event was PrideFest.

The better part of three days were spent telling people about the loving and welcoming atmosphere of Trinity. We handed out a lot of information sheets about the church and its services. We handed out Trinity keytags, tattoos and stickers, prizes and lollipops and cupcakes.

We always explained that Lutherans are big on food, ... which is why there are cupcakes.

Of course, I picked up a nice red glow from three days in the sun ... I hope some of the flaking up top might lead to some hair growth.

And while we were telling visitors about what Trinity can offer them and the community, some visitors told us about their faith journeys and their experiences with the church.

These were not good stories.

There was the time that a pastor condemned someone from the pulpit for being gay ...

There was another story ... which sadly is a familiar one ... of a family rejecting a person when they came out ... and putting that person out on the street. Their congregation ... the faith community they knew since childhood ... turned their back on them.

And there were stories of congregations who claimed to be welcoming and even affirming only to ignore newcomers and visitors from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community when they attended a service.

You can see why members of the community are suspicious of churches reaching out to them.

Churches have wounded when they should have healed. The pain they caused is profoundly and deeply felt. It is a pain that Trinity is called to ease.

But what was clear ... and what one Trinity member working at the table said was “eye-opening” ... was that people ... for all their hurt and pain ... are still looking for a church where they can belong.

A place where they can grow spiritually and one that provides them a means to serve others.

They are searching for a place to be ***IN*** community.

Who’s out and who’s in ...

This is the question Jesus deals with in this morning’s Gospel lesson from Mark.

Mark shares with us that the Pharisees and some scribes continue to test Jesus.

They’ve travelled out from Jerusalem to hear what this Galilean teacher has to say.

They notice that Jesus’ followers have not ritually washed their hands before eating. The religious authorities are aghast.

They question Jesus ...

“How can you let this happen?”

“How come you allow yourselves to be defiled by the way you eat food?”

“Why don’t you follow the teachings of the elders?”

In Jesus’ time, how you washed your hands depended on where you were and how you worshipped.

Different Jews followed different ways to wash their hands.

This had nothing to do with hygiene.

None of the ways really had anything to do with cleaning the crud off your hands ... the water used for handwashing or even for ritual baths at the temple was not frequently changed.

So, the fiftieth person in line would be washing in the same water as the other forty-nine before them.

Hand-washing wasn’t a requirement handed down by God ... it was one of

the customs that had evolved over the centuries.

The priests and religious authorities cultivated the tradition as a way to mark the community ... it was a visible way to set the people apart from the romans and other gentiles.

It was a way of showing who was clean and who was unclean ... who was to be included and who was to be excluded from the community of believers. Their rules eventually led them to make lists of people with whom you could and could not associate.

This morning, Jesus' lesson is on what truly defiles a person ... how they are identified ... and what marks that community.

Jesus' instructions come in the time between the feeding of the 5,000 on the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee and the feeding of the 4,000 among the Gentile community.

Jesus seeks to break down the barriers between the two communities ... customs ... traditions and practices can get in the way being a true community of faith.

What Jesus criticizes is that the religious leaders have allowed man-made traditions and customs to become more important than living into God's commandments ... and we know that Jesus said that the most important commandment is to love God ... followed by loving our neighbour.

No one is to be out ... everyone is to be in.

Jesus says how or what a person eats does not defile a person ... because all food ends up in the sewer.

Rather a person's actions ... what holds their hearts ... is what marks their relationship with God and with one another.

Jesus rattles off a list of the evil intentions that defile a person ... fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.

To practice pious traditions, while allowing such things to rule their hearts marks a person and even an entire community as being hypocritical. Culture and tradition become a disguise to hide behind.

Churches and congregations have been guilty of such social hypocrisy ... some proclaim and display their piety ... they pray publicly and loudly, but do not fully live into the grace that we each have received.

In other words, they talk the talk and they are selective with how they walk the walk ... if they walk at all ... and this disconnect is noticed by the world. It marks the community.

People recognize when we profess to love God and one another and then do not live that love. They recognize those times when deceit ... envy ... slander ... pride and folly mark the life of a community and its members who proclaim piety and love.

In these moments of recognition ... they see hypocrisy and look elsewhere

in their search for a place of belonging ... of service ... and of love.

After all, who would want to be among the hypocrites.

This morning, I'd like to leave you with the following question:

Does our life together demonstrate something that has integrity to what we confess and proclaim?

In short, do our actions mirror our words?

Our faith calls us into a life of service ... a service of love to our neighbours ... a life where actions consistently live out the faith-filled words we proclaim.

We heard James' words: "...be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves."

Talk the talk ... walk the walk ... James tells his listeners.

Proclaim love and then live that love. This should be the constant of our lives. That is what should identify a faith community.

Here's the thing we need to remember ... here's the thing that we need to hold to on to as we reflect on our shortcomings ... on those times when deceit ... envy ... slander ... pride and folly marked our lives ... we need to know that God's grace remains ... God's unconditional love is ever-present in our lives.

Jesus never turned his back on those whose hands were dirty ... or on those whose hands were clean, but their hearts were stained.

He forgave. He still loved.

And through our living into such grace ... people yearning for a place to belong ... are able to recognize that they have found a place where they can find comfort and healing ... a place where their pain is eased ... a place where love is made known.

May we live into that love.

AMEN

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

Blessing

May the Holy Parent ignite the fires of advocacy in your heart
May the Spirit place the scroll of knowledge on your tongue in tough conversations
May the Son + walk with you as you march with your queer siblings.

AMEN

EVEN MORE ANNOUNCEMENTS...

We are in the process of reviewing and updating our membership records. If you would like a visit from Pastor Chris, please call the church office and leave a message. Pastor Chris would be happy to visit and bring you communion, if you have difficulty attending church services.



Trinity's Confirmation classes are planned to restart in the Fall. The Confirmation program is two-years long. The classes are an hour in length once a week. Each year runs from the end of September to early December and from mid-January to Easter. If your child has been baptized Lutheran, please consider enrolling them in the program. Email the church office or DM through the congregation's Facebook page for more information.

The All Saints Service is scheduled for Nov. 3. This is the service in which we remember the saints in our lives who have gone on to the kingdom. The service will include a guest musician and is intended to assist attendees with processing their sense of grief. You are invited to bring a candle (a votive is

preferred) to light and place before the altar. If you don't have a candle or forgot to bring one, don't worry. We'll have some available.

