

POSSIBLE Prayer of the Church ☩ 6th Sunday after Trinity July 6th, 2014

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs...

O God of all truth, goodness and beauty, teach us the truth of Your Word. Fill us with virtue and righteousness. Inspire in our hearts the adoration of Your glory, that we may always be one with You. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Father, You alone are our dwelling place and have given us order, peace and fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the faith. Bless and guide our Synod, its leaders [esp. *Circuit Visitor Pr. Steven Sparley*], its organizations and our congregation, that we may honor and follow You above all else. Keep us faithful to the end even as You have preserved and strengthened us to this day. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

O Lord, You gave the Law that we might know Your will and live as Your holy people. Increase in us true fear, love and trust in Your holy name and saving Word, that we may have no other gods but You. Guide and bless all fathers and mothers, pastors and teachers as they bring up children in the discipline and knowledge of the true faith. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, uphold our president; our governor; our legislatures and judges; our local leaders; and all who serve in our armed forces. Grant peace graciously, O Lord, in our time; for there is no other who fights for us but You only, O Lord, our God. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Merciful Lord, preserve us and all who call to You in any need of body, mind and soul [*especially Our Savior & Faith Prayers.*] ... *and all those we each name and keep in our hearts in personal prayer.* **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his evil way and live. We flee to Your mercy in Christ Jesus. Grant that we may ever thus believe and never waver. Grant that in such faith we may worthily go to Your altar to receive the very body and true blood that Your Son has given for our redemption, that we may ever praise, serve and honor You and Your Son. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our ...**

Heavenly Father, in the Holy Supper You forgive our sins and bind us together in Your communion of love. Grant that we, too, may gladly forgive the sins of our brothers, and let no division arise among those gathered at Your table. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Blessed are You, O Lord, for the gift of eternal life and for all who rest in their graves in the hope of the resurrection. You indeed have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. **LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. **Amen.**

TRINITY-6/PENT.7A Matthew 5:17-26 TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS 7.12.15 F.OS.L

PRAYER **LORD** God, Heavenly Father, we confess that we are poor, wretched sinners, and that there is no good in us; our hearts, flesh and blood being so corrupted by sin that we are never in this life without sinful lusts and desires. Dear Father, forgive our sins, and let Your Holy Spirit cleanse our hearts so we desire and love Your Word, abide by it, and by Your grace are saved; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our LORD, in whose Name we pray. **Amen.**

WARNING [TO US] Jesus often told the scribes and Pharisees the truth about themselves. He warned them often. They accepted the Bible but twisted its meaning. They lived clean lives but were unacceptable to God. Why? Their religion was only external. It was fruitless. It was without love. And, they are a warning to us.

TRUE or FALSE? "*As long as you try your hardest to be good and do your best to keep the commandments, God will accept that and give you eternal life.*" The statement is **FALSE**. That is the theology of those who say, "God helps those who help themselves." You do your part and God will take care of the rest and do whatever is beyond your ability to accomplish. You show you're sincere, you do something for God, and God will in turn do good to you and bless you. In effect, you and God work together to achieve your salvation. There's a theological word for that. It's called "**Synergism**," which means "**working together**." <-sounds okay> **I do my part, God does His part**, everything's taken care of. There's just **one problem**. Synergism is a **heresy, a false teaching**. And if the surveys are right, it's a pretty popular heresy. Even something like **40% of people who call themselves Lutherans agree** with the synergistic statements I've just been explaining.

1. REJECT/CONDEMN In today's Gospel reading Jesus explicitly **rejects** and **condemns synergism** when He says, "**Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**" It's not just that you've got to do to the best of your ability and try your hardest. It's that you've got to do better than those who **were the very best at keeping the Law**. The Pharisees dedicated **their whole lives** to knowing and keeping God's commands down to the finest detail. For instance, you think it's hard to **tithe and give 10%** of your income in offerings. Many of us struggle to give even **3 or 4%** [...or even ANY percent?!]. Well, the Pharisees would not only tithe of their income but of all that they possessed, even down to the **herbs** they would use to prepare their meals. They strove to keep God's Law **perfectly**, even **making up some of their own laws** to boot.

"**RIGHT.**" **PAST PHARISEES** Jesus basically is saying here, you've got to do **even better than that**, otherwise you've got **NO chance** of entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Even the Pharisees don't make it. Even the godly church people come up short. In the Old Testament God summarized what He demands when He said, "**Be HOLY; for I the LORD your God am HOLY.**" And Jesus Himself taught in this same Sermon on the Mount, "**You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**" Holiness and perfection. That's what the Law requires. Anything less than that just isn't [*nearly*] good enough.

100% NOT 1 SLIP

James 2 makes this point very clearly. It says, **"Whoever keeps the whole Law, yet fails in just one point, He is guilty of all of it."** It's sort of like a **balloon**. It may only bump into that one little sharp object. Only one little portion of the balloon may be pierced. But the result is the whole thing pops and is ruined. One hole, one flaw, ruins the entire balloon.

HOW IT [L] WORKS

That's how it is with God's Law. Even if you were able to keep all of the Law **except one area**, that one point brings down the whole structure of the Law. You see, the **Law all hangs together in love** for God and for the neighbor. You can't just say, *"Oh, I did that a long time ago when I was young and foolish; I've gotten my act together now."* Or, *"Oh, I was just tired and stressed out and in a bad mood when I lost my temper; you can't hold that against me."* Failing in one point is failing in all points.

SHARPENING [5TH] COMM. The one point that Jesus focuses on in today's Gospel is the **5th Commandment, "You shall not murder."** Now I'm sure that in a civil sense, **just about** all of you/us have kept that law. But in God's sight this Command requires much more than not killing someone or even not hurting someone. It also requires that you do good to your neighbor and help her or him in all their physical needs. When you have done something against another person, Jesus says here that you should swallow your pride and go and be reconciled to him as a matter of first priority. **Confess** your wrongdoing and **apologize** sincerely. And when s/he has done something against you, you are **not to hold a grudge** and **refuse to speak to** her and seek some sort of revenge. Rather you are to forgive and be merciful. Jesus shows us here that the 5th Commandment has to do **not only with deeds** but even also with **words** and the **thoughts** of the heart. Because **all sin begins in the HEART**.

DEAD-MEN'S BONES

That's why Jesus called the Pharisees, **"whitewashed tombs,"** and, **"well manicured cemeteries."** Outwardly they were clean and pure, but inwardly they were full of **uncleanness** and **dead men's bones**. This is what **all human righteousness** is: A good looking and attractive *exterior* that covers nothing but rotting, stinking death on the *inside*. Can you do any better than the scribes and the Pharisees? Then you will **not** enter the kingdom of Heaven. **That's the judgment of the Law**.

2. INWARD RIGHT...

Jesus is teaching you here that you must not seek merely an outward righteousness like the Pharisees, but an **inward righteousness before God**, the righteousness of faith, whereby we place our confidence not in ourselves or our own goodness but in Him alone and pray the words of the Introit, **"The LORD is my Strength and my Shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped."** Only in Christ is there deliverance from the judgment of the Law. Because **only** Christ has performed the Law without fault or failing. Jesus said, **"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill (them)."** Jesus **alone** has kept the Law. And He did so for you and in your place.

TWO-WAYS [1ST WAY]

Our LORD fulfilled the Law in **two ways**. [1.] **First** of all, **as true God** who at the same time had become fully human, **Jesus never sinned**, as it is written in **Hebrews**, **"He was tempted in all points as we are, yet [He was] without sin."** Not only did Jesus **not** do the things that the commandments forbid, He also **did do** everything the commandments

demand. Not only did He **not murder** or **steal** or have **impure thoughts**, but He also perfectly **loved** His Father in Heaven and His neighbor on earth, showing **compassion**, **healing**, **doing good** and **teaching the truth** to all. Our LORD lived a holy life as our representative and our substitute, that our unholy lives might be redeemed.

[2.] 2ND FULFILLMENT

Secondly, Jesus fulfilled the Law by completing all of the old ceremonial requirements regarding the Sabbath and the sacrifices and so forth. By His holy death and burial, Jesus Himself **became our eternal Sabbath rest**, cleansing us from our sin by His **once-for-all sacrifice**. All the Old Testament Jewish rules and regulations found their **goal and culmination in Jesus**, who put that all to **an end in His Crucified Body**, that the Law might no longer condemn us. Not only did Jesus live a perfectly godly life in our place, He also **suffered on the Cross** the full sentence for our imperfect and ungodly lives in order to reconcile us to the Father. Our Lord is now risen from the dead that we might be **freed from judgment** and **given new life** and a **sure hope**.

BAPTISMAL "BURIAL"

That freedom, that new life, that sure hope are all yours in **Holy Baptism**. St. Paul says in the Epistle that **by water and the Word you were buried into Christ's death and raised with Him to a new life**. His death **counts as your death**. The hellish judgment he experienced **counts for you too**. You are united with Him if you believe and are baptized. The flames of hell were **doused for you at the font** which **joined you to the Cross**. All there is now is the life of Christ that you who believe share fully.

OURS REALLY DOES...

So it is that the Words of Jesus which seemed to be impossible are now, in fact, **true in Him**: **"Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."** By faith in Christ, **your** righteousness **DOES indeed exceed** that of the Pharisees, because it has been **given to you freely by God's grace**. You have the perfect righteousness of Jesus. The Father has **declared** you to be **holy** in His sight. He didn't just demand that you straighten out your life, He gave you a whole new life, the life of Jesus that is full and complete and perfect and everlasting. Through Christ you will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. **Believe** that – **it's true**.

CONCLUSION

Our text, **Matthew 5:20-26**, is given to us so that we might **examine ourselves**. Do we twist the Scriptures to **hide a sinful heart**? Do we **harbor anger** in our hearts? Do we **refuse to be reconciled** with our brother, our sister, our neighbor, or coworker? Are we **unkind** to those who are unkind to us [or even **kind** to us]? ANSWER: **YES**. Then, **Let us confess our sins to God**. Let us turn to **Jesus Who forgives us our sins**. So abide in Him by faith so that we can produce much fruit to glorify our Father in Heaven and benefit our neighbor on earth. These deeds do not save us but show that we have faith in our LORD Jesus.

DEAD AND ALIVE

So, reckon yourselves to be **dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ**. Because just as you have been united with Him in His death, you will surely also be united with Him in the resurrection of the body when He comes again. To Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit belongs all worship, honor, glory, and praise, forever and ever. **IJ'N, Amen. SDG**