

Salem-Sauk Valley Lutheran Parish
Order of Sunday Worship- 20th Sunday after Pentecost- October 6th, 2024
At Sauk Valley Lutheran Church

Prelude

Emily Larson, Musician

Welcome/Announcements

Invocation:

P: We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

P: O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Your presence to hear Your holy Word. We pray that You would open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that through the preaching of Your Word we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ's sake. **C: Amen.**

Hymn:

"This is My Father's World"

Praise #56

Confession of Sin:

P: Let us bow before the Lord and confess our sins.

C: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Therefore, we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kyrie:

C: O God the Father in heaven, have mercy upon us!

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us!

O God the Holy Spirit, true Comforter, have mercy upon us!

Absolution:

P: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us, and has given his only Son to die for us, and for his sake God forgives all our sins. To those who believe in his name he gives power to become the children of God, and has promised them his Holy Spirit. Those who believe and are baptized shall be saved. Grant this Lord unto us all.

C: Amen.

Gloria:

P: Glory be to God in the highest.

C: And on earth peace, good will toward men.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray together.

C: Sovereign God, you have created us to live in loving community with one another. Form us for life that is faithful and steadfast, and teach us to trust like little children, that we may reflect the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalm 8

First Reading- Genesis 2:18-24

Second Reading- Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12

Gospel Reading- Mark 10:2-16

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: God be praised for his glad tidings!

Apostles Creed

C: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Children's Message – "Jesus Loves Me"

Offering and Offertory: *We give Thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift might be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee.*

Hymn: "Blessed Be the Name"

Praise #82

Sermon

Pastor Lexy Carson

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

The heart of our Gospel for today revolves around divorce, and it is such a loaded and tricky topic because it hits so close to home for everyone. We all know someone who has been divorced, this topic applies to us all. And this has been the basic question since the fall in the garden. Whose fault is it? Even though Adam and Eve stayed together, I'm sure as they left the garden the thought popped in at least one of their heads - do I have to stick around with this person because they were clearly at odds with each other - quickly blaming the other instead of clinging to each other. But for Adam and Eve what other choice did they have other than to hang out by themselves amongst the alligators and flamingos.

The Pharisees come, putting Jesus to the test with a question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" My first thought when I read this text is why this question? Why must they put Jesus to the test? Why do they do this? The role of a Pharisee is to be an expert in the law so why do they need to ask Jesus a question about the law? Well that's exactly the point, they aren't interested in Christ's insights on the topic - they want to even the playing fields. Christ is going throughout the land teaching and preaching with authority and the Pharisees feel threatened. They are feeling as though their power is not as good as Jesus's and so they try to bring Christ into their playing field. As experts in the law, they bring him to their arena to test him to try and establish their own authority. It'd be like if Maryann wasn't feeling very confident in her sewing abilities so she invited me over and she watched me try to sew, she'd sure feel a lot better about her skills. The Pharisees are trying to bring the crowds back to them by putting Christ to the test with a heated topic, that is aimed to their advantage.

Even more interesting about this particular question is that it was this question that killed John the Baptist. When John spoke openly about the law around marriage, it upset Herodias, the wife of King Herod who was formerly married to his brother Philip. Herodias was filled with anger at

John for his proclamation and this ultimately led to his death. Now Jesus knew all this backstory, the loadedness of this question and all that was at stake. How it could lead him to his own death.

Jesus knows that the law can only divide. It is so divisive it can even lead to his own death. The law only divided in biblical times and it only divides today. With this question Christ is given you have people on opposite sides of the table. Some who say yes it is lawful to divorce and you have others who say no it is not lawful to divorce. We live in the same world of a dividing law. Should we have low taxes or high taxes? To allow immigrants in or not? To allow abortion or not? Should we allow fracking, oil pipelines? Is climate change real or not? The list goes on and on and on. All questions raised by the law that only divide us as a community, nation and even as Christians. The law will not bring unity, only divide.

So how does Christ respond when the Pharisees ask “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” Well, Christ does not answer in the law. He knows this will only divide. So he doesn’t answer the question but instead directs the Pharisees, the experts in the law back to their own law. He says, “What does Moses command of you?” Turning the Pharisees back on their heels.

Christ is turning them back to the Torah, to what Moses gave them, he is the expert in the law after all and Jesus did not come to be a new Moses. Now the Torah does have grounds for a certificate of divorce. It means that if you remarry you would not be committing adultery. This is a loophole to the law that was given to Moses from God. A concession to the law. So technically according to the law of Moses, there is a loophole within the law that makes a divorce okay.

But Jesus presses further, he says, “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law.” It was because of our hardness of heart that God had this commandment to begin with. How hard is that to hear? Our hearts are hardened. Now a temptation with this particular text is to point the finger. Well Jesus is talking about people that have been divorced, they are the ones with hardened hearts. If you’ve never been divorced you might be sitting back real comfortable right now but none of us divorced or not are off the hook.

When Jesus says our hearts have been hardened he doesn’t mean just about marriage. He is talking about anytime we don’t trust what God says. That is what having a hardened heart means, we don’t trust what God says. We doubt his words. Instead, saying did he mean it? It all started in the Garden when the devil planted that first seed of doubt, did God really say? From there original sin begins and continues. This same hardness of heart, did God say? Did he mean it this way? Surely there must be a loophole, some leeway, allowance for our discretion.

That’s how Moses created the loophole for a certificate of divorce. It all stemmed from this hardness of heart, seeking an alternative route to a loophole. Moses gave a concession but God has never given loopholes in creation. Jesus dives into this further “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

What truly is at stake with not just this topic or set of verses, but anything Jesus brings up spanning from greed, false gods, envy, you can name any sin and what is at stake with every single one of them is this - God says something and we don’t like it.

With this topic of marriage and divorce, we go to what our Genesis text says, what God says, we don't like it and then Moses writes a concession. A loophole, a way out of God's word. What God says is always being questioned. Creation, marriage ahh did God really say? We don't like when God is categorical, black and white. We want leeway, room for our own discretion. Jesus is hard and fast, standing firm in God's word and creation. He gives no concession. It is a slippery slope, if we try to give a loophole in Christ wherever we want. What are we left with? The word is lost in the midst of our own desire to change and edit to the way that we like. If we say God didn't mean creation, he didn't mean marriage, what is to stop us from saying he didn't mean forgiveness of sins? Then what are left with? Absolutely nothing. The word is watered down to nothing.

But fortunately, our Gospel goes on and it seems Jesus is throwing a curveball. "People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them."

Jesus turns to the fruit of the marriage, the children themselves - not the mothers and fathers who are struggling with marriage. He turns to their fruit, to the children, the ones whom will cling to faith itself and there he unleashes the absolution - he gets rid of the accusation of divorce in the conscience.

Jesus blesses the children and says, "anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Like a child. When a child receives words, they believe it because you said so. The tooth fairy will come if you put your tooth under your pillow, they believe words at their face value. They don't come with skepticism, doubt or hardened hearts. They don't try to find a reason to doubt or why it doesn't benefit them. They believe.

To enter the kingdom, we must receive the word like a little child. Believing, trusting and having faith because God said so. When you receive the word at its face value, you trust it. No longer looking for concessions, trying to make bargains, you're not questioning God's authority.

When you hear like a child, you have peace in your heart because you have received the word specifically for you from God. When you seek loopholes, concessions, when you're guilty by your sins whether it be about your marriage, divorce, whatever it may be. You are forgiven for not trusting God, you are forgiven for having a hardened heart. Although it hurts to hear Christ name our hardened hearts he gives us the greatest peace and comfort in freeing us from all of it. He didn't come to be liked. He came for you, for your hardened heart to set it free.

The peace of Christ which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Hymn:

"Children of the Heavenly Father"

Praise #327

Prayer of the Church: Each prayer will end: Lord, in your mercy. *C: Hear our prayer.*

Holy Communion

P: The Lord be with you.

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C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts to the Lord.

C: We lift up our hearts unto the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is meet and right so to do. P: It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and all places give thanks to you, O Lord, holy Father Through Jesus Christ, your dear son, our Lord and Savior who ascending above the heavens and sitting at your hand, poured out the Holy Spirit as he had promised upon the chosen disciples, causing the whole earth to rejoice.

Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company in heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and singing:

C: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Invitation/Distribution

Thanksgiving-

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Let us give thanks and pray: We thank you Lord God almighty that you have refreshed us with these gifts; and we ask you, in your mercy, to strengthen us through these same gifts in faith toward you and in fervent love for one another; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

C: Amen.

Benediction

P: Now may the Lord bless us and keep us. May the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us his peace.

C: Amen, Amen, Amen.

Doxology

C: Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here below. Praise him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Dismissal: P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God! Postlude**