

Sermon for The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

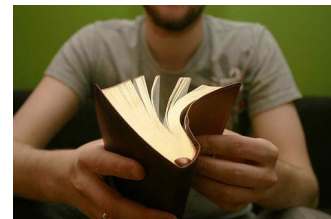
Date: August 5, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Second Reading: Acts 2:42-47

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:1-15



Sermon Title: Good News: Living A Devotional Life

Introit: Psalm 145:1-6; Antiphon: Psalm 145:8-9

Hymns:

LSB 595: O Blessed Spring

LSB 779 – Come, My Soul, with Every Care

LSB 599: O Gracious Lord, with Love Draw Near

Distribution:

LSB 601: All Who Believe and Are Baptized

LSB 606: I Lay My Sins on Jesus

LSB 632: O Jesus, Blessed Lord, to Thee

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151



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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Through the past messages we've learned about our God and how He has saved us. We've learned that He comes to us in His Holy Word. We've learned how He saved us through His Son and how we are kept in that faith by the Holy Spirit. We've learned about the Sacraments that Jesus gave us to feed and strengthen us, ...so now what? What do we do with all of this stuff? How are we supposed to live?

To sum this all up quickly I can ask you one question, who pleases God more?

- The monk in a monastery who reads his Bible seven hours a day, prays seven hours a day, performs good works seven hours a day, and only sleeps three hours a day.

or

- The person living a regular life, going to work everyday, caring for their family, simply living a good faithful Christian life.

People are often inclined to answer the monk who has dedicated every part of his life to devotion. That however would be the wrong answer. Why? Because God wants us in the world.¹ He wants us to be the example of Jesus to those who do not know Him. We're not supposed to hide our faith, hide in our faith, or hide from our faith. Our faith is shown best when we live as decent, honorable, kind, Christian people. You are the ones who are obeying God living your life here in and around Austin far more than a monk hiding away in a secluded spiritual island.

This seventh message is called: "Good News: Living A Devotional Life." We live in a country where we have the privilege of worshiping and practicing our faith freely. Though there are some who would like to hinder that freedom and attempt to do so in various ways sometimes through the secular court system, yet over all we still have a great deal of religious freedom in this county. That is not true in many other places. One of the subscription I receive regularly is a publication called, "The Voice of the Martyrs." It chronicles persecution of Christians around the world. Very often recording accounts of people who were executed for their faith.

As I said we have a lot of freedom in this country to enjoy our religious liberties, so much so that perhaps we take those things for granted. Look around you right here today. Does the congregation look like it did years ago? People have taken our freedom to worship publicly and collectively for granted. They perhaps don't see the benefits of it. What are some of the privileges and benefits that we receive from public worship? The Bible says:

Ecclesiastes 5:1 Watch your step when you go to the house of God. It is better to go there and listen than to bring the sacrifices fools bring. Fools are unaware that they are doing something evil.

Psalms 26:8 O Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.

Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message that is heard is what Christ spoke.

¹ John 17:15-16

It really is a wonderful privilege to come into God's house with other Christians. Here God teaches us how to guard our steps. He teaches us how to come close to Him. Here we see Him better, we listen to His good counsel. As we read and sing the liturgy, taken from His Word, we are taught of the wonderful gifts God has given us through His Word and Sacraments. Here is where the strong in faith come to bolster up the weak, and together as a family we live under God's care, receiving mutual encouragement and growth in faith, all bringing glory to God, so that we can walk out into the world strengthened and emboldened to serve Him all the better.

How important should God and God's Word be in our lives?

Hebrews 10:24-25 We must consider how to encourage each other to show love and to do good things. We should not stop gathering together with other believers, as some are doing. Instead, we must continue to encourage each other, even more as we see the day of the Lord coming.

Acts 2:42 The disciples were devoted to the teachings of the apostles, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

Colossians 3:16-17 Let Christ's word with all its wisdom and richness live in you. Use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to teach and instruct yourselves about God's kindness. Sing to God in your hearts. Everything you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Luke 11:28 Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hear and obey God's word."

The early Christians were eager to study God's Word, and to learn about the God who had saved them. They did that through regular worship, as well as Bible study, and personal devotion. The same things we are called to do today. The benefit today is that we have much more rich resources. They did not have a copy of the Bible in their home. They did not have tools like Portals of Prayer to use. They had to wait for a teacher to come to town to have a Bible study. We have all of these things readily and easily available to us multiple times each week. I think it is that ease of access that causes us to take such things for granted.

Prayer is another gift we have been given. The opportunity to talk with the very Author of Life Himself. The Bible says about prayer:

Psalms 19:14 May the words from my mouth and the thoughts from my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my defender.

Psalms 10:17-18 You have heard the desire of oppressed people, O Lord. You encourage them. You pay close attention to them in order to provide justice for orphans and oppressed people so that no mere mortal will terrify them again.

Prayer is another gift we take too much for granted. There is a hymn titled, "Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire." Verse 5 states:

*Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters rest with prayer.*

*O Lord, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself has trod—
Lord, teach us how to pray.*

What are some important things to know about prayer?

John 16:23-24 *[Jesus said]* I can guarantee this truth: If you ask the Father for anything in my name, he will give it to you. So far you haven't asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive so that you can be completely happy.

Matthew 6:7-8 *[Jesus said]* "When you pray, don't ramble like heathens who think they'll be heard if they talk a lot. Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

1 John 5:14 We are confident that God listens to us if we ask for anything that has his approval.

All prayers must be to the one true, holy, living, God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All other prayers are to false gods and not heard. We can talk to the Father only through Jesus His Son because Jesus is the One who has opened the door to all believers. There are no other special requirements. You don't have to be a poet. You don't have to craft together beautiful words that well up people's emotions. The prayers don't have to be long drawn out speeches. All you have to do is talk with God, know He listens, and in all things we pray, "Thy will be done" because God knows what we truly need. His only goal is our salvation and He will give us what is good to prosper our life to that "Last Day" end.

Living a devotional life is one of simply using the gifts God has given us to provide strength and growth for our physical and spiritual needs. When it comes to praying, talking to God, Jesus has given us an example prayer to follow. We call it the Lord's Prayer. I thought I would end this message by going through the Lord's Prayer and show what Jesus was teaching us to do. I want to do that because here again we have a prayer that is taken very much for granted because we say it so often.

Our Father who art in Heaven: Jesus teaches us to call on our Father. We are His children. He loves us, disciplines us, and teaches us the way to live, so we call on Him with the affection a child should have for a good father.

Hallowed be Thy name: Though we call Him Father He is God and we acknowledge Him as the Sovereign Most High, the Holy One.

Thy kingdom come: This is the primary goal of the Holy Christian Church and all of God's holy saints. To tell the Good News and wait for the ultimate time of God's coming, the Last Day.

Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven: Here we are asking God to bind our will to His. We are praying that the perfect obedience found in Heaven would also be found also in our hearts.

Give us this day our daily bread: We ask God to give us all that we need each day for body and soul. That He would feed and sustain us to the end of our days on this Earth.

Forgive us our trespasses as we for give those who trespass against us: Another way to think of this phrase might be, “Forgive us our trespasses [the same way] we for give those who trespass against us.” That’s a bit more intimidating to say, because it requires us to be as forgiving as Jesus. No doubt something we all would struggle to achieve but that is what should always be our goal.

Lead us not into temptation: God certainly would never tempt us to sin. Here we are praying that God would lead and guide us on our way through this life by directing us away from those things that would tempt us.

But deliver us from evil: Here I need to point out a small translation error that has gotten itself stuck in the Lord’s Prayer. You might recall I mentioned this in my second sermon in this series. This phrase was mistranslated back in the early 1600’s and we have used that for so long that changing it becomes a challenge. The better translation would be, not, “deliver us from evil” but, “deliver us from the evil one.” There is always evil in the world and in the previous phrase we asked God to lead us away from it. Here we are asking God to protect us from Lucifer, the evil one.

Finally, we sing our praises to God for all His wonder and might, as we say: **For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

At the beginning of this message I asked the questions, “What do we do with all of this stuff? How are we supposed to live?” The answer is we should live a life serving our neighbor, caring for our families, teaching everyone of the love of Jesus, and remaining in regular communication with the God who has saved us. That is the life that truly pleases God. That is the life that will end with the assurance and confidence that peace and eternal life will follow.

That is the life God wants us to live.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.