

Sermon for The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: July 21, 2019

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

Old Testament: Exodus 32:21-29

Epistle Reading: Acts 2:1,5-11,14,22-24,36-41

Gospel Reading: John 1:29-34

Sermon Text: Exodus 32:21-29

Sermon Title: Pentecost and the 14th of Tammuz



Introit: Psalm 119:57–60, 64; antiphon: v. 105

Hymns:

LSB 915 – Today Your Mercy Calls Us

LSB 901 – Open now Thy Gates of Beauty

LSB 784 – Take My Life and Let It Be (v. 1,4,6)

LSB 918 – Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer

Distribution:

LSB 609 – Jesus Sinner Doth Receive

LSB 610 – Lord Jesus, Think on Me

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203



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Text: Exodus 32:21-29

Moses asked Aaron, “What did these people do to you that you encouraged them to commit such a serious sin?”

“Don’t be angry, sir,” Aaron answered. “You know that these people are evil. They said to me, ‘We don’t know what has happened to this Moses who brought us out of Egypt. Make gods for us. They will lead us.’ So I told them to take off any gold they were wearing. They gave it to me. I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!”

Aaron had let the people get out of control, and they became an object of ridicule to their enemies. When Moses saw this, he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, “If you are on the Lord’s side come over here to me!” Then all the Levites gathered around him. He said to them, “This is what the Lord God of Israel says, ‘Each of you put on your sword. Go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other, and kill your relatives, friends, and neighbors.’”

The Levites did what Moses told them, and that day about 3,000 people died. Moses said, “Today you are ordained as the Lord’s priests. God gave you a blessing today because each of you fought with your own sons and brothers.”

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

If you were paying close attention you heard a number repeated in the Old Testament and Epistle readings for today. That number is important only because it appears in both the Old and New Testaments and they are intended to be understood together. That number is 3,000.

This year, when we run across those ancient Jewish festivals, instituted by God in the Old Testament, we are exploring them here. One such event occurred this past Wednesday. It is known simply as the Fast of the 14th of Tammuz.¹ Now for those of you not well versed in the Jewish Lunar calendar Tammuz is the name of one of the months. The 14th of that month is a day God commanded the people of Israel to remember every year.

What were they to remember? The day Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the tablets of stone where God's own hand had written the Torah, the Law of God.² He had been on the mountain for 40 days while the people waited. The people however, became impatient and then determined that Moses had died, so they decided to make a new god. They went to Aaron, Moses' brother, and asked him to make the idol. He told them to bring their gold. With it he formed a golden calf.

The people bowed down to it. They worshiped it. They even proclaimed it was the god who brought them out of Egypt.³ The crowds were celebrating. The people were partying. The noise was deafening. It was so loud that Moses could hear the noise as he came down the mountain. His attendant, Joshua, thought a war was going on.⁴

Then Moses saw what was happening.⁵ Moses was not amused. He stormed down the mountain in a rage. He shattered the tablets written in God's own hand, and all of the celebration stopped.⁶ Moses scolded them like children everyone knew they were in trouble. Aaron lied.⁷ People backed away. Moses spoke.

It was not all of the people who groveled before this golden calf. Some had remained faithful including some of the priestly order, from the tribe of Levi. Moses called them to come and stand near him with their swords. Moses gave

1 This date falls 40 days after Shavuot (Pentecost). 40 days after Moses ascended Mount Sinai.

2 Exodus 32:16

3 Exodus 32:4

4 Exodus 32:17

5 Exodus 32:18

6 Exodus 32:19-20

7 Exodus 32:24

them orders to unsheathe their swords and spread out through the crowd hacking their own people to death. That day 3,000 people died at the hands of the priests.⁸

That's the part of the receiving of the Ten Commandments that you never see in the movies. You have to read the Book.

This is the event that God wanted the people to never forget. They were to remember it always on the 14th of Tammuz.⁹ Of all the festivals and commemoration it is the only one that recall the punishment by God for the people's failure. Why would God want them to remember such a thing? Because God has a plan.

About 1500 years later God's plan was revealed. It was revealed in Jesus His Son being born, living, dying and rising again. This in fact was the plan from before God said "let there be light." This plan was the promise, given to Adam and Eve. A promised that has been fulfilled. The Promised One, the Holy One, the Messiah has come and His name is Jesus.

Just before Jesus' death He celebrated the Passover with his disciples. That very Passover Jesus changed the Passover Meal and gave us another Holy Meal. A better Holy Meal, a Sacred Meal: The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion. 50 days later, on the high holy day of Shavuot or First Harvest, with people from all over the world present God reminded them of the 14th of Tammuz.¹⁰

God again was present in a powerful and mighty way. This time it was not smoke and fire billowing up from the top of a mountain. This time it was a mighty wind and fire burning on the top of each believers head. This time God's voice did not shake the ground, nor did it, like the words that came from Moses, pronounce a condemning Law no one could fully obey. This time it proclaimed the Law fulfilled. The promise fulfilled.

This time the Law did condemn,¹¹ but then came the sweet, gentle, tender Gospel.¹² Under that heavy Law the people asked, "What should we do?!" The Gospel message to them, and us is repent, believe, be Baptized and you will be saved. Saved even if you personally called for Jesus' execution. There is no sin too great.

8 Exodus 32:27-28

9 This date has been designated as the date to remember a number of events. According to the Mishnah, five calamities befell the Jewish people on this day: (1) Moses broke the two tablets of stone on Mount Sinai; (2) The daily tamid offering ceased to be brought;; (3) During the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the city walls were breached (proceeding to the destruction of the Second Temple); (4) Prior to Bar Kokhba's revolt, Roman military leader Apostomus burned a Torah scroll; (5) An idol was erected in the Temple.

10 A fast they would hold in just 40 more days.

11 Acts 2:37

12 Acts 2:38-39

At Sinai 3,000 were killed. On that first New Testament Pentecost those 3,000 were replaced. Again through the Covenant of God, but a New Covenant, a New Contract, a New Testament.

The Old Covenant required circumcision to mark you as one redeemed. The New Covenant requires Holy Baptism to mark you as one redeemed. A mark each of you this very day bears, as you come here before the altar of your God. Those 3,000 replacements were part of what led Justin Martyr¹³ to proclaim Holy Baptism to be the circumcision of the New Testament.¹⁴ A precious and sacred gift given to anyone of any age, that all may come and be proclaimed a child of God.

That is the message we proclaim here. Our message here is that God's grace is freely offered to all people. There is no past too dark, no evil too great, no action so horrible, that God cannot forgive. Our message is, that forgiveness comes at a price. It is expensive. So expensive no one could afford it. For that reason God Himself paid the price. The cost to us is only repentance. To apologize to God for mistakes of the past. To apologize from the heart, and to mean it.

With that apology comes total and complete forgiveness. With that forgiveness come the free gift of salvation. That salvation is the freedom Jesus won for us. The freedom from the slavery to sin we once endured. We are free, and in our heart is held in the promise of a life that cannot ever end, where we will live, with Christ, in a place that will never end or ever be touched or stained by sin again.

That is the message of the Church. That has been, and will remain, the message of this church until the day when the new promise is realized and we all stand in the presence of our Holy God. Until that time we continue to give glory to the God who has, out of His loving kindness, grace and mercy given us the freedom and the right, to proclaim His glory and His Word to the nations as the Church continues on through the ages. This is the legacy we have been given. This is the legacy we have to give. May Jesus, the Holy Christ, the Son of the Most High God, grant us the wisdom and might to do so boldly.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

13 Justin Martyr 100-166 AD

14 Justin Martyr in his Dialog with Trypho The Jew