

# Sermon for The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

**Date:** June 27, 2021

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

**Old Testament:** Exodus 32:19-20, 25-29

**Epistle Reading:** Acts 2:22-24, 32-33, 41

**Gospel Reading:** John 14:23-31



**Sermon Text:** Exodus 32:19-29

**Sermon Title:** The 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz – Repentance Matters

**Introit:** 1 Chronicles 29:10b,11,13; Antiphon Psalm 26:8

## Hymns:

LSB 915 – Today Your Mercy Calls Us

LSB 901 – Open now Thy Gates of Beauty

LSB 918 – Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer

## Songs:

Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive

Forgive - This Hope

Forgiveness - Matthew West

## Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151

## Liturgy:

Creative Worship



Pastor James Groleau  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
1200 13th Avenue NW  
Austin, MN 55912  
Office: (507) 433-2642  
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net  
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org  
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



**Text: Exodus 32:19–20, 25–29**

And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies), then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. And he said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. And Moses said, "Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day."

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Grace, peace, and God's eternal mercy be with you always. Amen.

Happy 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz! Today we celebrate an event of God's judgment and condemnation. We celebrate a day of God's wrath falling on people as they die by the thousands. Woo Hoo!! Let's have a party!

I hope that sounded strange to you. Yet, that is what today is all about among those following the Jewish faith. Today is the 17<sup>th</sup> of the month of Tammuz. A day to remember rebellion against God.

All sin, purposeful or accidental, known or unknown, is still sin. You may be able to justify it in your own mind. You might even be able to justify it in the minds of others, but it is still sin. It doesn't matter why. It doesn't matter how. Sin is sin and sin brings death. That is the Law of God.

I want you to recon back about five weeks. On that Sunday we celebrated Pentecost and the birthday of the Holy Christian Church, the beginning of the Last Days, and the entrance of the New Testament. This event occurred 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead, fulfilling the Torah Law of God.

That should be a day for rejoicing and wonder. Because of what Jesus has done we are no longer held to the ceremony of the old Law. No longer are we held to rules and regulation that could never be kept. No longer are we crushed under the condemnation of our sins. It was on this day that the Holy Spirit was sent. He was sent to the disciples, and with His arrival everything changed.

The clumsy, bumbling, disciples, who were constantly misunderstanding Jesus, were on that day filled with the Holy Spirit, and with that they will become the profound preachers of the faith and the heroes of Church that we celebrate and revere.

Their message is our message. That being, here is the place where God's grace is freely offered to all of God's repentant people. There is no past too dark, there is no evil too great, there is no action so horrible, that God cannot forgive. Our message is: forgiveness comes at a price. It is expensive. So expensive there is not a person who could ever afford it. For that reason God Himself paid the price. The cost to us is only repentance. To apologize to God for mistakes and missteps of the past. To apologize from the heart. To admit it, acknowledge it, to repent of it, and to mean it.

With that apology comes total and complete forgiveness. With that forgiveness comes 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 the promise of a life that cannot ever end, where we will live, with Christ, in a place that will never ever again be touched or stained by sin.

That is the message of this congregation, and of the Holy Christian Church, since that glorious day when the Holy Spirit came. That has been, and will remain, the message until the day when that promise is realized and we all stand in the presence of our Holy God.

The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, is the One who now dwells, not just with us, but within us. Our body's are temples of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> As He arrived on that first Pentecost day there was a powerful sound of rushing wind. Then the appearance of fire. That fire divided and rested on the heads of the disciples and so began the end of that 50 day transition between the Old and New Testament eras. At that moment the New Contract, the New Testament, began.

That is the world in which we now live. We do not live under the Old Testament, the Old Contract. We are not required to offer sacrifices to cover sin. That does not mean however that we do not need to acknowledge our sin.

To fully understand how God brought in this New Contract era we need to look much farther back. We have to go back almost 4,000 years from today. The children of Israel had just left Egypt. Moses was up on the mountain receiving the Torah Law of God, including the Ten Commandments. As Moses came down the mountain he discovered the people worshipping a golden calf.

There are a number of details about that event you may not remember. Moses had the calf ground to powder and poured it into water. Then the people were forced to drink it. Then Moses called the faithful priests, of the tribe of Levi, to him. He commanded them to take up swords and to go through the people of Israel killing those who worshiped the golden calf, hacking them to death. That day 3,000 Jews were killed by the priests.

1 1 Corinthians 6:19

Later when the people were finally entering the Promised Land they were commanded to remember several events in their history, and to hold special days to remember those events. God commanded them not to forget what they had done. In Deuteronomy 9[:7-21] one of the events they were commanded to remember was the golden calf. They were to remember how they had angered the Lord, and not forget. In the Jewish faith this is remembered by a holiday called “The Fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz.” That fast is today, this very day. They are to remember the 3,000 people who were killed and eternally cut off from the grace of God.

You may ask what that has to do with Pentecost, or with us on this very day. That requires going to Acts chapter 2. There, the Holy Spirit had given them the ability to speak in languages from all over the world. The list of people represented the entire known world at that time. It covered countries from Asia, Africa, and Europe. The crowd of people were from all over the world, but with one thing in common. They were believers in the one, true, holy, living God. They were people waiting for Messiah to come.

With all of those people present Peter preaches boldly. His sermon was full of convicting, law and condemnation for sin. They had killed Messiah, the One for whom they had waited. What greater sin could anyone commit? What hope of salvation could they have? They saw their guilt before God, and they saw condemnation was their future. Hell’s deadly maw was open for them. What hope could they have?

Scripture tells us what they did not know. What is written for us had not yet been written for them.

Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people ... whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven...<sup>2</sup>

They had killed Messiah, the One for whom they had waited. God forgives. That is the message that followed Peters call to admit their sin. What followed was the gracious and precious Gospel that proclaims forgiveness for sin through Jesus Christ.

2 Matthew 12:30-32 (*Excerpts*)

At the end of that message how many people were brought into the one true faith through Holy Baptism? The answer is 3,000. Where many years earlier God's people were commanded to kill their own brothers and friends, now that number has been restored. Restored from all the peoples and nations of the world. Now all believers are called children of God. No longer is the Jewish nation the only chosen people. Now all people who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior are the chosen people of God.<sup>3</sup>

God has shown to all, and made it clear, that salvation is for all people, in all lands, in all languages.<sup>4</sup> From that day to this very day, we have all heard, and possess, the free gift of salvation that was promised to, and came though, the Jewish people.

The road was made wider. The gate was made broader. The entrance to Heaven was made easier.

Someone, somewhere, perhaps in some distant land, way back in your family tree, heard the good news of salvation and left their former false gods to follow the one true Christian faith. From that point on, your family has been given a new legacy. A legacy that has been past on to you, and is for you to pass on to your children. A legacy of promise and salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Maybe, for some, that event was not so far back. Maybe it was something that happened in your family recently. Maybe it was your grandparents, or your parents that changed the legacy of your family tree. Maybe you still have time to thank them for their wisdom and the gift they have given to you.

Maybe it was to you the Holy Spirit came, through God's Word. Maybe it was you who has become the one who will give to your family a new legacy that will last for generations. However you have come to this Holy Christian faith, as you are brought to repentance you are saved. You are free. You are a child of God.

That is the reason we are here today. Without that first New Testament Pentecost, there would be no St. John's Lutheran Church. Without Pentecost we would still be condemned and without hope. Without Pentecost the truth is we would have no salvation, and no reason to celebrate this, or any, day.

3 John 1:12-13

4 John 3:16-17

Pentecost was, and is, not like “The Fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz.” It is not just a remembrance of days long gone.

In the Lutheran tradition the sermon contains Law and Gospel. Both are important. Both are necessary. The 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz is the Law. It’s message is: Hell is real. Pentecost is the Gospel. It’s message is: salvation has come.

Pentecost is a remembrance of your Holy Baptism. Pentecost is a remembrance of that day when your body, your heart, became a temple, a house of reverence, honor, worship and praise, in which the Holy Spirit Himself dwells.

Repentance matters. Repentance makes all the difference.

But what about a real sin, a serious sin?

Earlier I quoted a verse about forgiveness, in part. Here is the full quote from Jesus:

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.<sup>5</sup>

What about a real sin, a serious sin?

I don’t know your past. I don’t know what you have done. Have you proclaimed the Holy Spirit’s transformation in your life, but shown no change? Have you, a walking, living, temple of the Holy Spirit failed to show the fruits of the Spirit? Have lies, hate, or others sins against your neighbor continued in your heart? Are you a temple of the Holy Spirit or a walking, living blasphemy against the One who came to you at your Holy Baptism?

What is God’s message to you? God’s Word is God’s Word. Jesus own words proclaim, eternal death. Is there hope?

The Bible proclaims:

5 Matthew 12:30-32

God is love.<sup>6</sup>

The Bible proclaims:

God desires all people to be saved  
and to come to the knowledge of the truth.<sup>7</sup>

Here is the wonder of our God. He can change His mind about destruction under the Law. If Satan would whisper threats of God's anger at you, turn to God's Word. See how often He has changed His mind when true repentance comes. Time does not allow me to read them to you, but the list is long. It includes:

Exodus 32:9-14

Jonah 3:10

Amos 7:1-6

Jonah 3:9-10

Jeremiah 18:1-11

Jeremiah 26:12-13

You should look then up. You should read them. Here is what they will tell you. No matter the sin. No matter the guilt. No matter the shame. God forgives. Do not let Satan rejoice over you. God forgives. Do not let Satan rejoice over your neighbor. Tell them, God forgives.

If a sinner is to be condemned,  
at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies.

If they are to perish,  
let them perish with our arms wrapped about their  
legs,  
imploring them not to go.

If Hell must be filled,  
let it be filled against the  
exhausting efforts of our exertion  
to proclaim God's forgiveness.

Let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.<sup>8</sup>

6 1 John 4:8

7 1 Timothy 2:3-4

8 Based on a quote from a funeral sermon by Charles Spurgeon.



Has sin enslaved you? Has Satan trapped you? Has he tricked you into speaking what should not be said? I know the cure. God forgives. If you struggle to believe that, or feel that, this altar up here is where the answer can be found. Here is where peace is proclaimed and experienced.

Nothing would bring me greater joy then to have one in whom sin has won come to this humble shepherd. I will come before this altar with you and I will pray with you. I will pray for you. My God hears my prayers.<sup>9</sup>

Listen to Him:

Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power.<sup>10</sup>

My God reigns. My God hears. My God forgives. My God has crushed Satan's head. My God wants you to get home.<sup>11</sup> If you don't feel you have the right to kneels before Him, I will go with you. If you think I am not enough there are plenty of others in this congregation who will kneel with us. We will pray.

God forgives.<sup>12</sup>

Confess you sin.

God forgives.

God be praised!

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,  
Encourage one another in faith,  
Witness to God's love and  
Serve all people**



9 James 5:16

10 James 5:16

11 1 Timothy 2:4

12 Psalm 51