

15th Sunday after Pentecost  
Sunday, September 1, 2024 Grace 10:30

### **Introduction to the day**

Jesus protests against human customs being given the weight of divine law, while the essence of God's law is ignored. True uncleanness comes not from external things, but from the intentions of the human heart. Last week Jesus told us "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). Now James says God has given us birth by the word of truth. We who were washed in the word when we were born in the font return to it every Sunday to ask God to create in us clean hearts.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

O God our strength, without you we are weak and wayward creatures. Protect us from all dangers that attack us from the outside, and cleanse us from all evil that arises from within ourselves, that we may be preserved through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

### **FIRST READING: Song of Solomon 2:8-13**

*Though using language and images of a love story, the Song of Solomon has long been interpreted allegorically. Jewish lore sees it as a description of the love between God and Israel. Christians have often interpreted the Song as a description of the love between Christ and his church.*

### **PSALM: Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9**

God has anointed you with the oil of gladness. (Ps. 45:8)

### **SECOND READING: James 1:17-27**

*The letter of James was intended to provide first-century Christians with instruction in godly behavior. Here Christians are encouraged to listen carefully and to act on what they hear, especially by caring for those least able to care for themselves.*

### **GOSPEL: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23**

*Mark's gospel depicts Jesus as challenging traditional ways in which religious people determine what is pure or impure. For Jesus, the observance of religious practices cannot become a substitute for godly words or deeds that spring from a faithful heart.*

### **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

#### **What Would Jesus Do?**

At the outset, rules seem simple. They divide the world into good and bad and help us restore a measure of order to a chaotic world. Unfortunately, the same rules that we use to bring order out of chaos are often insufficient to deal with the complexity of our lives, which is one of the reasons there truly is an exception to every rule. This is also the reason we appoint judges: to interpret the law when it fails to adequately address the circumstance to which it is applied.

In Jesus' day the Pharisees and scribes were known for their strict observance of the law. So when they notice the disciples of Jesus eating with defiled hands, the Pharisees and scribes bring this perceived

breach of the law to Jesus' attention. The law itself, which requires that people wash their hands before eating, originated from ancient purity laws. Jesus understands this and simultaneously upholds and reframes the law by drawing his listeners' attention away from the washing of hands to what truly defiles. In doing so, Jesus acts as a judge and offers an interpretation of the law that both upholds its original intent of purity and absolves the disciples of wrongdoing. At the same time, he exposes the prioritization of human precepts over God's command and reminds us of God's sovereignty and compassion.

Rules are simple, but our world is not. Through the incarnation, the Word made flesh, God meets us at the intersection of law and life. In Jesus, God the judge enters our world in a new way and interprets the law. And through Jesus, we come to understand God's will in a messy world. Therefore, if we as Christians truly want to live out the will of God, we do well to start with that old and simple question "What would Jesus do?"

## **THE PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Drawn together in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray with confidence for the church, God's good creation, and all who are in need.

God of every generation, give the church a sense of purpose and belonging. Sustain and build up leaders and lay people as we accompany one another in our life with Christ. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

God of creation, you named humans as co-creators with you. Where the earth cries out in pain, bring wholeness. Guide governments and industry, that environmental laws and practices seek to heal and not harm. Bring relief and justice to people and places suffering from climate catastrophe. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Sovereign God, we pray for local communities of every kind: rural and urban; established and new. Lead those in authority to seek the good of all through their words and actions and to mentor others in honest and generous ways. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Healing God, you draw near to all who are hurting. Be with all who desire relief from chronic and acute illness, cancer, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Strengthen health care workers, therapists, and caregivers. Tend to those who are close to our hearts especially Sandra Gagnon, Karen Weigold, Keith Weckwerth, Shirley Glickman, Marilyn Schneider, Denita Wolfgram, Stephanie Yourth, Christopher Yourth, Linda Boland, Glenda Panke, Debbie Thom, Donna L Hoffman, Walter Hobden, Harold Yourth, Doug Sell, Danny Schultz, Erna Schruder, Bill Lorbetzkie and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

On this Labor Day weekend we remember and give thanks for all who have fought for workers' rights around the world. Continue to improve working conditions and establish fair wages so that all people may thrive. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Comforting God, console us as we mourn our departed. Today we remember our brother Steve Agnew. We hold fast to the promise that death has been defeated by our Savior Jesus Christ. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We entrust these and all our prayers to you, holy God, in the name of your beloved child, Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

**BLESSING**

Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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