

20th Sunday After Pentecost
October 10, 2025

The word of the Lord is sharper than any two-edged sword. The word of the Lord will do what is needed to take us from where we are to become like Jesus. The plan of salvation is easy to understand if we are willing to listen to the Lord in His whole counsel.

All of the heresies have one thing in common: they are ways to let us off the hook from becoming like Jesus and instead focus upon you and me having the power and authority. In simple words, God is God and we are not, nor will we ever be. This brings us to the place where Lucifer fell when he said, “I will be like the most High.” No, you will not. God is God.

Look at the attitude of the rich young ruler. “All these things I have done since my youth.” All these things? There isn’t one time when perhaps you sinned? But Jesus does not go there. He gives grace. You see, Jesus isn’t interested in being the sin police. He knows we have all sinned. He is going deeper because this is a rescue operation. Jesus did not come to clean us up and send us on our way. He has come to make us to be like Him. He, the Author and Finisher of our faith, will perfect us to become a child of the Heavenly Father. He will not stop until we are perfect.

This world is filled with encouragement to be good enough. Go along to get along. Say things in the right way, offend no one, and follow the yellow brick road, even if you do not know where it is going. In contrast, Jesus tells us to follow Him and then adds, “And You know the way to where I am going.” Jesus is the way, truth, and life and no one comes to the Father except through Him. An inclusive invitation to an exclusive relationship. And the world hates this. The world wants good enough. Jesus has come to perfect us.

The whole book of Job is, in one way, a description of the conditionality we have in our sinful relationship with God. We wonder why bad things happen to good people. Listen to Jesus, “Why do you call me good?” Listen! We assume that we are good. If we were good, we wouldn’t need to be saved. More than that, this is the original sin. In the Victorian era, people supposed it was some kind of sexual sin. Humanity has long been fascinated with doing things that make them feel good. The original sin was the temptation of the knowledge of good and evil. We think we know what is good and what is evil. We do not and cannot because, in sin, we are not good. The created cannot judge what the Creator is doing because the created are limited in time and space. We look in a mirror dimly. We simply do not know. The real question, answered by our faith in Jesus, is really, “Why do good things happen to bad people?”

Imagine something we call horrific happens – and sadly, it’s not hard to imagine because horrific things seem to happen every day – what is the first thing arrogance will say? “Where is your God.” Well, He’s not my God. He is *the* God for whom, through whom, and by whom all things have their being. I did not make Him up, He created you, me and all things. Does He know what he is doing? Think about the absurdity of such a question. He invented everything so of course He knows how it all works. And He allows things for His own purpose.

The Lord did not create us to be automatons, walking with preprogramming to do what He wants. This is obviously not the case. In this land, it is the foundation of the governing documents and a foundation of our thinking. We consider things from the perspective that we have the inalienable right of freedom. We are free to praise or curse. We are free to love or hate. We are free to work or steal. We are free to support life or snuff it out. We have freedom of thought. But freedom itself is not the thing for which we are to live and sadly, when we misuse this freedom and land solidly in the put of sin. Jesus has modeled for us the godly life and that is to completely submit to the will of the Father – the One who is good and knows good. True

freedom is living in the will of our Heavenly Father.

This freedom that we have is also the very thing that is necessary in order for us to love. Think about what love really is. It is the willing submission of the self for the sake of the other. Rather than thinking about the other for my purpose, it is seeing the other as a self capable of love. When we learn to love – truly love – we see, begin to understand and live the love of God. That love is no more apparent than Jesus, God in the flesh, humbly walking among us. He who knew no sin, sullied by the sinners surrounding Him, walked to the cross and exchanged His life for ours. What great love is this that God would actually think of us as His children. Rebellious, filled with anger and hatred, opinionated and shaking our fist at God every time things do not go the way we want and His response to us is love.

Jesus says, “One thing you lack, get rid of all the junk that fills up your life this day and come with me.” The young man says, “I cannot.” Yes he can, it is just that he won’t. Death will strip him of all of these things anyway, so why do we cling to what we will not take with us? We do, but I ask that rhetorical question, “Why?” We do cling to things. Beginning in childhood for many when there was that favorite toy or blanket to which we clung to give us comfort. We cling to what we know. The word tells us that the day is here where no longer do we need the prophets to speak God’s word, for we have the Son who has given us the words of eternal life. We do not need to be taught to know God, for from the least to the greatest, we will know God, for He has written His law upon our hearts.

Did you know that there is a genetic marker that puts a lock on murdering? Something needs to remove that lock. In World War II the Nazis invented meth as a means to give their soldiers super powers. No, they weren’t super powers (just feelings) that allowed the soldiers to go three days without sleep. It had the Nazi benefit of removing the “do not murder” lock. It also, from prolonged use, destroyed the mind of those who chemically altered their brains. God gives life and evil destroys life. Short term gain at long term pain. That seems to be the way of this world. The Lord tells us that there is short term pain for eternal gain. Yes, this world is filled with sorrow, because with the freedom humanity has been given, we each seek to set ourselves up in the place of God thinking we know good and evil.

Knowing these things, we too may ask the question, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus tells us that it is possible with God. I might add, “And only with God and because He is God.” Scripture tells us that we are not yet what He will make of us. We are not yet. We are being saved by God, for God, and through God. Go the Father, in great love, calls us to become His children. Jesus, the faithful and only begotten Son makes this possible. God the Holy Spirit is in us, leading us, so that we too may be eternally bonded with the Triune God in godly and true love.

What garbage are you willing to throw away that gets in the way of the love of God? There is nothing in this world you will take with you, but you do have the character that is either growing closer to the Lord or else moving ever farther away. By the time of the judgement, there really are two kinds of people, those who drew near to God and those who did not. Add to this that it is not how far you go on the journey of becoming like Christ, but that you are on the journey. The true riches of life is not all the stuff you have, but the love of the Creator of all things, including the stuff that you now call your own. Listen to the wisdom of the all-knowing God who loves you. Listen to Jesus when he says, “The last shall be first and the first shall be last,” to which I say, “Jesus, as long as I am with You, it does not matter where you place me.” Amen!