

Sunday, June 6, 2021 Sermon
Second Sunday After Pentecost (Proper 5)

Human nature in this age is sinful. This age is very deceitful. Put the two together and know that our Lord will lead us through the pitfalls of this age. We can say whatever we will, but our Lord will guide us by His grace and mercy to live as He knows we need to live if we are truthful about the life He gives and that to which we are called.

At first glance, we may think the Israelites were crazy for wanting a king. Who wants someone who is going to be an absolute ruler or even a tyrant ruling over you? Yes, we need leaders, but we want them to keep us safe and let us be to go about our business unhindered. But can you not see that, in the reality of this age, these are two different things?

A leader is someone who is a part of the group and steps in front and says, "Come on, let's go this way." A commander is someone who sits back and says, "I know what needs to be done. You, go where I direct you." This world is filled with would-be commanders, but very few leaders. Jesus is our Leader. He is leading us toward eternity with Him. He gives us His commandments, but He does not command us, not in the way of this world. He takes us, where we are, and leads us to where we need to be. Do not underestimate this subtle, but significant difference.

The Israelites wanted a king. Our sinful nature desires a superman to come to the rescue. We want them to be good and lift us out of our current situation so that we can go back to what we were doing unhindered. But, if we raise up a human to such a position, sin often abounds, for we are all sinners. Just look at history and you will see that over and over again, giving this authority to another often does not go well. Yes, there are some exceptions, but they are few. God warned the Israelites, but they did not listen. Jesus warns us, but do we listen?

By the time Solomon became king, it is believed that the tax rate was close to 90%. Yes, 90%! Someone had to pay for all of that building that was going on. That and the grand and powerful army had to be supported. And then, there were all those wives and concubines. No wonder Rehoboam was advised to lower the tax rate. He didn't and the kingdom was split.

I am convinced that why our nation's constitution has worked as well as it has, thus far, is that the Founding Fathers understood sin nature and put in the checks and balances to confront the sinful inclination we all have when given a little authority to go for more.

In this age, we need leaders and not commanders. In our laziness, we want someone who will take charge and get done what we think needs to be done. And here's the rub, we each want what we think is right in our own minds. We are reminded by Scripture that we do not even know what we really want. We need to be rescued from the mess of this world. We need a Savior.

This sinful thinking, which is in all of us, needs to be overcome. If we insist on being sinful, God is not going to stop us. It breaks His heart, but we, for a time in this age, have the ability to do what is right in our own minds. That's really the problem in this age; that each of us fights to get our own way. This is why that point Jesus made in Gethesemane, when He prayed for us, is so important. We are called away from our will to seek the Father's will. We even pray it when we speak the Lord's prayer and say, "Thy will be done on earth as it shall be done in heaven." Yes, it is the Lord's will that needs to be done! And the Lord's will shall be done!

What does this mean for us?

In contrast to how this world thinks, Jesus was not behaving the way people wanted, with their own idea of how the Messiah ought to behave. Yes, he was healing people and that was

good, but He wasn't seeking power or authority. The people wanted Rome to be kicked out and for Jesus to take charge and be their king. But this is not the way of Jesus, who truly is our King. Even His own family did not trust Him. They were more concerned with what others thought than the truth. We too can fall for that piece of devilishness and listen to what others think rather than heed the word of the Lord.

We should not place our trust in any worldly leader. We are to trust God above all things. Jesus is our leader. Yes, leader, not commander. He will speak the will of our Heavenly Father, and we are to learn how to obey all that is commanded, but the journey to eternity is the way of salvation.

God does not use devilishness to accomplish His will. Sinners do. God does not manipulate, scheme, or coerce others in order to get things done. Sinners do. Our Lord speaks to us plainly and bids us to come follow Him and the way in which He is leading. When we follow the way of the world, those steeped in the way of the world will treat us as though we are crazy. Jesus has told us that the way of the cross is surrounded with suffering. We are not called to suffer for its own sake, but we will suffer if we hold fast to the confession of our faith.

A house divided will not stand. In this age, at this time, there is great division, even in the church. Look to the One who saves us. Yes, you see the problems. We need . . . we need . . . what we need has already been provided. Do not seek for what you think is right, look to our Savior Jesus who is here and is leading us. As you pray for a pastor to come into our midst, do not pray for a commander – a king, or some kind of superman who will save this fellowship – pray for a leader who will remind us over and over again that the Savior is here and leading us. Jesus did not come to set up a worldly dominion. He came to save us from sin, in all its forms, and to prepare us for the heavenly kingdom which is without sin in any form.

Jesus has come, not to lord it over you, but to lift you up to be a child of the Heavenly Father. He will raise you up, not lord it over you. Understanding this, we should not lord it over others, but seek for every opportunity to lift others up as we have been lifted up in order to follow the One who is saving us. Do not reject what you have been given.

Through the water of your baptism, you have been given great promises. A part of the promise is to prosper you in the way of the Lord. It is the possibility you have to take the hand of Jesus and see that He is the One who leads you all the days of your life. In that leading, you will find the way of the world constantly attacking you as you follow Jesus. From every corner, even from family and the church, you will find those who are tugging at you. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Do not silence the voice of the Spirit in you. This is an unforgivable sin that goes into eternity. You and I need the guidance of the Spirit of God in order to be led into the life God intends. He is the One who is creating in you the image of Christ. He knows what you need. It will do no good to argue with the Lord – even though we have and perhaps, will – for the Father's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Who are the sisters and brothers of the Lord? They are the ones who do the will of the Father. Our Lord has spoken plainly so that we who have heard the words of eternal life may walk in the leadership of our Savior. What must we do to save Good Shepherd for future generations? Stop thinking that way, that's what we must do. Our Savior, Jesus, has knit together a wonderful fellowship in this place. Do not worry about what is ahead on this journey, but keep your eyes upon Jesus, listen to the Holy Spirit and know that our good and gracious Lord is leading us exactly where He intends. It is no mantra when we say that God is good all the time. It is the truth that our Lord will lead us all the days of our lives if we will seek Him. Amen.