

11th Sunday after Pentecost Sermon
August 20/21, 2027

The Lord knew each one of us before we were formed in the womb. He knows the plans He has for us. Why do we worry? Why the anxiety? The world has been in turmoil since sin came into the world. Do not focus upon the sin, but upon the decency you encounter each day. There are still many who do the right thing. Be thankful for the good folk. The goodness of the Lord has not left us, but we are to see things as they are and, with willingness, fight the good fight of faith, trusting in the One who has called us to Himself by faith and through grace.

We are in a conflict in this age of rebellion against God. We are not fighting against flesh and blood. Indeed, our Lord has commanded that we love our neighbor. We are to love the sinner, but hate the sin. Sin is rampant in our age. What is it that drives people to act as they do? Here from the word of the Lord not some antiquated idea, but what Jesus said and did. A woman was crippled by a spirit. I do not know about you, but as the world has gotten goofier, I have become more aware of the spiritual element of things. There is a spiritual element. For confirmands, I ask them if they have ever experienced something and turned to see someone looking at them. That is not intuition (although that is what the world calls it), it is your spirit becoming attentive to another spirit. This happens every time you, how do we say this, “I am creeped out?” We are physical, yes, and there are physical maladies, but also, there are spiritual things which impact us as well. If it were not so, our Lord would not have done what He did. Keep in mind that this writing is from Dr. Luke, a medical doctor, so he would not call it bound by a spirit unless that is what it was.

It is kind of a funny thing, but our world has become so materialist that I find that I often dismiss things that might be considered too religious, spiritual, or other worldly. The more we have become like this, the more I see entertainment that relishes in going into the eery and mysterious. Too often, it is in the dark side. It is as if the world says, “We’re too mature to believe in such things, but we are fascinated with them anyway.”

Is this not at the heart of those who reacted to Jesus and the healing He performed? Rather than marveling at what God had done and that a daughter of Abraham had been freed, they attacked with the law which was given to help our spiritual well being. We do not fight against the flesh, but against the forces of darkness. The darkness is spiritual. You know that. Why, we even have a saying, “The hairs on my neck stood up,” when in the presence of evil. There is a spiritual element and we do well to learn to ignore the materialists of this age who proclaim that if it can’t be touched, measured, and understood, it is just fantasy. You know that is false as well, for you have those in your life whom you love and that love is real. It cannot be touched, measured, and often, not understood, but it is real.

For a second week in a row, we see confronting our hypocrisy. In this “that’s not nice” world, we do not like to hear these words, but let them sink in. If we say one thing and do another, well, that is hypocrisy. The truth is that we do this all of the time. Jesus is calling for us to be honest with our selves. It is impossible for us to lie to the Lord because He knows, but we do know how to deceive ourselves. Jesus is calling this out for all of us.

I find it an interesting thing when people say, “This or that is Christian behavior.” The problem with thinking in this way is that we see things as a list of what to do or not do. But to be a Christ follower is to follow the Lord all the days (and minutes of the day) in the whole of your life. What is Christian behavior? Why it is the behavior of Christ followers. That is all over the place. Do you see the hypocrisy in this? If we try to behave a certain way – especially if it is

foreign to us – we will fall short. You know, like the resolutions made on New Year’s day that are shortly forgotten and abandoned. Jesus did not come to reform our behavior, but to set us free from the spiritual bondage that we are in because of sin.

We were born bound to sin. It does no good for to rebel against it, because this is the center of the truth and why we declare each week that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. It is simply a statement of truth. What then? Well, let Jesus free you.

This is the point where we often double down. I am willing to let my neighbor be freed – and boy do they need it – but I am not such a bad person as that. Yes, yes, I am. But do not be discouraged by this. The world tells us that there is no such thing as spiritual things. Ask the Lord and see for yourself. In your heart of hearts, there is something that resonates with what I am saying. Either you are deceived, made all of this up, or else there is something true which is speaking to your heart.

A beautiful thing about our Savior is that He gives us the grace to test things. In fact, Scripture tells us to test the spirits. So, we are encouraged to open up to the reality that we are both physical and spiritual beings. Do go to your doctor, but also, go to the Lord and ask for complete healing. It is an interesting observation, but the level of trust I see for those who go to medical professionals seems to be what it once was for clergy. I would not ever want to return to those days where clergy were trusted absolutely, but instead, learn to trust the Lord as both Your Savior and as the Great physician. He who heals the soul has also created the body as an amazing thing which can does repair itself (to a point).

At the heart of what happens in today’s lesson is the reality that we are offered in salvation which brings balance to our lives. In a world that is out of balance, Christ has come to set us free from sin, death, and the devil, to put us back into balance in a living relationship with the One who created us, redeemed us, restores us and leads us toward the goal of our faith, being with Him eternally. This is what Christ has come to do. How then do we slip back into the place where we determine for ourselves what God can or cannot, will or will not do? Are not all things possible with God? Yes, I tell you, and so I encourage you to partake of the better portion, and this is walking with the Lord all the days of your life.

You have come to something that cannot be touched, Scripture tells us. It is more real that what you or may think reality is. The God who created all things with a word, has called us to live trusting Him. There are things we do not know – and things we do not need to know – but what we do need is right before us. This is the call of faith that calls into reality itself. Yes, we are shaken so that which is unshakable may remain. We are receiving something that cannot be shaken. We have been given something that cannot be taken from us. We have the salvation promised, from the Lord Himself, so that we might continue living in this world with its ever shifting sand knowing that our Lord has purpose in everything.

God is Spirit and Truth and He desires those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. In this sense, every day is a Sabbath. We are called to become holy even as He is holy. We are told to pray without ceasing which means that we are to be continuously in His presence. This call of faith, given to us in our baptism, calls us forward in Him so that we may learn from Him how to live life as it designed it to be lived.

What is before you is very simple. I know that it is hard to do, but even in saying this I realize how absurd this difficulty is in my own life. Trust the Lord. That’s it. Trust Him always, in all things, for all things, through all things. “Yes, Lord, but . . .” I sinfully say. Then His Spirit reminds me, “Not my will, but thine be done.” Amen.

