

THE SERMON SUPPLY



A Resource from
Region 6



Lectionary 30, Year C

Bishop Daniel Beaudoin, Northwestern Ohio Synod
Reformation Sunday: Gospel Text – Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9-14

⁹[Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

SERMON TEXT:

Dear friends in Christ, it is good to be with you, and on behalf of all of those who love and serve Jesus across the 23 counties of Northwestern Ohio, I bring you greetings. I am Daniel Beaudoin, and I am blessed to serve as the Bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod. Yes, it is good to be with you on this Reformation Sunday.

Now when I'm out on Sunday mornings, folks will sometimes ask, **"So, what do you miss about being a parish pastor?"** I miss the rhythm of the week. Prayer Group, Bible Study, Catechism, Worship (**2x**). I miss the breadth of connections in the community. And I miss the depth of relationships that are formed between pastor and people. **"So, what don't you miss about the parish?"** Oh, that's easy... Rummage sales. I do not miss the annual church rummage sale.

The call goes out. We gotta get the youth group to Dallas, or Detroit, or New Orleans for the Youth Gathering. But there's only 46 cents in the Luther League account. We could do yard flamingos. We could sell super bowl subs. We could rake leaves. We could bake cookies. No, no no... this is much bigger than that. So much bigger. This is going to take a church rummage sale. So, the word goes out. And people bring their... (well you can't say that word in church)... people bring their rummage. And they shove it all into that 1 abandoned room. The old SS room with the windows that are painted shut. And early in the morning

on rummage sale day, before the rising of the sun, you head down there with the kids, and you swim your way through the mold spores. And it smells like musty basement, and dusty attic, and Avon perfume. And you haul all this stuff out. Clothing and videos. Books and toys. 4 George Foreman grills. A 1994 World Almanac. And a 2-fingered bowling ball.

So, you haul this stuff out, and you sort it, and you price it. And it's always 96 degrees with 96% humidity. And you spend the whole day haggling with sale savvy shoppers. And then at the end of the night, after you have filled the church dumpster 6 feet above capacity, we learn that we made \$2200. \$2200. Which means we're going to New Orleans. But what that also means, is that next summer, there's going to be another church rummage sale. And if you've never been involved in a church rummage sale, I would encourage you to fasten your seatbelts and tighten your chin straps, because the Church in North America is smack dab in the middle of a church rummage sale.

When I am out and about in congregations on Sunday mornings, someone will often pull me aside and say to me, "**Bishop, I remember back in the 1960's when we had....**" And you can fill in the blank. A full sanctuary. 100 kids in SS. 3 choirs. Luther League. Softball and Bowling. And during my 1st few years as Bishop I would say, "**We need to celebrate that great legacy and give thanks to God**".

But now that I am in my 2nd term and have heard those same words for so many Sundays, I now say, **"We need to celebrate that legacy and give thanks to God. But let's also be honest. Those days are gone, and they are not coming back."**

We are smack dab in the middle of a church rummage sale, and when we are constantly looking back to what was, we will never be able to see the future that God has in store for us. We worship and serve a crucified and risen Lord. Dear Friends in Christ, we got to walk out of the tomb of what used to be, and into the glorious light of what can and what will be.

Now back in 2008, Phyllis Tickle (I love the sound of her name). Phyllis Tickle wrote a book called the *Great Emergence*, and in this book, Phyllis Tickle argues that about every 500 years the church has a rummage sale. And the old and familiar way of doing church is replaced by something new. What once occupied pride of place is set aside, as the HS renews us and pushes us to be the people of God in a whole new way. **"Behold"**, the crucified and risen Jesus says. **"I make all things new."**

So, in the year 476, nearly 500 years after the birth of Jesus, the Roman Empire and the Roman Church crumbles in on itself. But the monks rise. And from far away monasteries, the monks share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the Angles, and the Saxons, and the Germans. 500 years later, in the year 1054, there is a Great Schism, a great church split between East and West. The

Church in the East bears the brunt of invasion. While in the West great cathedrals rise from the earth and ascend to heaven. Universities are born. And the missionaries share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the Poles, and the Danes, and the Swedes. But you also have the Crusades. And you also have corruption. Which paves the way for church rummage sale #3. The Lutheran rummage sale.

On October 31, 1517, 508 years ago, a priest and Bible professor named Martin Luther took a hammer and a nail, and he tacked 95 short sentences to the church door in Wittenberg. 95 little arguments that critiqued what the church was preaching, and teaching, and selling. It was October 31, 1517. The moment that begins the Protestant Reformation. Though I would argue the Reformation actually started 6 years earlier, when Martin Luther was called by God to be a church pastor and a Bible professor in the German city of Wittenberg. From 1511 to 1517, Professor Luther dove deeply into the breadth and depth of Sacred Scripture.

3 years deep in the Book of Psalms. 3 years deep in the Letter to the Romans. Studying, teaching, preaching (**2x**). Asking his parishioners, "**Is God a righteous God?**" Asking his students, "**Is God a loving God?**" Asking himself, "**Is God a gracious God?**" And then turning to the Letter of Romans to find the answer. In Romans, St. Paul writes, "**For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.**"

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith".

It is in the study of sacred scripture that Martin Luther begins to see the righteousness of God, not as punitive and vengeful, but as grace filled and loving. And this righteousness, which we read about in Romans chapter 3, makes a person just, which makes a person free. A righteousness that becomes ours, not on account of human works, but on account of God's grace. This is what drives Martin Luther to the church door on October 31, 1517; 6 years of being deeply engaged in the Word of God.

As a parish pastor and now a bishop, I believe that God's Word has the power to transform people and communities from who we are, into the people and communities that God longs for us to be. Every 500 years the church has a rummage sale, and when you dig down deep enough, you will find the Word of God and the promise of the Gospel. The promise of a Christ, and a cross, and a crucifixion. Followed by the truth of an empty tomb. Jesus, the Son of the Living God, sets us free. **"And when the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."**

500 years ago, the church had a rummage sale, and here we are in 2025, celebrating Luther's Reformation, but still picking through the goods. So, what do we hold close and what do we cast aside? What pains can we let go of? What joys can we

celebrate? And what truths do we continue to hold dear? The Word of God and the promise of the Gospel.

And it is in the Letter to the Romans, that St. Paul reminds us of the promise of the Gospel. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. That when Jesus dies on the cross, and rises from that death, we are made right with God. There is no rubbish and there is no rummage. Through the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, God loves you and has made you His own. God claims you as a beloved child. And there ain't no one and there ain't no-thing that is going to take you away from the love of God. That is the promise of the Gospel. And as Lutheran Christians, we believe it. We live it. And we get to share it!

Every 500 years, the church has a rummage sale, and here we are in 2025, still picking through the goods. What do we hold close and what do we cast aside? What pains can we let go of? What joys can we celebrate? And what truths do we continue to hold dear? The Word of God and the promise of the Gospel (3x).

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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