

THE SERMON SUPPLY



A Resource from
Region 6



Lectionary 14, Year A

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Gospel Text - Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30*

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

[Jesus spoke to the crowd saying:] ¹⁶ "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷ 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

¹⁸ "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; ¹⁹ the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

²⁰ Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done because they did not repent. ²¹ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum,

will you be exalted to heaven?

No, you will be brought down to Hades.

“For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.”

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

SERMON TEXT:

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ!

I am Robin McCants, a licensed lay minister and Assistant to the Bishop for Justice Issues and Lay Ministry in the Southeast Michigan Synod.

I don't know about you, but it feels as if whenever a holiday comes around, exhaustion is yet to follow.

We prepare for the upcoming holiday by cleaning our homes or sprucing up our yards or outdoor spaces.

We are developing menus and then shopping for the items in advance. The salad fixings to be rinsed and assembled. The meat is seasoned and marinated, waiting to be cooked. And the sides that will either be mixed or cooked by the host or the list of BYOs to family members and friends that will make their way to the location of choice. Beverages are purchased along with ice and if not already on hand, the various coolers or containers that will keep them ready to serve.

Once all the prep has been taken care of and the meal is ready to serve and the guests (family or friends) have come by and had a wonderful time, we have to figure out the clean up!

Everything that is trash is bagged. Recyclable items are cleaned and stored. The extra seating and tables are returned to their storage spaces. Food is either on its way to the homes of the guests or refrigerated for tomorrow's meal. Dishes are washed or sitting in a dishwasher.

And that is a scenario that may not include the holiday that falls on Sunday. Because then we as the good Christians we are, will arrange all of the busyness around our church worship schedule.

After all of that energy we have used to celebrate being together, eating food and enjoying one another's company, culminates in certain exhaustion, that's hopefully worth all the effort put into having the event.

However, sometimes our expectations will not align with the realities of the outcomes.

Maybe this is the year that a new host has taken over the planning. With a new host, even with all of the years of examples that have been laid out for the new host, changes will happen and expectations will be different.

Expectations that the new host will do all of the great things the previous host has done to make the occasion well planned.

Expectations that the food will be almost as good as in past gatherings.

Expectations that all that is needed will be made available, just as it has been in the past.

Then you may hear the comparisons of what could have happened if:

- I would have done it this way.
- I would have prepared these sides with these meats.
- Why would they use this (fill in the blank) with that (fill in the blank)?

But that is not how it will happen, because with each time, there will be a number of factors in the equation that may lead to a success, a failure or something in between.

We in our human selves bring a lot to the table of expectations which can be of great benefit or of great hurt and harm if not received in the right way.

Have we done all that we can do for what we're preparing for?

Were we kind in our delivery of dismay with what was done for us?

Were we gracious and thankful to our host for all they did to make us comfortable.

Did we offer to help?

On this sixth Sunday of Pentecost we find ourselves in the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus, at the beginning of Chapter 1, had finished instructing the 12 disciples to move on in their mission of bringing the good news of Jesus the Christ to the people.

He has already set his expectations for them; to continue the preaching and healing, and sharing news that the Kingdom of heaven is near. They had received all of the coursework needed to move into the internship of bringing people to know and follow Christ.

So now Jesus is moving on to the next part of his journey, which includes interaction with followers of John the Baptist. Jesus is now teaching and proclaiming his message in the cities of his apostles.

We know John is imprisoned by King Herod for the messages John was delivering regarding Herod's behavior in choosing his brother's wife, Herodias. But that is spelled out in Chapter 14.

Jesus' message to John's followers is a confirmation that he is the one from whom the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

Yes, Jesus is the Messiah that John's ministry has been preparing for and Jesus confirms that the works he has done and will do are because of who he is.

It is more than Jesus saying who he is but the actions he takes to prove that he has come to deliver us from the actions of our sins.

Even with the proof that we have today of the presence of Jesus and the descriptions of the many miracles of healing and deliverance completed while he walked the earth, some of us will not receive those examples to bring us closer to Him and to the gateway of Glory that He provides.

We have the written account of his miracles, and while those during His time are privy to the actual occurrences themselves still some did not believe.

Mark Allen Powell says "opposition to Jesus begins to mount as he encounters doubt, apathy and outright hostility from diverse parties.

His own generation is what Jesus was describing to us in Matthew 11.

Verse 18 - 19 reads, "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man came eating and

drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

They described what they saw before them, but they did not take into account those who had been changed or those who had been healed.

We will use the face value of those before us and disregard the heart - which we cannot see, or their character, which is evidence of their ingrained moral and ethical qualities, and is revealed in how people think, feel, and act, particularly under pressure.

As we have heard many, many times, we are sinners saved by grace. We are humans that are defective, weak, impaired, and yes flawed, and although as sinners we will and do make mistakes, God forgives us anyway! And God offers eternal life to us for free. God loves us anyway.

Even when God's hopes for us are to be examples of the Jesus that we know: the One who can do all things but fail, the one who saved us from eternal death by His own death, we still get it wrong and miss the cues and the clues by rejecting the evidence laid before us.

So when I read today's scripture, I wonder, "Lord, have mercy! How can I be worthy?" What am I not doing? Or what should I be doing better?

If God's expectations of me were similar to my own expectations of others, I could find myself in some serious trouble.

The expectations we may have of others does not define them as the whole person that they are. Even the expectations we have of ourselves does not fully define us, when we fail to meet them.

Our expectations - whether or not they are rather good or bad - are only a sliver of a fraction of the whole reality. There are so many factors that will need to be considered to get a better or clearer picture of what is before us. And even then, there is so much more to be pondered.

Friends, we are created in God's own image. Not that any of us looks like the one we've never seen before, but we can reflect the qualities that are seen by the actions of God's only son, our Lord Jesus!

We can offer love, reason, creativity, and a moral compass as children of God here on earth. We can share kindness with one another. We can help each other to grow in maturity and to simply be good people that shows others what goodness resembles.

Now, reflecting on the lectionary's 1st reading for today, the Romans 7 verses are listed under the title "The Inner Conflict".

It references the ways in which our actions conflict with the desires to be and do good. We then recognize that the flipside of being good and doing good is being and doing evil.

For some, the expectation to be better and do better can seem like climbing a mountain in very slippery shoes. There is no way to grip the edges when the soles of your shoes are not made for

that environment. And even when you find a perch or ledge that holds you, the next step might not do the same. Or it's the step after that!

However, the Romans text concludes; "21 So I find it to be a law that, when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched person that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God[b] through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Wretched person that I am, but Thanks be to God to save me from this body of death.

Through Jesus Christ, we can be delivered from the wretched persons we may find ourselves to be, with the goal to try, try again with each new day that we are granted, and rise in the morning to be a better person.

We are even able to retract and apologize to one another when we've been bad in action or deed.

It does not mean the action or deed is forgiven, but it can help in our remorse.

When Jesus speaks to us that the Father has hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and revealed them to infants, we can receive this message as those who think we know it all or those who are innocent enough to learn.

We have the blueprint spelled out for us in scripture and the ability to apply it to our daily lives. We also have the means to introduce this way of life to those who have not been touched by it as we have.

Through Jesus, we are able to acknowledge HIS expectations of us through his own words and actions, there is yet one more line in today's Gospel that should be mentioned.

We have received an invitation in Matthew to rest; and this invitation is only found in this gospel.

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest

Even more so than those who are recovering from a family holiday or big event, I think of those who live on the margins. Those for which life has been hard, and opportunities are few and far in between.

Each person under the sound of my voice has encountered someone who has not had the best circumstances in which to grow and succeed. I don't mean opportunities to become a CEO of a million or billion dollar company or to have the highest level of education.

I'm referring to those who, without bad luck, would have no luck at all. Those on the margins of employment, housing, health or healthcare. Those overcome by the hardships of their environment. Those who can't remember the last time they had a good break.

I caught a movie not long ago that had already started on some TV or streaming station. Two families were unhoused and living in their cars. They became good neighbors until one family received a voucher or benefit for housing that did not flow to the other family.

The children's grades were declining. Food was never enough. The car needed repair and neither parent had a job because they were unable to obtain the proper work-related tools like work boots or fresh clothing.

One of the kids' teachers kept on trying to find a way to help them, and he eventually landed at their car slash home. This one encounter opened the door for the kids to receive food, the dad to get workboots for the job he wanted and the mom to clean her family's clothes, including her own to get a job as well.

Through it all, even under very dire circumstances, the mom never ceased praying for God's intervention.

They weren't always on the margins, but life kept throwing one curve ball after another, one strike out after the next.

And then God did what God does, not because of their faith, but despite their faith.

They were able to tell the story - - their own testimony of God's presence in their lives and how they changed because of it.

When invited to lay the heavy burdens at the altar, accepting the invitation does not make one weak or vulnerable. Receiving the

rest of mind, body and spirit can provide a new sense of what can happen next without the cloudiness in thoughts that happens when we are overwhelmed.

He says, "take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Even when we bring those extremely high expectations of ourselves or of others to the table, we can be assured that regardless of the outcome, God still loves us enough.

When faced with the challenge to hold back emotions or feelings, or simply not get out of the bed because what the day will bring is too stressful, too hard or too-something, we can find rest in the Lord.

We can strive to be better spouses, neighbors, parents, children, colleagues, partners, employers or employees, and when it's too hard, may we be reminded to lift up our eyes to the hills, from where our will help will come, from the Lord.

Model Christ-like behaviors to the stranger we encounter, not because we have to, but because we have the opportunity to do so.

As Jesus did, we can offer thanks and gratitude to our Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing what was hidden to us as though we too were infants, or weak in our faith, or even not meeting expectations.

May we strive to be like infants in the ways we receive each other and strangers, that we welcome them, honor them and show them the grace and love that God shows us, each and every day, through his son, our Lord Christ Jesus.

Because we all have expectations of ourselves, of one another, of those we have no relationship with.

And remember the Lord has expectations of us as well.

And He also loves us, gives us grace and is always waiting to receive us with open arms

Amen.

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