

ST. LUKE 6:36-42 (esp. 39)
[GENESIS 50:15-21; ROMANS 12:14-21]
4TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
SUNDAY, JULY 9, 2017

SERMONST. LUKE 6:39

“SOMETHING ABOUT ‘THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND’”

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. [*Amen.*]

Dear fellow by nature spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. [*Amen.*]

“Lord, ’tis not that I did choose Thee;
That, I know, could never be;
For this heart would still refuse Thee
Had Thy grace not chosen me.
Thou hast from the sin that stained me
Washed and cleansed and set me free
And unto this end ordained me,
That I ever live to Thee.”

(*LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK*, © 2006 Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. 573:1)

GOSPEL READING.....ST. LUKE 6:39

He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?”

PROLOGUE: Idioms “offer advice about how to live and also transfer some underlying ideas, principles and values of a given culture or society” (<http://www.smart-words.org>) and our English language is full of them. Among the 66 most common ones identified on the [smart-words.org](http://www.smart-words.org) website are “actions speak louder than words,” “barking up the wrong tree,” “costs an arm and a leg,” and “don’t count your chickens before the eggs have hatched.” Then there’s the one that reflects what Jesus Himself said in today’s Gospel Reading that contains ...

“SOMETHING ABOUT ‘THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND’.”

Saint Matthew also recorded a similar or the same incident when Jesus warned His hearers about the Pharisees: “Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” (*St Matt 15:14 ESV*) THE LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLE contains the following explanation about what Jesus said: “The Pharisees considered themselves spiritual guides for the common Jew. But since the guides were themselves blind to Jesus’ teachings, both they and their followers were doomed.” (*THE LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLE*. E. A. Engelbrecht, Gen. Ed. Copyright © 2009 Concordia Publishing House St. Louis, MO. Page 1614.)

You see, correct advice and counsel about living for God’s glory and honor do not ask the subjective speculative question “**What would Jesus do?**” that’s largely popular in American Evangelical circles as well as some of our Lutheran ones. Rather, it asks the objective question “**What did Jesus do?**” that reflects orthodox Lutheranism by calling forth historical fact. And what Jesus did was to both exemplify and encourage what He taught, namely, ...

I. MAKE MERCY THE HALLMARK OF OUR FAITH. (36-38)

³⁶[Jesus said:] “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. ³⁷Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

The Pharisees were well known for and, in fact, “**tooted their own horns**” (there’s another idiom, by the way) about their moral values and lifestyles. Remember the parable

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Jesus told on another occasion **“to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt”** (*St Luke 18:9 ESV*), namely, a Pharisee and tax collector praying in the temple.

The content of the Pharisee’s so-called prayer was very arrogantly self-centered and largely based on works: **“God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.”** (*St Luke 18:11-12 ESV*) He proudly extolled what he perceived to be self-righteous virtues. In contrast, however, the tax collector, feeling the full weight of guilt over his sin, very simply and sincerely prayed: **“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”** (*St Luke 18:13 ESV*) Jesus’ insightful commentary was that the man who humbly begged for mercy **“went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”** (*St Luke 18:14 ESV*)

In fact, early in His ministry Jesus declared **“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy”** (*St Matt 5:1 NASU*) in the fifth of His nine beatitudes in His **“Sermon on the Mount.”** **“Witness, Mercy, Life Together”** is the **“hat trick”** (a contemporary idiom based on an ice hockey term for three goals scored by a player in one game) or trinitarian emphasis of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod during the present presidency of the Reverend Matthew Harrison. As explained on the LCMS website, those terms **“illustrate how the church lives and works together to proclaim the Gospel and to provide for our brothers and sisters in Christ in our congregations, communities and throughout the world. And in all we do, Christ is at the center, leading us, sustaining us, keeping us focused on our mission.”** (*LCMS website*) In fact, the **“Mercy”** emphasis is based on what Jesus said about Himself and His purpose-driven self-sacrificial ministry: **“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** (*St Mark 10:45 ESV*)

The mercy-service that Jesus performed for the forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life of sinful mankind was none other than His substitutionary atonement whereby He **“voluntarily humbled Himself in order to ‘redeem [us], ... lost and condemned person[s]’ ... ‘from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.’”** That is, **“Christ was [our] substitute. He took [our] place under God’s judgment against sin. By paying the penalty of [our] guilt, Christ atoned, or made satisfaction, for [our] sins (vicarious atonement).”** And (now be absolutely sure to get this!), our Savior’s salvation work was not an exclusive thing, but inclusive. That is, **“Christ has redeemed [us] and all people (universal atonement).”** (*LUTHER’S SMALL CATECHISM WITH EXPLANATION. Copyright © 1986, 1991 Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. Pages 133-137.*)

In addition, Jesus both exemplified and encouraged His audiences then and us today to

...

II. MAKE HUMILITY THE EVIDENCE OF OUR FAITH. (40-42)

⁴⁰**“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.** ⁴¹Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴²How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? **You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.”**

“Eat or eating humble pie” is another idiom that’s somewhat common in our English language. It means very simply: **“to be forced to apologize humbly; suffer humiliation.”** (*Dictionary.com*) While Jesus did not advocate forcing humility on someone, He did

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energetically encourage it. In fact, He stated the paradoxical truth: **“Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven”** (*St Matt 18:4 ESV*); and the apostle Paul wrote (answering the objective historical question **“What did Jesus do?”**): **“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”** (*Phil 2:5-8 ESV*)

So, just what does it mean to be truly humble ... and, I might add, contrite? It means to stand before God and fellow sinners fully exposed as having no natural goodness or righteousness to offer or boast about. It means, as we confessed earlier in this Divine Service, that we realize and honestly declare the truth **“that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against [our merciful God] in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved [our merciful God] with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve [our merciful God’s] present and eternal punishment.”** (*LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK, Page 151.*)

Thanks be to God that, having adopted us as His dear children in Holy Baptism, He now reassures us of His grace-filled mercy, forgiveness, renewal, and leadership **“so that we may delight in [His] will and walk in [His] ways to the glory of [His] holy name.”** (*IBID.*) He does so in the reading and hearing of His Holy Word, the announcement of Holy Absolution, and the Sacred Sacrament of Holy Communion.

In his Lutheran Hour Ministries devotion on May 16, 2014, titled **“The Blind See”** Pastor Ken Klaus, Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour, said the following: **“You see, we’re surrounded by people who are pretty spectacular. Many of these folk are ‘good’ individuals. Some of them have brilliant minds, and a fair number of them are just plain and simple people, who are kind and caring. Most of them are confident, having shown an ability to deal competently with many of the problems which come their way.**

“Sadly, many of these folks, without knowing the Savior, are blind. They are spiritually blind, and they are headed the wrong way. Most of them don’t know they’re headed the wrong direction, and the majority have convinced themselves they know exactly where they’re going—and how they’re going to get there.

“No, they don’t know they’re headed the wrong direction, but we do. And ... it is our job to try and point them in the right direction and set their foot on the proper path, which leads to heaven. It is our duty to show them the Savior who is not just the Light of the world; He is the Light to those are spiritually in the dark.” (*Used by permission; all rights reserved by the Int’l LLL (LHM) 660 Mason Ridge Center Dr., St. Louis, MO 63141.*)

So it is that today’s Gospel Reading and my sermon based on it contain ...

“SOMETHING ABOUT ‘THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND’.”

And that something is much more than their dismal condition; it’s our opportunity to share the good news about Jesus with them. After all, **“He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** (*St John 1:29 ESV*) As we rejoice over who He is, what He had done for us, and the grace-gifts He gained for us, may we ever ...

- I. MAKE MERCY THE HALLMARK OF OUR FAITH. (36-38) Let’s do so following the example contained in today’s Old Testament Reading: **“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.**

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So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.” (*Gen 50:15, 19-21 ESV*) In fact, let’s do so striving by the Holy Spirit’s power alone to ...

- II. MAKE HUMILITY THE EVIDENCE OF OUR FAITH. (40-42) Saint Paul offered wise Spirit-inspired counsel in today’s Epistle Reading about how to do that: **“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** (*Rom 12:14-18, 21 ESV*)

As we do our utmost to make mercy the hallmark of our faith and humility the evidence of our faith, let’s always remember to bathe our efforts in heartfelt prayer, perhaps using both today’s Collect: **“O Lord, grant that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Your governance that Your Church may joyfully serve You in all godly quietness”** as well as today’s Gradual: **“Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name deliver us.”** (*Ps 79: 10a ESV*) After all, as we were reminded and declared in today’s Introit: **“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.”** (*Ps 27:1, 5 ESV*)

God grant it all for the sake of Jesus Christ, His humble Son, our holy Savior.

[*Amen.*]

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. [*Amen.*]