

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
January 31, 2021

Hi Friends,

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ.

Beginning next Sunday (February 7) we will be having communion every Sunday.

May the joy, the peace and the love of God continue to warm your heart and enlighten your days throughout the year.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Denise

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Luke 6:1-16

A reading from the 6th chapter of Luke beginning at the first verse.

6 ¹⁻² On a certain Sabbath Jesus was walking through a field of ripe grain. His disciples were pulling off heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands to get rid of the chaff, and eating them. Some Pharisees said, “Why are you doing that, breaking a Sabbath rule?”

³⁻⁴ But Jesus stood up for them. “Have you never read what David and those with him did when they were hungry? How he entered the sanctuary and ate fresh bread off the altar, bread that no one but priests were allowed to eat? He also handed it out to his companions.”

⁵ Then he said, “The Son of Man is no slave to the Sabbath; he’s in charge.”

⁶⁻⁸ On another Sabbath he went to the meeting place and taught. There was a man there with a crippled right hand. The religion scholars and Pharisees had their eyes on Jesus to see if he would

heal the man, hoping to catch him in a Sabbath violation. He knew what they were up to and spoke to the man with the crippled hand: “Get up and stand here before us.” He did.

⁹ Then Jesus addressed them, “Let me ask you something: What kind of action suits the Sabbath best? Doing good or doing evil? Helping people or leaving them helpless?”

¹⁰⁻¹¹ He looked around, looked each one in the eye. He said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” He held it out—it was as good as new! They were beside themselves with anger, and started plotting how they might get even with him.

The Twelve Apostles

¹²⁻¹⁶ At about that same time he climbed a mountain to pray. He was there all night in prayer before God. The next day he summoned his

disciples; from them he selected
twelve he designated as apostles:

Simon, whom he named Peter,

Andrew, his brother, James,

John, Philip, Bartholomew,

Matthew, Thomas,

James, son of Alphaeus,

Simon, called the Zealot,

Judas, son of James,

Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Lord of the Sabbath,
Your followers were told not to work on the Sabbath, and yet they boldly plucked grain to show that you are Lord of all. The world tells us not to rest on the Sabbath. Show us how to rest boldly, rejecting conventions that go against your will, and instead praying and resting as you did up on the mountain, for the glory of your word and work, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Identity – who are we – if I asked each of you that question – who are you – there are many ways you might go about telling me who you are – you might tell me what you do for a living – you

might tell me about your family or your heritage – you might tell me how you respond to change or a challenge or what you are passionate about – you might tell me what you believe in - or you might tell me about the teams or the community that you belong to

In addition to talking about who we are, there are also other ways that we let people know who we are -- for our teens in high school – perhaps it's the school sweatshirt that you wear that tells everyone you are student at Muhlenberg High School or that you are on the soccer team or play in the band –

or perhaps it's the hat that you wear that tells others that you are part of the Phillies fan club. In addition to outward signs; traditions, practices and actions are also ways that we tell the world who we are and to whom or to what we belong.

In first century Palestine, the Hebrews also had specific traditions and behaviors that they adhered to, to tell the world who they were the people who believed in, who were faithful to and who were chosen to be God's chosen people.

And to preserve this lifestyle, there were laws that guided their actions. These laws helped to ensure that they maintained their identity in spite of the circumstances that they found themselves. For throughout the years they had been forced to

live among foreigners with very different belief systems.

And the Pharisees were the people designated by the community to make sure that these rules were being followed.

So, when we read this text this morning, I know we all want to immediately be critical of the Pharisees for confronting Jesus, but let's remember that the Pharisees were just doing their job of protecting their nation's identity.

So, this conflict that we witness in this morning's text was not just about Jesus, who was himself a faithful Jew being lax about following the rules of his Jewish community.

This conflict was more about the challenge that was beginning to surface about the Jews claim that following their rules to the

letter of the law was the only way to be faithful to the God, even when following the rules was not provide support or hope to the those in their community who were in need.

So, having heard of the unorthodox ways that Jesus and his followers were behaving, the Pharisees have been watching Jesus every move to make sure that Jesus and his followers do not “get out of line”.

So, we meet up with Jesus and his followers in this morning’s text on the Sabbath day. They are all walking along a wheat field. The disciples have obviously not eaten in a while so they pluck some of the grain, rub off the shaft to remove it so that they can eat the seeds.

This rubbing off of the shaft of the wheat, which might seem

insignificant to us today, was considered work in first century Palestine.

Which meant that Jesus was allowing his followers to break the commandment of keeping the Sabbath day holy. And so, the Pharisees confront Jesus about the actions of his disciples.

Jesus responds by connecting the actions of his followers to the story of their beloved ancestor King David, who was traveling with his soldiers and found themselves starving from lack of food . They went into the temple and they ate the holy bread that only the High Priest were entitled to eat.

And yes, it was indeed against the law to eat this sacred bread, but it in this case it was not deemed unlawful for it was more important to feed the hungry.

Although that answer may have quieted the Pharisees for the moment, they continued to keep close tabs on Jesus and his followers.

On another Sabbath, Jesus encountered a man with a withered hand. Jesus asks the man to stand and reach out his withered hand and it is cured.

The Pharisees are right there to chastise Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. This time Jesus challenges them with the question about what kind of action suits the Sabbath best? Doing good or doing evil? Helping people or leaving them helpless?"

Jesus is pushing the Pharisees to think deeply about the rules that they have been enforcing for generations. Are these rules, rules that allow the entire

community to be blessed or are these rules, rules that deny blessings for those most in need? Jesus is presenting to them a new way of being faithful to God as he begins to usher in a new age and a new way of being known as God's people.

This new identity will certainly not be displayed with a sweatshirt or a saying on a coffee mug or even a cross hanging on a chain.

This new identity will will not be displayed with rigid adherence to laws that leave people out, that leave people desperate and/or helpless, or leave people hopeless.

In this new age that Jesus is ushering in, our identity as children named and claimed by the same God who had chosen the descendants of Abraham;

will be known to others by how we express our love for God by loving our neighbor as God has first loved us. By showering one another with grace. By being merciful and forgiving. By being compassionate and understanding.

So, how will the world know not only who we are but whose we

are? How will the world identify us as Christians?

(sing) They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love. They will know we are Christians by our love.

AMEN

Blessing

May
The love of God,
The light of Christ,
And the joy of the Holy Spirit
Abide with you on this day
and forever more.

AMEN