

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
May 9, 2021

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ.

**HE IS RISEN!! HE IS RISEN INDEED!! ALLELUIA!!**

OUTSIDE in-person worship on the parking lot, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. To accommodate some technical issues and possibly eliminate some sun glare, we will be setting up in front of the Fellowship Hall entrance this week. Masks and social distancing are required. Bring your lawn chair. When you arrive, you will be directed to park your car in a designated space. If you would like to stay in your car for the worship service, let the parking attendant know and they will direct you to an appropriate parking place. After you park your car, place your lawn chair where you would like to sit. Then, go to the table to pick up a bulletin, a communion kit (choice of grape juice or wine) and place your offering in the plate.

We are excited about gathering in-person again and we ask you to be considerate of other's needs at this time. This transition back to being together may cause a great deal of anxiety for some people. So, although you may be fully vaccinated and/or may be comfortable being a little more lax with the CDC guidelines; there will be those there on Sunday morning that are not. So, please for the sake of others who are working through their anxiety adhere to CDC guidelines of wearing your mask properly (with your nose covered), maintain the 6 ft separation from others who are not family members, and do not engage in any physical contact (hand-shaking or hugs). We want this outside sanctuary to be a place where all people who choose to attend feel they can participate safely.

The witness committee will be selling pinwheels to benefit Family Promise in May. This is a partnership with Thrivent Financial. We have purchased the pinwheels with a grant from Thrivent and will be selling them for \$2.00. All the proceeds will be donated to the ministry of Family Promise, which provides housing for those who are homeless.

**Eugene Burkhart Scholarship** – The Eugene Burkhart Scholarship Fund has been set up to provide financial assistance to members of Good Shepherd ELC who are graduating from high school and pursuing higher education. To request an application, email or text Pastor Denise. Completed applications are to be returned to Pastor Denise on or before May 14<sup>th</sup>.

If you have prayer requests, please send them to me so that I can include them in my weekly newsletters.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Denise

Home Phone           610-750-6432

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## Galatians 1:13-17, 2:11-21

A reading from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Galatians beginning at the 1<sup>st</sup> verse..

**1** <sup>13-16</sup> I'm sure that you've heard the story of my earlier life when I lived in the Jewish way. In those days I went all out in persecuting God's church. I was systematically destroying it.

I was so enthusiastic about the traditions of my ancestors that I advanced head and shoulders above my peers in my career. Even then God had his eye on me. Why, when I was still in my mother's womb he chose and called me out of sheer generosity! Now he has intervened and revealed his Son to me so that I might joyfully tell non-Jews about him.

<sup>16-20</sup> Immediately after my calling—without consulting anyone around me and without going up to Jerusalem to confer with those who were apostles long before I was—I got away to Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus, but it was three years before I went up to Jerusalem to compare stories with Peter.

**2** <sup>11-13</sup> Later, when Peter came to Antioch, I had a face-to-face confrontation with him because he was clearly out of line. Here's the situation. Earlier, before certain persons had come from James, Peter regularly ate with the non-Jews. But when that conservative group came from Jerusalem, he cautiously pulled back and put as much distance as he could manage between himself and his non-Jewish friends.

That's how fearful he was of the conservative Jewish clique that's been pushing the old system of circumcision. Unfortunately, the rest of the Jews in the Antioch church joined in that hypocrisy so that even Barnabas was swept along in the charade.

<sup>14</sup> But when I saw that they were not maintaining a steady, straight course according to the Message, I spoke up to Peter in front of them all: "If you, a Jew, live like a non-Jew when you're not being observed

by the watchdogs from Jerusalem, what right do you have to require non-Jews to conform to Jewish customs just to make a favorable impression on your old Jerusalem buddies?”

<sup>15-16</sup> We Jews know that we have no advantage of birth over “non-Jewish sinners.” We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

How do we know? We tried it—and we had the best system of rules the world has ever seen! Convinced that no human being can please God by self-improvement, we believed in Jesus as the Messiah so that we might be set right before God by trusting in the Messiah, not by trying to be good.

<sup>17-18</sup> Have some of you noticed that we are not yet perfect? (No great surprise, right?) And are you ready to make the accusation that since people like me, who go through Christ in order to get things right with God, aren’t perfectly virtuous, Christ must therefore be an accessory to sin? The accusation is frivolous. If I was “trying to be good,” I would be rebuilding the

same old barn that I tore down. I would be acting as a pretender.

<sup>19-21</sup> What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn’t work. So I quit being a “law man” so that I could be *God’s* man. Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him.

Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.

<sup>21</sup> Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God’s grace. If a living relationship with God could

come by rule-keeping, then Christ  
died unnecessarily.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

## Sermon

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

Let us pray:

Lord of justification,  
With great joy we receive the gift  
of salvation which is ours not  
because of our own efforts, but  
because of the saving work of  
Christ. Grant us full access to  
the glory of your salvation, an  
abundance that is more than  
enough for all humankind, for  
the sake of our redeeming  
Christ. Amen.

We have been hearing from the  
texts in the book of Acts that the  
Spirit of God is shaking things  
up. Touching people's lives,  
opening their eyes and ears and  
hearts, including the foreigners  
and the outcasts, and  
transforming lives personally  
and communally into faith  
communities that are growing

rapidly with an inclusive  
embrace open to all people.

And as this inclusive embrace  
reached out to those who were  
not Jewish, many questions and  
challenges began to surface.

In this morning's text from  
Paul's letter to the Galatians, we  
hear from the Jewish Christ  
follower, the Apostle Paul, who  
confesses that he had lived a life  
in which he was honored and  
rewarded for his faithful  
adherence to the Jewish  
practices and traditions to the  
extent that right after the death  
and resurrection he was one who  
adamantly persecuting those  
Jews who had become Jesus'  
followers.

Until one day, the Holy Spirit grabbed ahold of Paul, opened his eyes, his ears and his heart. We hear in Paul's testimony this morning that his life drastically changed as he encountered the risen Christ and came to believe in what the God of Israel had done through his beloved son Jesus.

As Jesus died on the cross so that all people may be in right relationship with God. And this right relationship with God was pure gift.

For no matter how much Paul and his ancestors had tried, they were never able to achieve that righteousness that they worked toward through rigid and diligent rule following. But, it was through the faithfulness and obedience of one sinless Jew, Jesus the Christ, that this righteousness was accomplished once and for all. And it is our faith, our believing in Jesus and what God has done for us through the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus that

brings us together as beloved children on God.

Paul tells us that he will always be of Jewish descent for that is the earthly family he has been born into, BUT that is not his true identity. His true identity comes from believing in the one God, the God of Israel, who has named him and claimed him at birth and has redeemed him through the sacrifice that Jesus made for all of us on the cross.

As you look to your right and to your left this morning, you see brothers and sisters in Christ whose ethnicities are different, you see people whose political views are different, whose educational backgrounds are different, whose confidence in medicine and science are different, whose parenting skills are different and whose lives have taken very different paths.

Each and every one of us here today are very unique and very different, but all of us regardless

of our differences are united in our true identity as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

For, it is Jesus, the Son of the one God who became man so that we could get to know the true character of the God.

It is Jesus, who came to teach us how to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.

It is Jesus, who on the cross cried out to his heavenly Father to forgive us for we don't really know what we are doing.

It is Jesus, in whom, through whom and with whom we named and claimed as beloved children of God.

It is Jesus, our brother who brings us and binds us together as a faith community.

Paul professes that Christ's life showed him how to live a Christ-

like life, and then Christ's sacrifice freed him from his own sinful self and therefore enabled him to strive to live that Christ-like life.

Paul goes on to say, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego no longer informs and directs my actions. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you, who are my brothers and sisters in Christ and it no longer important to me that you have a good opinion of me. I am no longer driven to impress God or to impress you or my neighbor.

Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back to that other life.

I am not going back to trying to impress God or others, but I am going to love God with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my mind and I am going to love my neighbor as myself.

I am not going back to following rules for rules sake when they

conflict with living a Christ-like life.

I am not going back to making up rules that exclude and create caste systems of those who have and those who do not and that allow those in power to take advantage of others.

I am not going back to living a life where is it all about me, all about what I want, all about when I want it and all about with whom I want to do it.

As we follow Paul's ministry we see that Paul not only talks "the talk", but walks "the walk". Regardless of the sacrifice he will need to make and the challenges he will face, Paul strives to live the Jesus-like life that has been revealed to him through the stories that he had heard about the love, the compassion and the mercy that Jesus so freely gave to others. The stories about how Jesus reached out and had compassions for the least, the

last and the lost of society. And the stories about his faithfulness and obedience to do the will of the Father even when it lead him to a humiliating death on the cross.

As so now Paul empowered and emboldened by the Holy Spirit, who is constantly shaking things up; encourages us to center ourselves in the love of Christ and to strive to live a Christ-like life of love.

For it is by the love of Christ that we have been brought together and named and claimed as God's beloved children.

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**