

**Lessons for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany**

**February 12, 2017**

Psalm 119:1-8 (*antiphon vs 1*) ~ *Devoted to God's word, the psalmist desires steadfastness in obedience.*

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 ~ *Hold fast to God's way, for it is the way of life; any other way leads to death.*

1 Corinthians 3:1-9 ~ *As people of faith mature spiritually, they unite in the work of the Lord.*

Matthew 5:20-37 ~ *Jesus exposed the rabbis' teachings as compromise and taught God's radical demands.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** Advice Worth More Than You Can Pay

In this world, advice that is too freely given is often worth nothing! But Moses gave valuable advice to the Israelites as he prepared to leave them before they entered the promised land: "Follow God's laws and live!" Jesus pointed to the difference between the teachings of the rabbis and the intent of God's law which goes to the heart of the matter and reveals what is the matter with our hearts. In his letter to the Christians of Corinth, St. Paul revealed the Spirit of God as the only source of a wisdom that can teach us the true worth of the gift of salvation that we have received from God through Christ Jesus.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Lord God, giver of all good things, thank you for the wisdom that comes to me through your Spirit to guide me in knowing and living by your will. Help me remember the value of your gift of forgiveness and salvation in Christ my Savior so that I may live at peace with you and with my neighbors. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** The greatest spiritual gift is not attainable at any price but only when we recognize that it is freely offered through the invaluable sacrifice of our Lord's life. Now we are free to use the goods that come at greater cost to ease the lives of those who cannot afford even the basic of needs. With that gracious help, we demonstrate God's greater gift.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** Lord, in these gifts we bring today,  
Remove all hindrances away,  
That what we give to You may prove  
Your greater gift of Jesus' love. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** We think more expensive means better quality and, translating that to spiritual matters, expect more complex laws and ways to be more helpful. Only the Spirit of God can lead us in understanding spiritual matters. Jesus said the rabbis with their extrapolations of the commandments had not improved them, but rather ruined them. "Let 'yes' be 'yes' and 'no' be 'no'." Moses taught simply, follow the Lord's ways and live. Any other way is the way of death. The radical, undiluted law of God urges us to seek the free gift of God's grace in Christ Jesus.