

Lessons for The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 10, 2023

Psalm 32:1-7 ~ *Psalm celebrating God's forgiveness upon the acknowledgment of our guilt.*

Ezekiel 33:7-9 ~ *God requires His people to warn their neighbors when they are in danger from their sin.*

Romans 13:1-10 ~ *Even secular rulers are appointed by God to keep order and curb wrong.*

Matthew 18:1-20 ~ *Humility before God and our neighbors helps us recognize and turn from sin.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: It's God's Job, and We All Have to Do It.

God supports right and condemns wrong. His prophets, His governments, and all His people have a tough job to do: oppose sin and promote righteousness. Ezekiel was reminded that he had a responsibility to warn people about their sin even if they would not repent, but especially if there was any chance they might! St. Paul wrote that the government is God's agent to punish wrongdoers so that citizens will learn to show love to their neighbors. Jesus gave specific instructions for dealing with sin between fellow believers so that their place in the fellowship of the redeemed might be restored and strengthened.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Dearest Jesus, help me see my sin and seek Your forgiveness so that when sisters and brothers are at fault I will be ready and willing to help them come to the knowledge of Your grace and be restored to the family of faith for eternity. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: A good steward does not say, "My sinful neighbors do not deserve my assistance by gift or act of love," but "How can my gift or action be a sign of God's love to move my neighbors to repentance so that they may know the greater gift of God's grace?"

OFFERING PRAYER: So precious in Your sight, O Lord, is every little one,
The rich, the poor, the weak, the strong, no matter what we've done.
Now bless these gifts we bring today, that they may show Your grace,
and all our neighbors, far and wide, may know your loving face. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: From politicians and social activists to family members pleading their own cause, we hear the appeal, "it's the right thing to do." Along with our post-modern neighbors we are all too prone to reject absolute moral demands, focusing instead on the practical consequences of our behavior. Secular rulers, appointed by God to curb wrong, instead find it expedient to pursue their own advantage. God's people from Ezekiel to all the fellowship of the redeemed are called upon to confront sin for the purpose of winning repentance and extending forgiveness. That is the job our Lord carried out on the cross on our behalf.

Questions to Consider: How do you know "it's the right thing to do?"

- What was to be Ezekiel's goal in warning the wicked of their sin?
- What should we expect from the governing authorities?
- Why is it important to confront those who sin against you?
- Why is examining our lives in light of the law the right thing to do?