

Lessons for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 1, 2024

Psalm 119:129–36 ~ *A portion of Psalm 119 extolling God's law, deploring sin, and seeking direction.*

Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 6–9 ~ *Others will be attracted to our great God when his people obey His commands.*

Ephesians 6:10–20 ~ *God provides spiritual armor to protect His people from the powers of the devil.*

Mark 7:14–23 ~ *Jesus declared that all foods are clean, but evil thoughts from our hearts make us unclean.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: A Way That Only Appears to be Right

Some things are done just for show. The Lord God of Israel gave commandments to His people so they would look good to their neighbors and His name would be glorified, but it was to go more than just "skin deep." Jesus taught the Pharisees and teachers of the Law that only appearing to be right on the outside was not the same as being clean within. St. Paul explained that the full armor of one of the Lord's soldiers must include the breastplate of God's righteousness that changes the heart through the blood of Christ.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: O Holy Spirit, nourish me by Your holy Word that I may not be contaminated with the false teachings of this world. Guide me in living by the wisdom of Your righteousness so that my life will be an example of Your great love and I may always be ready to speak the Gospel of Your peace. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God has given us great resources and commandments on how to use them in relationship with others so that we bring glory to His name. When we use His gifts to show off the love of God, He will bring many people to know His grace.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, when we bring these gifts to You
Don't let them just be brought for show.
Bless them – and us in all we do,
To show Your grace for all to know. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: God demonstrates His loving care for all people through the caring love of those who keep His commandments. When we put on a good front but carry on selfish and hurtful practices in secret, we deny the relationship to which God has called us. We have been given the breastplate of Christ's righteousness to make us clean in God's sight, inside and out. We now stand ready to share the good news in loving ways that will bring people to declare how wonderful God is.