

# TRINITY 6

July 28 2018

Old Test: Exodus 20:1-17

Epistle: Rom. 6:3-11

Gospel: Matthew 5:20-26

## ***Standing...***

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

As you know, we're in the season of the Church—Ordinary Time as it's called.

During this season, we pay special attention to Christ's teaching,  
as you see Him doing on the front cover of your bulletin.

And what a doozy we have this morning.

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in Your sight O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

"Your righteousness," Jesus says, "must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees."  
That had to have sounded like a clap of lightning.

These religious experts were engaged in spiritual exercises 24/7/365.

Their righteousness was evidenced by their hair,  
their clothes,  
the food they ate—and did not eat,  
their walking down the street and everything they said.  
They relentlessly pursued the holiness and righteousness of God  
on their own, making them the paragons of virtue...

Examples of righteousness...

"So—exceed them," Jesus says,  
"in order to get into heaven."

Jesus calls for perfect righteousness—

utter sinlessness—complete obedience to God's law, not just externally...  
but complete obedience in thought, word and deed.

For this...is what earns a place in the kingdom of heaven.

Now beloved, I'm about as sharp as a marble,  
 but this—this is something I cannot do—neither can you.  
 Not because God made us incapable of being righteous  
 but because our parents did—  
 and their parents before them all the way back to Adam and Eve.

It's called Original Sin, and Original Sin has infected all of us  
 turning us into people who don't even want to be righteous, not by nature,  
 people who trust in ourselves first,  
 who look out for our own interests first,  
 people who easily find fault in others, or even in God,  
 but who imagine ourselves to be righteous—  
 or at least, righteous enough.  
 We are infected to the core.

And this is why Jesus preaches the way He does...  
 so that we would hear the Law—in this case the Fifth Commandment,  
 hearing that it does not deal only with the external act of murder,  
 but there's an inward righteousness.  
 I mean, to us, the Fifth Commandment  
 seems to be the easiest commandment to keep—  
 "I've never murdered anyone!"  
 So, check it off and move on.  
 But not so fast...

*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.*

The Fifth commandment doesn't just forbid us from wrapping our hands around someone's neck and squeezing—it instructs our hearts and lips as well.

Specifically, what we think and say about our neighbor.

Those harmful words, that we use all the time, according to Jesus—  
 are forms of murder in God's sight.

Gang, we're not talking about the vocation of a soldier who defends his country...  
 Or, the vocation of a police officer who takes a life to protect someone else...  
 We're not talking about the vocation of a judge who sentences someone to death—or  
 the executioner who carries out the sentence.

We're talking about all those times when someone has wronged you,  
sinned against you, more times than not in the slightest of ways,  
and you obliterate them with your thoughts and words...

Best construction? Please—  
it's more like worst deconstruction.

And you're perfectly content with it.

Insult is murder.

Anger is murder.

You are a murderer.

And if that is how you fare with what is thought  
to be the "easiest" commandment to keep,  
how will it be with the rest of them?

Jesus has not authorized any of us to be angry with those who sin against us.

Instead, He has commanded us, directly,  
to love them—to bless them—  
to pray for them—to serve them.

Jesus' interpretation of the law makes it far more penetrating and dreadful  
than it appears and when it's held before your eyes—

we're convicted, confessing,

"We have not kept the Law."

"We have sinned."

"Who can live like this?!"

And you despair—

because there's no way you can achieve this righteousness.

Righteousness is required,

but it cannot, it will not...come from you.

What's Jesus' point?

You need the righteousness of *Another*—

One who works a righteousness entirely outside of you, for you—as a gift.

And there is only One Person in the history of the world who could stand before the  
judgement of the Law and not be condemned.

Though you deserve the fire of Hell for breaking God's commandments,  
Jesus suffered Hell for you, and wants to give you bliss in heaven.

For your murder and violence, your anger and insults,  
 for every time your tongue has wounded and slain,  
 Jesus was wounded and slain on the cross.

Jesus was insulted, called a fool,  
 mocked and murdered to make atonement for your sins  
 so that you might be called a child of God.

So, for you who desperately need righteousness,  
 Jesus says, "Look to Me, I have all you need."  
 For His is the only righteousness that exceeds  
 the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees—  
 whom He called white-washed tombs.  
 And His is the righteousness you have...

The Scriptures are clear, *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,  
 so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

Through your baptism you first put on Christ as a garment of righteousness, through  
 faith. But it doesn't end there...

Jesus pours His righteousness out to you through the lips of the faithful pastor  
 who absolves you and preaches the cross into your ears.

Jesus pours out His righteousness for you—the very cup of salvation given and  
 shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins.

By the way, the pastor wears a white garment before you each and every  
 Sunday reminding you that Christ's righteousness is what you're clothed  
 in. And when you die, we'll cover your casket with a white covering  
 to show everyone who comes to your funeral  
 that you were clothed in the righteousness of Christ,  
 no doubt entering into the kingdom of heaven.

God gave His Son into death  
 in order to make unrighteous people...into righteous ones.

So now, made righteous in God's sight,  
 the Holy Spirit has made you into something new—a new creation.

So, we return to the Commandments—seeing them now  
 not as a mirror but as a guide,  
 not to learn how to enter the kingdom of heaven,  
 but to learn how children of heaven  
 think, speak and act toward our neighbor.

And when it comes to those who wrong us—what do we do?

We love and do not hate.

We bless and do not curse.

We pray and do not gossip.

We serve and do not neglect.

This is a righteousness that comes from faith,  
what the Reformers called “new obedience.”

Tough to do? Sure—but we pray for the Lord’s help to soften our conscience. We meditate on the Ten Commandments and we let them do the work of digging the specks and the logs out of our eyes. We pray for the Holy Spirit to dwell with us and teach us what it means to be gentle and kind and caring, asking the Lord for wisdom.

This is not complete in this life, and sometimes gets messy.

But it’s genuine,

and we keep working together with the Holy Spirit—

striving to be righteousness like Christ calls us to be.

And—final thing—when we’re tempted to not do any of those things, and just think—  
I’ll remain in my disgust towards my neighbor and ask God for forgiveness—  
what does Jesus say about that?

*So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

In other words, God will not accept your offering  
until you’re first reconciled to the one whom you hate.

Take care of that sin first.

Then approach God’s altar with your gift.

Beloved, this is why we encourage you to share the peace of God  
with those near you at the beginning of the Divine Service—  
so that as you approach God, at His holy altar, He will accept you.

May God grant to us all this righteousness before Him,  
but also, this righteousness lived between each other another.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

**Standing...**And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.