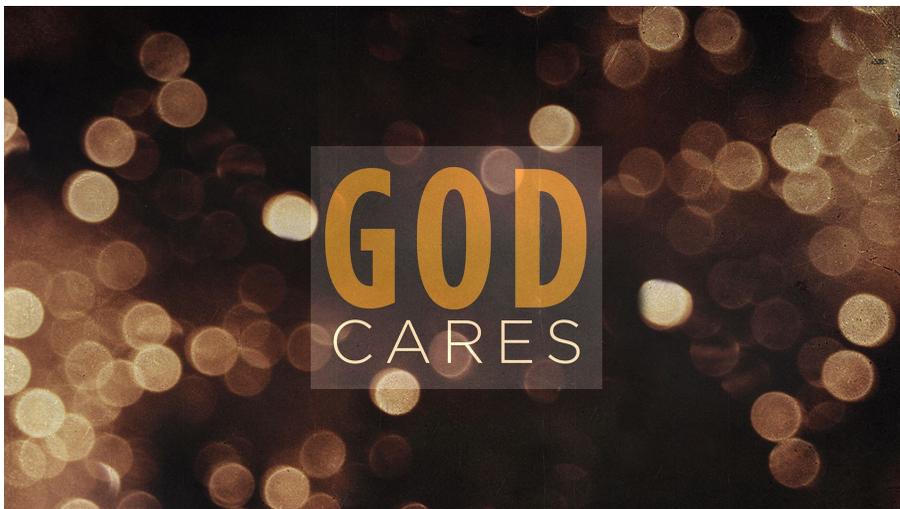


Nineteenth Week of Pentecost



The Lihu'e Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hawai'i

Ka Hale Pule 'O Na Lahui Apau . . .

Church Of All Peoples . . .

. . . Hele Pu Maʻkou me Iesu Kristo

. . . Walking Together With Christ

October 3, 2021

The Lihue Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hawai'i

4602 Ho'omana Road, Lihue, HI 96766

The Rev. Dr. JP Paxton Tony Kment, Technology

Rhonda Pabo, Organist Clyde Miller, Lector

Church: (808) 245-2145 Fax: (808) 246-8626

E-Mail: staff@lihuelutheran.com Website: lihuelutheranchurch.com

Welcome to Our Guests

It is always a joy to share our faith and worship with people visiting from around the world. Please know your presence and participation in our service is most appreciated. At Lihue Lutheran we celebrate Holy Communion at every service. You are certainly welcome in joining us as our Lord comes to us in this holy meal.

Prayer Concerns

Please remember these people in your prayers during the week: The family of Amanda Thayer , Bob & Joann Clash, Sally Rasay, Linda Garrett, Stan Weeks, Ronnie Pacheco, Pagatpatan ohana, Villanueva ohana, Geronimo ohana, David Gragg, Joe Morgan, Zosimo and Virginia Austria, Karen Kinoshita, Jake Whisenhunt, Rick Rentz, Norman Dibble, Kazue Zaima, Virginia Hines-Aflague, John Mattek, Giraldo II (Bobby Giraldo's son), Kristie Schmid (Tony's sister), Lolli Hagen, Abraham Torres, Sr., Kristy Kahananui, Sonny Koerte, Uncle Joe, Mallory Rodriguez, Steve Schantz, Peter Alisna, Tirzah Pope, Pastor Matthew Weber, Joyce Anglemeyer, Stephen Shioi, Peggy Hood, Jason Shimono, Richard Rasay, Nancy Nelson (formely Mandell), Karen & Patrick Pavao, Edward Rasay, Karen Richards (friend of Nancy Mandell), Marcos Larson (Liedeke's son), Dora Jane Rowell, Franklin Parraga, Penny Parraga, Leticia Ancog (Kurt Javinar's sister), Yvonne Shinseki, Al Dressler (Larry's Father), Shirley Hallman (Denese Alcott's Mother), Mercy Ballesteros, Mike LaBerge, Anna Marie & Phil Croghan, Judy Carlson, Caroline Johnson, Sheila Belarmino, Ray Roderick, The Church Council, and leaders in the ELCA. If you have additional prayer requests, please let the church office know. "*Ask it in my name . . .*" Mahalo for your love.

Remembering Our Military

As we gather for worship, please remember those serving us in the military, and the families of our Hawai'i National Guard. These names have been given by loved ones and family members: Navy – TJ, Javinar, Kristian Matsumoto, Coast Guard - Brian Rodriguez, Navy - Kiana Alisna, Coast Guard - Ke'ale Renta Army - Jason Lumacad, Levi Fajardo: Air Force - Steven Javinar, Ikaika Fajardo, Army - Brandon Perkinson, Drew Cox, Tony Garton: National Guard - Benji MacKenzie, Eddie Resinto, Fred Casticimo, Philip Kamakea, Anthony Y. Torres, Master Sgt. If you know of someone you would like added to our prayer list, please advise the church office.

Lihue Lutheran Spotlight

We extend **heartfelt gratitude** to the Martha's Circle for their dedication and faithful service! **Mahalo nui** to the Nishek's for their donation to the Youth's Reformation Renovation, and to Tony for his help putting up their brand new gift!! It is domestic abuse awareness month.



Introduction

Today's gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus' saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God's law. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?

Overview

Who Would Jesus Bless Today

Many Bibles include a heading before the latter part of today's gospel reading (Mark 10:13-16) that says something like "Blessing the Children" or "Jesus Welcomes the Children." In reading such a heading, we might begin to imagine a sentimental scene in which Jesus is surrounded by cute, adorable children. When we think about children being blessed in our churches today, we might imagine children gathering around the altar or at the front of the worship space for a children's time, in which the pastor or worship leader would say a prayer with them and give them a blessing. The parents and others may also be gathered just behind the children, smiling in adoration of these young ones.

However, we cannot view the scene from Mark's gospel with only our modern understanding of the role and place of children in society. The life of many children in North America is one of relative privilege, with carefree days in which they often experience the care and love of grown-ups. Jesus, by bringing the children to him, identifies himself with those who were among the most vulnerable and helpless in society. In ancient times, children often were treated like property. They had few protections from those who would treat them badly. But Jesus came into the world for ones such as these children. Who, in our communities, is in the place of the children of ancient times? As Christ's church, do we provide a place of welcome and care for the most vulnerable and weak in our society?

Let The Children Come

Jesus takes children seriously, and as his followers we are called into the big work of clearing a path for their spiritual development. One of the most welcoming things we can do for children, indeed for all people, is to call them by name. This assures them that we see them, we remember them, and we connect them in the web of community. Knowing the importance of names makes it that much more important to try to learn the name of each child in your community and to encourage others to do the same. Depending on the number of children in your congregation, you could pray for each child by name in the prayers of intercession today, or spread the names out over the coming month, including a few each week. Include also prayers for children in your neighborhood and around the world.

Announcements and Weekly Events!

Welcome, Check-In, and Announcements

In the Facebook chatbox share something good God is doing in your life.

Announcements

- ◇ Reformation Renovation in the Youth Room!
- ◇ All Church Workday—**Saturday, October 16**
- ◇ **Sign up for Trunk-or-Treat** or **Trick-or-Treat** in the Grave Yard!
- ◇ **Operation Christmas Child**—Michelle Dressler

Weekly Events

- ◇ Ghetto Sweet Tarts (breakfast for dinner!)
Monday, Oct 4, 5:30-7pm in the Fellowship Hall
- ◇ BOBS Bible Study—The Forgotten Luther (6-week study)
Tuesday, Oct 5, @ 5:30-7pm in the fellowship hall
- ◇ Centering Prayer with Liedeke Bulder
Saturday, Oct 9, @ 9-10am via zoom <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9079773456>
- ◇ Youth Group
Sunday, Oct 10, youth group online! <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/94250967656>
Reformation Renovation, Oct 31, come check out the Reformed Room!

Nineteenth Week of Pentecost

Order for Worship

*Confession and Forgiveness

P In the name of Makua, ✚ Keike Kane, and Uhane Hemolele.

C Amen.

P God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. Most merciful God,

C we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free our selves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of Makua, ✚ Keike Kane, and Uhane Hemolele.

C Amen.



*Gathering Song Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

1 Praise the One who breaks the dark-ness with a lib - er - at - ing light;
 2 Praise the One who blessed the chil - dren with a strong yet gen - tle word;
 3 Praise the one true love in - car - nate: Christ, who suf - fered in our place;

praise the One who frees the pris-'ners, turn-ing blind-ness in - to sight.
praise the One who drove out de - mons with a pierc - ing, two - edged sword.
Je - sus died and rose for man - y that we may know God by grace.

Praise the One who preached the gos - pel, heal-ing ev - 'ry dread dis - ease,
Praise the One who brings cool wa - ter to the des - ert's burn - ing sand;
Let us sing for joy and glad - ness, see - ing what our God has done.

calm - ing storms and feed - ing thou - sands with the ver - y bread of peace.
from this well comes liv - ing wa - ter quench - ing thirst in ev - 'ry land.
Praise the one re - deem - ing glo - ry; praise the One who makes us one.

**Thanksgiving for Baptism*

P Joined into Christ in the waters of baptism, we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness. Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family. Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all. We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. Shower us with your Spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.

To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

C Amen.

*The Apostolic Greeting

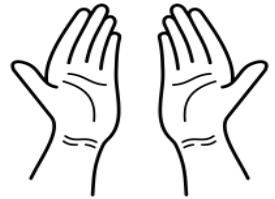
P The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

C And also with you.

*Prayer of the Day

P Let us pray. Sovereign God, you have created us to live in loving community with one another. Form us for life that is faithful and steadfast, and teach us to trust like little children, that we may reflect the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.



First Reading

Genesis 2:18-24

Genesis 2 stresses that people are not meant to live in isolation but in relationship. Out of love for humanity, God creates them male and female, to provide companionship for each other and to become with each other “one flesh.” The Hebrew words used here are ish (man) and ishshah (woman).

¹⁸The LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” ¹⁹So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he took one

of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.”

²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

A The Word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God.

*Psalm**Psalm 8*

You crown us with glory and honor. (*Ps. 8:5*)

¹O ¹LORD our Lord,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!—
²**you whose glory is chanted above the heavens
 out of the mouths of infants and children; you
 have set up a fortress against your enemies, to
 silence the foe and avenger.**
³When I consider your heavens, the work of your
 fingers, the moon and the stars you have set in their
 courses,
⁴**what are mere mortals that you should be
 mindful of them, human beings that you should
 care for them?**

⁵Yet you have made them little less than di-
 vine; with glory and honor you crown them.
⁶**You have made them rule over the works
 of your hands; you have put all things under
 their feet:**
⁷all flocks and cattle,
 even the wild beasts of the field,
⁸**the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
 and whatever passes along the paths of
 the sea.**
⁹O LORD our Lord,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*Second Reading**Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12*

Quoting from the psalms, this passage from Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus, the one through whom God created everything and who sits at God's right hand, is also the one who experienced human suffering and death in order to blaze the path of salvation for us.

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ^{2:5}Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. ⁶But someone has testified somewhere,
 "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?"
⁷You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, ⁸subjecting all things under their feet."

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, ⁹but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹²saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you."

A The Word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God.

***Gospel Acclamation**

Refrain



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, give thanks to the ris - en Lord;
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, give praise to his name.

Holy Gospel**Mark 10:2-16**

Jesus announced and enacted in history the new reality of God's surprising activity. These two stories demonstrate this new reality: Women and children are accepted and valued, not dismissed as inferior to adult men.

P The Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark, the tenth chapter.



Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

²Some Pharisees came, and to test [Jesus] they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"
³He answered them, "What did Moses command you?"⁴They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her."⁵But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you."⁶But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'⁷'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh.⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."¹⁰Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.¹¹He said to them,

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her;¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them.¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

P The Gospel of the Lord.



Keiki Sermon Sermon

*Hymn of the Day

Our Father, Whose Name

1 Our Fa - ther, by whose name all par - ent - hood is known,
 2 O Christ, your - self a child with - in an earth - ly home,
 3 O Ho - ly Spir - it, bind our hearts in u - ni - ty

in love di - vine you claim each fam - 'ly as your own.
 with heart still un - de - filed to full a - dult - hood come:
 and teach us how to find the love from self set free;

Bless moth - ers, fa - thers, guard - ing well, with con - stant love as
 our chil - dren bless in ev - 'ry place that they may all be -
 in all our hearts such love in - crease that ev - 'ry home, by



sen - ti - nel, the homes in which your peo - ple dwell.
hold your face and, know - ing you, may grow in grace.
this re - lease, may be the dwell - ing place of peace.

**Apostles' Creed*

P Let us join together in reciting the Apostles' Creed

A **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**



**The Prayers of the Church*

P Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A Holy One, you have raised up faithful leaders throughout history. Empower those discerning a call to ministry and all seminarians, that they continue to be formed for the sake of the gospel. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A You have established a diverse and beautiful creation. Revive declining species and preserve endangered lands. Cultivate in us a sense of wonder for the world you created. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A You desire for us not to be alone and to live in community with one another. Strengthen relationships between nations and peoples, that we celebrate and support one human family. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A You share in our experiences and struggles. Bless all who live with any mental or physical disability. Inspire creative communities, spaces, and environments that are accessible and hospitable. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

A You have established and nurtured relationships that extend beyond those gathered here today. Bless members who can no longer travel to worship with us (*especially*) and remind us of their continued role in this community of faith. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A You promise eternal life to all your children. Thank you for the people of faith who have gone before us. Strengthen our trust we have in you. Lord, in your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen

*The Queen's Prayer

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system is labeled 'Piano' and the second 'Pno'. The lyrics are written below the treble clef staff of each system. The first system contains the first two lines of the prayer, and the second system contains the final two lines. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and simple rhythmic patterns in both hands.

Piano

O kou a - lo - ha no A i - a i ka La - ni, A
No - lai - la e ka - Haku Ma - la - lo kou e - he - u, Ko

Pno

o kou oi - a i - o, He he - mo - le - le hoi
ma - kou ma - lu - hi - a, A mau loa a - ku no. A - me - ne.

English Translation

1. O Lord thy Loving Mercy,
Is high as the Heavens.
It tells us of thy truth.
And 'tis filled with holiness

3. For thy grace I beseech thee.
Bring us 'neath thy protection.
And peace will be thy portion
Now and forever more. Amen

The Sharing of the Peace

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C And also with you.

P Let us share the peace of the Lord with those here locally and those joining us online via Facebook live! As the ushers come forward, take a minute to share "Aloha" with those joining us online!



Offertory Word

If God puts it on your heart to give, donations can be given here today, mailed in, or given online our website [here](#) or you can copy and paste the weblink below @



https://www.eservicepayments.com/cgi-bin/Vanco_ver3.vps?a_pver3=tYgT1GfNxRUIiimjHMvORYXmm3bazY6GfrmTtVDZydsksODEa-Up5lt373GHnco2evTpo0mld6BrVzd2nG0p8xSFKZ9u6c4AzLo4CjNx7k=&ver=3

Offertory Response

Lord of Aloha

God of the is - lands, Lord of the seas, Ma - ker of beau - ty and source of the breeze,

5 King of Cre - a - tion, an - cient and new, Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.

9 Auth - or of mer - cy, Giv - er of grace, Bles - sed Re - deem - er who died in our place, Fath - er of one O

14 ha - na are you, Lift - ing our voic - es we sing "Al - le - lu" Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.

19 God of the is - lands, Lord of the seas, Ma - ker of beau - ty and source of the breeze,

23

King of Cre - a - tion, an cient and new, Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.

27

Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.

**Offertory Prayer*

P Let us pray. Holy God, gracious and merciful, you bring forth food from the earth and nourish your whole creation. Turn our hearts toward those who hunger in any way, that all may know your care; and prepare us now to feast on the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Christ has set the table with more than enough for all. Come!

**The Words of Institution*

(All are welcome to share in this meal with us. The sacraments are provided in accordance to synodical guidelines in collaboration with CDC, state, and local precautions. If you do not have sacraments, please raise your hand and an usher will bring them to you.)

**The Lord's Prayer*

P Let us pray the prayer our Lord taught us to pray...

C **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and for give us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**



**The Post-Communion Blessing*

- P May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in His grace.
 C **Amen.**

**The Prayer After Communion*

- P Jesus, Bread of life, we have received from your table more than we could ever ask. As you have nourished us in this meal, now strengthen us to love the world with your own life. In your name we pray.
 C **Amen.**

Announcements

**The Blessing*

- P The blessing of God, who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us ☐ be upon you now and forever.
 C **Amen.**

**The Sending Song*

Now Thank We All Our God

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Now Thank We All Our God'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff at the top and a bass clef staff at the bottom. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. There are three verses of lyrics written below the treble staff.

1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voi - es,
 2 Oh, may this boun - teous God through all our life be near us,
 3 All praise and thanks to God the Fa - ther now be giv - en,

who won-drous things has done, in whom this world re-joice - es;
 with ev - er joy - ful hearts and bless - ed peace to cheer us,
 the Son, and Spir - it blest, who reign in high - est heav - en,

who, from our moth - ers' arms, has blest us on our way
 and keep us all in grace, and guide us when per - plexed,
 the one e - ter - nal God, whom earth and heav'n a - dore;

with count-less gifts of love, and still is ours to - day.
 and free us from all harm in this world and the next.
 for thus it was, is now, and shall be ev - er - more.

Dismissal

P Go in peace, the Living Word dwells in you.

C Thanks be to God.

Commemorations

Michael and All Angels

Wednesday, September 29, 2021

Michael the archangel, captain of the heavenly hosts, is remembered on this day along with the other angels and archangels. The word "angel" means messenger, and in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, these beings have a fully spiritual nature and no physical body.

Jerome, translator, teacher, died 420

Thursday, September 30, 2021

Jerome was a biblical scholar and translator, but rather than translating the original Hebrew and Greek scriptures into classical Latin, he worked in the commonly-spoken Latin of the day, creating a version called the Vulgate.

Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church, died 1226

Monday, October 4, 2021

Born into the family of a wealthy merchant, Francis gave up his inheritance to serve poor people. He formed the Order of Friars Minor (called Franciscans), who took on poverty and the task of preaching "using words if necessary." Francis had a spirit of gratitude for all of God's creation.

Theodor Fliedner, renewer of society, died 1864

Monday, October 4, 2021

Fliedner helped to bring about a revival of the ministry of deaconesses among Lutherans. He was influenced in this by Moravian deaconesses he had met. The mother-house he founded in Kaiserswerth, Germany, inspired many around the world to take up this ministry.

William Tyndale, translator, martyr, died 1536

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

Tyndale was ordained a priest in England, and wished to translate the Bible into English. He was opposed in this by King Henry VIII, causing him to flee to Germany. He completed the New Testament in 1525, but before he could finish the Old Testament, he was tried for heresy and burned at the stake.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, pastor in North America, died 1787

Thursday, October 7, 2021

Divided Lutherans in America asked leaders in Europe to send someone who could take charge and unite their work. Muhlenberg was sent, and was effective in organizing the American Lutherans. Among other accomplishments, his liturgical principles became the basis for the Common Service of 1888.

Divorce

What's up with Jesus' discussion on divorce? This is one of those topics that Jesus teaches on that requires a socio-historical understanding surrounding divorce in the Ancient Near East. When we consider Jesus' words and Jesus teachings, we can typically assume that Jesus is teaching on a concept because there is something wrong with people's understanding of the concept. So, what's wrong with people's understanding of divorce?

Hardness of heart. When we think of "hard hearts" there are two places we can go to reflect, biblically: Exodus and Hebrews 3:13. They are *great* sites for reflection, evaluation, and consideration. In the book of Exodus, across chapters 5-12, we notice that "Pharaoh hardens his heart against God" multiple times. Moses comes to Pharaoh and, essentially, invites him to submit to God's authority, purpose, and plan. And Pharaoh hardens his heart, in rebellion, and doesn't submit or surrender to the authority, purpose, and plan of God.

In Hebrews 3:13, the text says, "encourage one another daily so that none of you will be hardened by sins deceitfulness." Sin has a way of not only shaping but also changing what we think, feel, and do. Obadiah 1:3 says, "but the pride of your heart has deceived you." The way pride is operating in this text is similar to the way it is operation in Exodus, with Pharaoh. It produces hard hearts that refuse to submit or surrender to the authority, purpose, and plan of God. It chooses to go its own way. Here, a person *thinks they know better than God*, so rather than listen to God, they do what they want.

In marriage AND divorce, people don't really know what to do. We aren't built with knowledge of what marriage is about or how to have a good marriage. Therefore, because we don't know God's purpose for marriage and we don't understand God's plan for marriage, marriage can often times just become another place where we seek to make life about ourselves.

However, God has a plan. God has a purpose for marriage. Marriage is a gift of God against loneliness and a gift of God to benefit and bless His creation. In marriage, a person has a helpmate, someone who collaborates, strengthens, and encourages. But it also serves an evangelical and Kingdom-oriented function: to show the world what it's like to be in a relationship with God. This is Paul's teaching on marriage in Ephesians. Marriage is a place where the married couple can put God's love on display for the entire world. It is in marriage that people can learn about God's love based on the love a couples shares with and toward and for one another.

What the text won't teach you. As always, God always has an ear to those who are oppressed and marginalized in society. Throughout the history of humanity, women have been, and continue to be, vulnerable and open to and subjected to violence and many forms of oppression. With this in mind, we have to consider *what* marriage offered women in the historical societies.

Marriage was the economic base for life and living. Marriage, for women, offered a home, offered belonging, offered a legacy (through childbearing), offered protection, offered provision, and it offered a plan for retirement. Without marriage, a woman had nothing and owned nothing. It was in and through marriage that a woman received the foundations for life.

This is why divorce was so oppressive and unjust. Men would just, on a whim, divorce their wives. The divorce had incredible implications and consequences for women. They immediately became houseless and penniless, with no possessions. Often times, women were married off to distant lands. And if they had no means to return, they quickly and easily “fell through the cracks” of society. That’s why James says, “true and right religion is to care for the orphans and the widows.” Women without husbands were very vulnerable.

God hates divorce not as some random rule but as a regulation against the injustice of men.

For Further Reflection

Theological Reflection

“We too belong to those whom Jesus loved, and loves, and will love, that Jesus’ love is not a private affair but at the center of the world” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1941–1945*, vol. 16 [Fortress Press, 2006], p. 310). How is Jesus’ love at the center of your faith community’s world? How is Jesus’ love evident in the daily discipleship lessons of marriage, divorce, parenting? It is easy to ruminate on Jesus’ judgments and any private shame they may engender. But how expansive the proclamation is when it mimics the gospel: a laying on of hands, and an embrace.

Sensory Idea

Those with experience in navigation on bodies of water may have insight to share about the paths of the sea (Ps. 8:8). One way to open a conversation with elders is to make an [“ocean in a bottle”](#) (use waterproof glue and a shatterproof container). As you create waves, read this and other brief biblical passages which praise bodies of water, fountains, and baptism. Ask questions about participants’ experiences with fishing boats, ocean liners, or submarines. Have participants ever seen a whale or dolphin leap? Been snorkeling, or floated down a gentle river? Remembering together water’s majestic power will lead to the appreciation of both its dangers and its restorative properties. Send the oceans in a bottle home with participants so they can continue to use and enjoy. Praise God for the great ways water carries and delights us.

Worship Reflection

What biblical texts stood out to me and why?

What do I feel God is trying to say to me in and through this sermon?

Is the Holy Spirit prompting me to change something in my heart or life? If yes, what is it? What is one step I can take to make a positive change in my life this week?

Where did I see/hear God in the sermon?
