

**9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**August 14, 2011**

From Isaiah 56 for today we read verse one and then we jumped to verse 6 through 8.

I want us to also consider those skipped verses, two through five. Please turn in your Pew Bibles to Isaiah 56 which can be found on page 672 or close to that page number. Please follow along as we read verses two through five of Isaiah 56.

*2)Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil. 3)Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and do not let the eunuch say, "I am just a dry tree." 4)For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, 5)I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters, I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.*

We hear in these verses that those who keep the Sabbath and who do not profane it and who keep from doing any evil are blessed by God. They **do not** do those things that God has commanded us **not to do** and they hold firmly on to the covenant that God has established with us.

Those who choose to do the things that please God will be given an everlasting name by God and that name will not be taken away from them.

In our reading from Romans for today we jumped from verses 1 through 2a to verses 29 through 32. The skipped verses talk about a remnant, chosen by grace, to do God's will in this world of ours. A remnant grafted to the ROOT, grafted to Christ Jesus, who is the Right ROOT.

This remnant is grafted to Christ Jesus through FAITH ALONE. Our faith is not something we can not hold up to others and say, "See what I have done," for it is God's doing.

We all know Martin Luther's SOLA's: We are saved by God's GRACE ALONE, by FAITH ALONE, on account of CHRIST ALONE. It is all God's doing and none of our own.

In Matthew's text for today Jesus comments on the disciples telling Him that the Pharisees are upset by what he said, that a person IS NOT defiled by eating with unwashed hands BUT by what comes out of their mouth, by their words.

Jesus says concerning the Pharisees, "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit."

We need to be cautious about who guides us as well; we do not want to be guided by those who are blinded by this world's gods that shine their light on **everything but** God's WORD for their guidance.

We need to listen carefully to what is said, written and claimed by those going down different paths than the one Christ Jesus is leading us down.

John Hus (1372 – 1415) wrote: “A subject (follower), in obeying his prelate (leader) in that which is evil, is not excused from sin ... they both fall into the pit of error.”

So not only are leaders judged for following evil ways, so are those who blindly follow them without question.

Jesus said, “What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart comes evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”

Clearly Jesus is saying that sin originates in one’s heart and not from external influences, it is one’s heart’s intentions that matter. And though our hearts are never completely free from sinful desires in our life-time here on earth, God’s Holy Spirit continually works on us to help lead us down God’s path of righteousness.

When we used the green Lutheran Book of Worship Hymnal, on those Sundays that we did not celebrate Holy Communion we sang **Create in Me a Clean Heart** following The Offering, the words are as follows:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with your free Spirit.*

There is good theology packed within those verses!

It is God who creates **clean hearts** in us.

It is God who renews **a right spirit** in us.

And yes it is God who can cast us away from His presence on Judgment Day, taking away His Holy Spirit.

And it is our honest prayer, that though we continue to struggle with sin in our lives, **that God** – through the work of Christ Jesus’ death on the Cross – **will restore** in our hearts the joy of knowing that our salvation does not rest in our hands but in HIS and that we will be upheld by HIS **FREE SPIRIT**.

And so we pray for God’s Holy Spirit to be at work not only in our life but in the lives of all people, that they too may be lead by God’s GRACE, to FAITH in CHRIST.

We sometimes close our Worship Service with the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers chapter 6, verses 24 – 26:

*The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine on you  
and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.*

Psalms 67 is a virtual quotation of that blessing with the added explanation of why it is used:

*That YOUR (God's) way may be known on earth YOUR (God's) saving power among all nations.*

How do we help **God's WAY** to be made known throughout all the earth so that people will be led towards and down right pathways for God's name sake?

Most often is in how we live out our lives Monday through Saturday that counts for those observing from a safe distance away from the Church.

Do we let our life speak of our praise of God?

Do we let our lives show that there is no higher authority in our life than God?

Do others see that we hold firmly onto the Covenant that God made with us?

Or do they see that we have chosen to hold onto something other than God's Covenant because we don't like what God's WORD says about following HIS path way of righteousness?

Psalm 67 ends with verse 7 saying; "... let all the ends of the earth revere HIM."

To revere God means that, for all the ends of the earth, there is nothing of higher authority than God.

For us to revere God in this manner means that we will hold firmly onto the Covenant that God has established with us and we will not follow after a counter-fit covenant that our culture devised because it fits with its wishes.

So as we continue to struggle with the sin that is constant in our lives, let us also continue to be lights that illumine God's path as best we can, with guidance from God's Holy Spirit.

Amen.