

Celebrate

Sunday, October 1, 2023
18th Sunday after Pentecost

Jesus' parable about two sons who don't do what they say reveals surprises in the reign of God. In the reading from Ezekiel the people claim the ways of the Lord are unfair, while God offers repentance and new life. Paul urges us to look to Christ as a model of humility, putting the interests of others above our own. Nourished by the broken bread and shared cup, we offer our lives for the sake of our needy world.

Prayer of the Day

God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

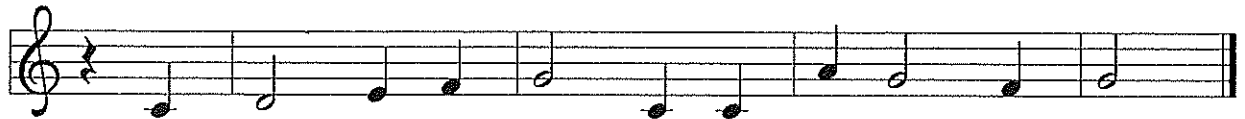
Ezekiel challenges those who think they cannot change because of what their parents were and did, or who think they cannot reverse their own previous behavior. God insistently invites people to turn and live.

The word of the LORD came to me:
²What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

²⁵Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ²⁷Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and

right, they shall save their life. ²⁸Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.



Re - mem - ber, O LORD, your com - pas - sion and love.

To ¹ you, O LORD,

I lift ¹ up my soul.

²**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be ¹ put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph ¹ over me.**

³Let none who look to you be ¹ put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame ¹ who are treacherous.

⁴**Show me your ¹ ways, O LORD,
and teach ¹ me your paths. R**

⁵Lead me in your ¹ truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all ¹ the day long.

⁶**Remember, O LORD, your compas- ¹ sion and love,
for they are from ¹ everlasting.**

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and ¹ my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love
and for the sake of your good- ¹ ness, O LORD.

⁸**You are gracious and up- ¹ right, O LORD;
therefore you teach sinners ¹ in your way.**

⁹You lead the low- ¹ ly in justice
and teach the low- ¹ ly your way. R

As part of a call for harmony rather than self-seeking, Paul uses a very early Christian hymn that extols the selflessness of Christ in his obedient death on the cross. Christ's selfless perspective is to be the essential perspective we share as the foundation for Christian accord.

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,

⁷but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and

under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Gospel

Matthew 21:23-32

After driving the moneychangers out of the temple (21:12), Jesus begins teaching there. His authority is questioned by the religious leaders, who are supposed to be in charge of the temple.

When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by

what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went.

³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

A brief silence.

We put our trust in you as we pray for the church. Give bishops, pastors, deacons, and teachers the gifts of wisdom and discernment. Be with them in bold truth and faithful witness. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Lead us in your truth as we pray for creation. Empower us to look to the interests of others as we make choices that impact the environment. Summon us to be advocates for healthy waterways, habitats, and air. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Lead us in justice as we pray for those in government, the military, and other positions of authority (*local and national leaders may be named*). Give them humble and willing hearts, looking to the needs of others. We pray also for our enemies. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Trusting your goodness, we pray for all caregivers and people who are sick or suffering in any way (*especially*). Give them encouragement and consolation in your presence. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Teach us your paths as we pray for this congregation. Be at work in us and unite us in your love as we labor together for the sake of the gospel. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for all the saints who died secure in the knowledge of salvation. Keep us fearless in our faith and certain of your resurrection. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 28. **Tuesday** Philippians 1:15-21. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church, died 1226; Theodor Fliedner, renewer of society, died 1864) Judges 16:23-31. **Thursday** Psalm 80:7-15. **Friday** (commemoration of William Tyndale, translator, martyr, died 1536) Philippians 2:14-18; 3:1-4a. **Saturday** (commemoration of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, pastor in North America, died 1787) Jeremiah 6:1-10. **Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost** Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:7-15; Philippians 3:4b-14; Matthew 21:33-46.

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