

**Blessed Rather...**  
**Luke 11:14-28**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The third Sunday in Lent has historically been called Oculi Sunday – it has to do with the eyes, that we are ever and always to look to God. As we examine our Epistle lesson, we are told to avoid sin, and there is a long list of sins given which we are to avoid. Instead, look to the Lord.

What is more, we are also told that we are not to even *associate* with those who try to deceive us into believing such things are not sin. Did you hear that? Consider that Jesus says, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”

So, what does our Epistle say? *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.*

Not only are you to avoid these sins – including filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking, AS well as sexual immorality and impurity – but you are to avoid associating with those who say such things are not sinful, including especially those who might claim to be Christian pastors who teach that such things are not sinful.

Considering our theme for today, we are to look to God to strengthen us to overcome temptation in regard to these things. We also look to Him to grant us forgiveness in our weaknesses, as we have fallen into or may fall into such sins.

But the text we will really focus upon for meditation today is the Gospel lesson. We’ve talked about this text in the past, the healing of the mute man and the casting out of demons, but today, I want to concentrate on the last exchange in our text. *As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"*

This woman speaks out of her high regard for Jesus. She thinks much of Him, therefore she thinks that the woman who raised him is wonderful, for His fine words and the miracles He’s performed. As His mother did bear Him in her womb, care for Him as he grew, yes, she is indeed blessed. Jesus does not deny this.

Our family relationships are very important, and well they should be. God gives us the families that we have, parents and children, given to one another for a purpose – that we might be blessings to one another. God gives spouses to us for a purpose – that we might be blessings to one another.

Jesus does not rebuke this woman for her comment, for indeed Mary is blessed of all women to have been chosen by God to be the theotokos, the God-bearer, the mother of Jesus. However, there is a greater blessing Mary enjoys that is more important than the blood relationship Jesus has with the woman who carried Him in her womb. *"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"*

Mary is blessed rather, for something more important than granting human flesh to God in her womb.

Blessed rather is Mary, because she heard the word of God, believed it and kept it. The angel Gabriel came to Mary and proclaimed God's Word to her, he told her that she was going to give birth. He told her that the Holy Spirit was going to come upon her and the power of the Most High was going to overshadow her, and the child to be born would be called Holy, the Son of God.

I don't know about you, but how many people would buy into this whole story? Not many, most would think of it as a daydream or something, a waking vision. But not Mary. Mary replied to Gabriel, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me *according to your word.*"

*According to your word* is the key phrase. That is the attitude of faith to which Jesus is referring in our text when He says, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Jesus is saying, "It is not the mother-son relationship that I have with my mother that is important and makes her blessed. Instead, she is blessed because she has heard the Word of God, believes it, and keeps it. It is by faith in the Word of God that she is blessed.

Dear friends, what does it mean to hear the Word of God and keep it? You heard the Word of God in our Epistle lesson. Do you keep it? Do you avoid filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking, AS well as sexual immorality and impurity? Do you associate with those who do such things, and who say such things are not sinful? Do you hear the Word of God and keep it?

Yes, we are to do those things. We are to hear that Word of God and keep it. A believer will listen to God's Word, take it to heart, keep it with a believing heart, and conform their life to it.

In Romans, we learn that "We were therefore buried with Him (Christ) through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Rom. 6:4)

According to the passage in Romans, the daily life of the Christian is one of repentance. And that life of repentance is lived acknowledging our sin in sorrow, trusting that is forgiven in Christ Jesus, and by the strength given to us by God, living different. And, that life is a life of wash, rinse, and repeat.

What does Jesus proclaim? "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*" (John 3:16-17)

Dearly beloved of God, blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. Hear the word of God, keep it, hold it in your heart, ponder it, meditate upon it, cherish it as the blessed gift that it is.

Do you know the Word of God? On the evening of the day of His resurrection, Jesus came to His disciples as they were hiding in that upper room. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

Blessed rather are those who hear that Word of God proclaimed to them that they are indeed forgiven. Blessed rather are those who trust in those glad tidings of great joy and live each day in that forgiveness. Indeed, isn't that why you are here today, to hear that Word of God, that Word of forgiveness proclaimed to you in the absolution – to hear it proclaimed to you even in this sermon?

In that Word of God, today your speech is made holy. Your speech is made perfect, for you sing and speak the very Word of God that is our liturgy, you are hearing it, speaking it, keeping it, and blessed rather are you in so doing.

But there is still more, isn't there. Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. Jesus gathered with His disciples in the upper room on the night He was betrayed. There He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them saying, "Take eat; this is my body." Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you, this cup is the new testament in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Gather, dear friends, at this table today. Eat of the flesh of the Son of God; drink of His very blood shed for you. Blessed rather are you, for in so doing, you are hearing the Word of God and keeping it. You are doing as Christ has instructed.

In so doing, you are granted forgiveness. Christ makes His dwelling within you, lives and reigns in your heart and mind, His good works are done in and through you.

Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

Blessed rather are you, for today, in this place, you are hearing the Word of God, and it is keeping you!  
Amen.