

Church of the Divine Love

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PROPER 21

SEPTEMBER 29, 2024 10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn #

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung)

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Numbers 11:4-6,10-16, 24-29**

Psalm 19:7-14

Second Lesson: **James 5:13-20**

Gradual Hymn #

Gospel: **Mark 9:38-50**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn #

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B page 367

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 367

The Lord's Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn #

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Prayer for Peace – on insert

Prayer of St. Francis page 833

Dismissal Hymn #

Dismissal

Sermon Sunday September 29, 2024

Numbers 11: 4-6, 10-16, 24-29; Psalm 19: 7-14; James 5: 13-20; Mark 9: 38-50.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

A friend of mine often says, "Sometimes the good news is bad news before it is good news." Those sure fits today's gospel (**Mark 9:38-50**). Today's gospel tells us that the prognosis is good – life, and peace with one another. But before that comes there is the treatment. And that's the bad news. The treatment is radical and painful.

Last week we heard the disciples arguing about who is greatest (**Mark 9:30-37**). It did not, as I said, bring out the best in them. Today, rather than making themselves "last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35) as Jesus had instructed, John tells Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and

we tried to stop him, because he was not following us" (**Mark 9:38**). Did you catch that? This guy is doing the work of Jesus. But John and the other disciples try to stop him because he's not doing it their way. He's not one of them and they don't approve. John is blaming this other guy for getting in their way. He can't see that he and the other disciples are the ones getting in the way. I wonder if that's ever happened to you. When have you gotten in the way of yourself or another?

Jesus will have none of it. "Do not stop him," he tells John and the others. Then he moves the focus from this other guy to the disciples. "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off" (**Mark 9:43**). "And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off" (**Mark 9:45**). "And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out" (**Mark 9:47**). Jesus isn't talking about this other guy; he's talking about his own disciples. It's as if Jesus is saying, "Don't you worry about that other one. You worry about yourself. In what ways are you a stumbling block to yourself? "What do you make of all that? What does that mean for your life and my life? Stumbling blocks, amputations, and tearing out eyeballs. What are we supposed to do with that?"

Several things strike me about today's gospel. First, to state the obvious, it doesn't look to me as if any of you have amputated one of your limbs or torn out one of your eyes. So, I'm guessing that either you've never stumbled or you're not reading today's gospel literally. I'm betting it's the latter. Any stock we might put in a simplistic and literal reading of scripture loses its credibility and value with a story like today's. That doesn't mean we should interpret away the shock and harshness of Jesus' words. It means that our interpretation must include and apply that shock and harshness in our lives. Jesus is not administering a punishment; he's prescribing the treatment. And it is radical. It cuts to the very core of our integrity and authenticity. We tend to focus on and cringe at the treatment but Jesus is focused on the prognosis, on our future. He sees it as a matter of life or hell. And you and I choose which we want.

The second thing that strikes me is the graphic nature of the images Jesus uses: drowning by millstone, the amputation of hand or foot, the torn-out eyeball, the unquenchable fire, hell, the worm that never dies. Those images reveal just how serious and urgent this matter is for Jesus. Jesus is trying to get our attention. He's trying to wake us up. He wants us to see the ways in which we are unbecoming ourselves, like salt that has lost its saltiness. He's showing us that sometimes we betray and turn away from our true selves. That's when we stumble. And he's showing us the way back to ourselves. We don't need to take those images literally, but do we need to take them seriously. Jesus uses those images four times to talk about what is better for us. "It is better for you," he says. This gospel is not about condemnation. It is about getting better, about healing. And that means facing some difficult truths about ourselves.

And that's the third thing that strikes me about today's gospel. I know exactly what Jesus is talking about. I know times in my life when I have tripped over my own two feet. And I know times when I have caused you or someone else to stumble and fall. And I'll bet you know what that likes too. I wonder in what ways you and I have become stumbling blocks to ourselves and one another? The two are related. Every time I stumble and fall, I take down someone with me. John and the disciples tripped over themselves before they ever became a stumbling block to the other guy doing Jesus' work. Think about it like this. When have you said to yourself, I'm my own worst enemy? Or maybe you've thought, I just

shot myself in the foot. Have you ever cut off your nose to spite your face? Have you ever done the same old thing even though you knew it wouldn't get you anything or anywhere new? Those are the moments that describe and point to ways that we have become our own stumbling block. Think about the metaphors for stumbling blocks Jesus uses in today's gospel: our hands, feet, and eyes. The very thing that becomes a stumbling block is intended to be a building block for our lives and the lives of others.

Our hands are meant to mold and shape life, to welcome and embrace, to reach out and care, to create, protect, and heal. They are a symbol of action. When have you mishandled a relationship or situation, fumbled the ball of life, held the wrong ideas or allegiances? When have your hands done violence to yourself or another? When have your open and receptive hands become closed fists? In what ways have your hands caused you stumble? Our feet are meant to move us towards life and more life, to take us to new ways of being, to get us to a better place. They symbolize movement and growth. They can be the means by which we come together or the means by which we trip or kick another. In what ways have you tripped over your own two feet? What places have you gone that were not good for you? When have you stepped on, kicked, or tripped another? When and from whom have you walked away? Our eyes are meant to see beauty, wisdom, and the holiness of each other and ourselves. They are intended to perceive and discern truth. They offer insight and give us a vision of what faith, hope, and love look like in our lives and relationships. In what ways has your vision been impaired and caused you stumble? When have you walked in the dark, unable to see what was right before you? When have you misperceived the truth and made a wrong judgment? When have you looked at another with anger, hatred, resentment, jealousy?

What is causing you to stumble today? How are your hands, feet, or eyes tripping you up or taking someone else down? In whatever ways you might answer those questions, let your answers be a diagnosis, not a judgment. Let them be a diagnosis of the broken, wounded, and hurting places in your life. If we truly want to be better, we know what we need to do. That's the bad news before the good news. It's a hard prescription. Jesus prescribes cutting off and tearing out. That's pretty extreme but here's the paradox in Jesus' prescription. We amputate in order to become whole. We cut off in order to reconnect. And we separate in order to return. Maybe that's what it means to have salt in ourselves – to regain our integrity and authenticity and be at peace with one another. This gospel is not about good and bad. It's a gospel of hope, healing, and wholeness. It's a gospel about accountability to our better selves and to one another. I think we came here today because at some level, whether we know it or not, we want to get well. We want to be whole and made better. **Amen!**

248th Diocesan Convention will be held November 8, 2024

Delegate needed.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, PROPER 21

	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	
MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING	
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, PROPER 22

10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	
	(also on zoom)	
	COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	
11:15 AM	VESTRY MEETING	

	Today	Next Week	
Eucharistic Minister		Deb Giordano	Jess Berbeck
Coffee		Erika Febres	Prossers

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Sister Eddie	Betty Curley	Jess
Bob Curley	Steve Curley	Art
Chris Dickson	Donna Buchsbaum	Deb P.
John Mulligan	Don Edwards	Evelyn
Manetta Family	Robert Hosey	Kristen
Christopher	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Danielle	Phil Ryder	Warren
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Donna A.	Kate Jones	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Ciara
Mary & Family	Ann Turco	Jan
Nathan Treadwell	Gladys Hadija	Vincent
Michael & Family	Matthew Treasure	Mo
Michelle & Baby	Marjorie Guerrier	Joseph
John Rocco		

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disaster. Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart, and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and for ever. Amen

