

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen

Seventh Sunday of Easter [Exaudi] (2022)

The Corruption of Truth

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“They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. But the LORD has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge.” (Psalm 94:21–22, ESV)

In the Gospel Reading for today, the Lord tells us, ***“They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.” (John 16:2, ESV)*** Killing seems to be a favorite pastime in our country today. Not a weekend goes by that we don’t hear or read of the innocent being slaughtered in the streets of our major cities. We ask why and we’re met with meaningless platitudes that it’s not the killer’s fault, but the fault of others or the weapons they choose, or a myriad of other reasons. Here we are again, mourning the slaughter of innocence in Uvalde while listening to the same mindless comments of politicians and journalist. As the song says, “The Beat Goes On.”

As Christians and as citizens of these United States, we cannot help but say to the tragedy at Uvalde, Lord have mercy. Once again, we grieve because of a senseless act of evil perpetrated on innocence. Young children, just beginning life are denied the fullness of life by a deranged person bent on killing, and not just killing anyone but purposely killing children in an elementary school. So the nation recoils from this murderous act asking, “Why God?” Why did these innocent children have to die?

We ask this question because we know full well, we do not have the answer. And not having the answer we turn to the only One who does: God our heavenly Father. However, the answer He provides, we don’t like. He tells us these children didn’t have to die. He tells us their deaths grieve Him as much as the death of the innocent in Bethlehem when Herod ordered their deaths trying to kill Jesus. The deaths of these innocent in Uvalde can be counted among the dead in Bethlehem, their deaths being the result of the corruption of man. Oh, but pastor you might say, that’s too easy of an explanation. But is it?

The corruption of man is hereditary. Scripture tells us we are born corrupt. Furthermore, corruption is that which leads man to turn inward, seeking satisfaction by expressing outwardly what they feel inwardly. Society tells us to express ourselves, to be who we believe we are. To cut loose and live out our fantasies according to our own perceptions. Everywhere we look, society no longer calls for restraint or calls for living the truth of reality. This is all too evident in what seems to be the most important subject today, a person’s identity. Deplorable social norms are being promoted by the woke as normal, human behavior. Its purpose is to diminishes evil and glorify corruption. It is that norm which says men are women capable of giving birth. Lies are promoted as truth. Their rhetoric turns normality on its head. If you speak out against this evil, society tells you to be quiet, it labels you a troublemaker, a busybody, a hater, a god-freak, or worst of all, a Christian. And by this intimidation, evil flourishes and what happened at Uvalde will continue to happen.

Society would have you believe that the shooter at Uvalde was a product of his environment. That is, he became a killer because his home life was dysfunctional. This may be true, his home

circumstances may well have had some influence on his actions, but God tells us exactly what made this young man do what he did. He says, ***“every intention of the thoughts of [man’s] heart [are] . . . evil continually.”*** (*Genesis 6:5, ESV*) Through the Psalmist He says ***“The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies. They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter.”*** (*Psalm 58:3–5, ESV*)

Scripture tells us man is born a corrupted creature, full of malice from birth, eager to pour out his malice upon others. Moreover, by his own effort, he cannot change who he is. On his own he is doomed to the oblivion of hell. But this is not God’s desire. To the contrary, God ***“desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*** (*1 Timothy 2:4, ESV*) But how is this to happen unless someone informs corrupted man there is a better way to live, that God would not have them condemned to the fire of hell? Indeed, the Scriptures says, ***“Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”*** For ***“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*** (*Romans 10:11, 13, ESV*)

Could the killer of Uvalde have called on the name of the Lord? Yes, but only if he believed in God. St. Paul asks, ***“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”*** (*Romans 10:14, ESV*) So, we ask, did the killer of Uvalde ever hear the Law and its message of condemning sin? Or had he heard the Gospel and its message of the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus? I don’t know. I can’t answer that question. But I can say that if the Word of God was proclaimed to him, it’s obvious he did not hear it. For if he had heard it, he would have been brought to faith (Rom. 10:17). As a child of faith, he would have known the Fifth Commandment and its prohibition against murder. Rather than desire the death of elementary children, his desire would have been to please the Lord. But this young man, led by Satan and societies corrupted acclamation of self-identity, listened to himself, and followed his individualism, his free-will, and choose to become a murderer. His action was pure madness and in many ways his action reflected the madness of the world against the church. Today we and the families of those killed grieve the tragic outcome of his action, asking God not why, but rather, ***“Holy Father, pour out Your grace and mercy upon the families of the victims, upon the citizens of Uvalde, and upon this nation that we may believe in the forgiveness of sins in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We thank You for those among the victims who lived and died in the faith, having been washed in the renewing waters of Baptism, cleansed of sin, made children of Yours, and are now awaiting the resurrection. Lead us to repent of our sins and turn our hearts to You seeking Your forgiveness and solace in this dark hour.”***

The Gospel Reading takes us back to that last evening Jesus has with His apostles, and He tells them, ***“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”*** (*John 15:18–19, ESV*) A little while later He tells them, ***“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.”*** (*John 16:1–2, ESV*) This is the world the shooter of Uvalde lived in. That world which hates the Christian Church, that world which hates God, that world which hates the followers of Christ.

You and I live in this world, in its perilous environment, but we are not of that environment. We are not of the world. No, our Lord Jesus has chosen us out of the world. He has rescued us from its defilements (1 Peter 2:20). We are no longer friends of the world and therefore, no longer enemies of God (James 4:4). The corruption that is ours at birth is still with us, but it no longer has any power over us because we have been rescued, we are baptized children of God,

“dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:11, ESV) However, this truth does not stop the world from wanting to harm us, denigrate us, and kill us. To the contrary, it stirs them on.

Our text for today says, **“They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.” (v. 21)** The secular world hates you; it hates all that you stand for, it hates the God you love, it denies the Incarnation of Jesus, His virgin birth, His resurrection, and His ascension into heaven. It denies sin and the need for forgiveness, for if there is sin, then they are guilty, and they do not wish to be called guilty of anything. But we know all men are sinners because God has made us aware of our sinful nature. But more importantly, God has brought us to faith to believe there is a remedy for our sin: His Son’s atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. We have been gifted with faith to believe that Christ’s death has justified and reconciled us with God. Thus truth makes the world hate you.

Now we might ask, why does this matter, we are baptized, forgiven children of God, we’re safe, so let the world hate. Yes, you have been so blessed, but think of those who are of the world, who are not safe. Well yes pastor, that’s true, but again, why do I care, God’s Word is available to them through many venues. Let them hear it and be saved.

Such an attitude shirks one’s duty as a follower of Christ, as a child of God. Jesus says to you, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20, ESV)** This is an imperative of Christ. It is not an option. This we shall do. To defy this command from our Lord is not to be a Christian, but to be an imposter.

Lutherans are chided for not preaching good works, but this is a chide without merit. Usually when this topic is brought up, it is speaking of works that lead to salvation. But Scripture is clear, works will not save you. However, the command of our Lord to make disciples of all nations is not a work to save us, but a work to save others. Moreover, it is not a work per se; but rather it is your calling as a child of God. A calling to add to the kingdom of God. So, the Church goes forth proclaiming the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. But no more does one begin to fulfill Christ’s command, when Satan and the world recoil and fight against the saving message of the Gospel. As the Psalmist says, **“They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.” (v. 21)**

In trying to save souls from the fires of hell by reaching out to those like the shooter at Uvalde, the Church is condemned by the secular world and by those who call themselves church, but who have rejected the wisdom of God’s Word in favor of man’s foolishness. There is within Christianity those who preach the same message as the world, preaching, you are who you think you are. Your inner, feelings trump the Word of God. Be whoever you think you are, God will not judge you. Such preaching preaches souls into hell, and this type of preaching would have emboldened the shooter of Uvalde. Moreover, these false Christians are those who are eager to cast you out of the church thinking they are offering a service to God (John 16:2, ESV).

Indeed, the world is filled with troubled souls such as the shooter of Uvalde, but God would have them come to faith. He would have them be saved from the fires of hell. He says in Ezekiel, **“As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die?” (Ezekiel 33:11, ESV)** Again, He says, **“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of**

stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” (Ezekiel 36:25–27, ESV)

Clearly, God had no desire that the shooter of Uvalde should have lived as a corrupted child of the world. According to His own Word, He would have had him live, oh not in this world, but in heaven with all the saints. He would have had him be baptized, to be cleansed from sin, to be given a new heart, a heart of faith that believes in the Atoning Sacrifice of the Son of God upon the Altar of the Cross for the forgiveness of sins. He would have had him become a child of His.

But sadly, on Tuesday this shooter claimed twenty-one victims within the halls of Robb Elementary school. This indeed was tragic, but there was another tragedy within the walls of that school. Sin, death, and the devil claimed the shooter, he was their victim because in his life he did not hear and heed the call of the Gospel through the voices of those called by God to proclaim it. He did not know The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Was he possessed by a demon? Perhaps. Was he mentally unbalanced, maybe? Was this an unmitigated act of evil? Absolutely. However, during his life God gave him every opportunity to hear His Word, to be given the gift of faith and be saved. But the shooter relied on his corrupted, free-will and choose to follow the voices of the world who were telling him he was his own god, he was whoever and whatever he desired to be. His desire was to be known for who he was rather than knowing the One who died for the forgiveness of his sins, and this led to his death and to the tragic death of twenty-one others. Today, because *truth was corrupted*, he has found that his quest to be known by the world has resulted in his not being known by Jesus. Lord have mercy, may we be saved from such a fate. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.