
TODAY'S NEWS

Prelude



Christ for the world we sing, the world to Christ we bring, with loving zeal;
the poor, and them that mourn, thee faint and over borne, sin sick and
sorrow worn, whom Christ doth heal.

The hands of a weaver.
Jesus weaves right
and good with mercy
to create Grace.

Lighting the Candles

Lighting our Soul-Candle

In the darkness of judgment, **let the light of mercy shine.**

When we sacrifice stranger, neighbor, and enemy on altars of opinion; **convict us with a hunger and thirst for righteousness.**

Create in us a pure heart, **fill us with peace that we may be Your Light of Salvation in this dark world.**

Welcome

Jesus says, “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment.” When we experience a person breaking one of the Ten Commandments, why do we demand they keep the Law? Jesus says, go and understand “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”

Mercy welcomes. Grace unites. Love heals and makes us One in Christ.

Special Music

Christ for t he world we sing, the world to Christ we bring, with fervent prayer; the wayward and the lost, by restless passions tossed, redeemed at countless cost, from dark despair.

Prayer of Confession

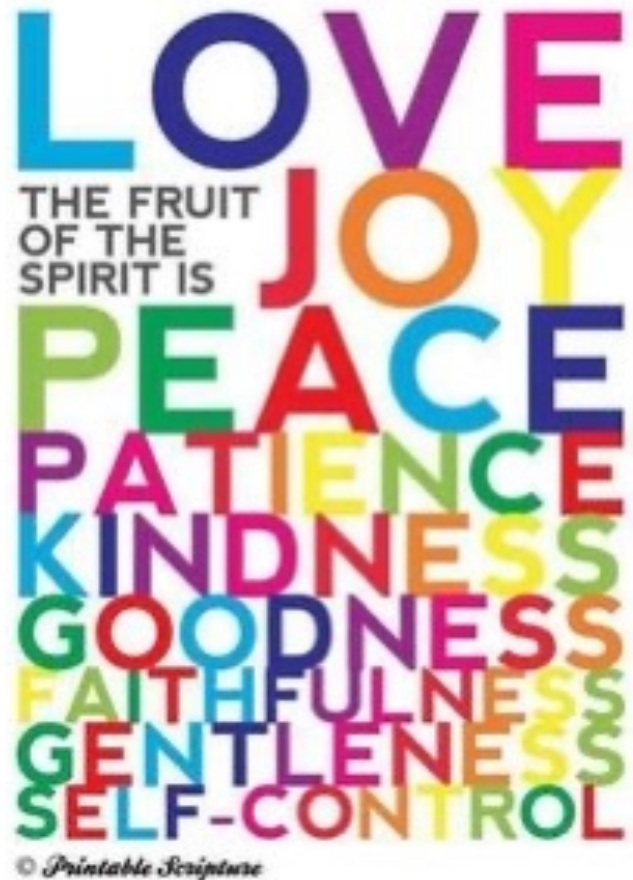
Jesus says, “Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, they will burst.”

Fasting creates mourning!
Have you ever said, “This diet is killing me?”

Robert

Father, I believe in Jesus. I am baptized in Jesus’ name. I am a born-again, new - creation. Still, I am tempted. I am tempted to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil. Like the Pharisees, Teachers of the Law and John’s Disciples I am tempted to judge my neighbor and myself. I am tempted to sacrifice self and neighbor on the altar of opinions and legalism.

Lord who desires mercy, **feed me till I want no more.** Take this heart and mind filled with the Old Wine made of judgement, condemnation



Nulla nunc lectus portitor vitae pulvinar magna. Sed et lacus quis enim mattis nonummy sodales.

and sacrifice. **Create in me a New Heart. Fill me with mercy and grace till I overflow with Love.**

Prayers of Intercession.

Prayer for our Nation, Election, Leaders and Teachers, the sick and oppressed.

The Lord's Prayer

Special Music

The Word of God Matthew 9: 14-17

14 Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

15 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

16 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. **17** Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Response to God's Word

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Message: "Are You on Our Side?"

Like the Teachers of the Law, Pharisees, and John's disciples we question why people behave, and live contrary to our beliefs. The Pharisees question why Jesus eats with sinners and Tax Collectors. The Teachers of the Law call Jesus a blasphemer. John's disciples wonder why Jesus fails to teach his disciples to fast. They all show up to challenge Jesus's Disciples with one question, "Are you on our side?" How many times in the course of a day or week do your beliefs and opinions lead you to choose sides?

Jesus gives John's disciples an answer. "How can the guest of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them." If you do not practice fasting Jesus answer simply adds to the confusion. Fasting means we deny ourselves food. Maybe we give up a meal. Sometimes people give up meat, chocolate, or potato chips for Lent. Fasting is one of many Christian Disciplines. Fasting leads to mourning. Fasting teaches us just how much control things have over our thinking, feelings, and actions.

Have you ever said, “This diet is killing me?” Have you experienced loss of willpower when dieting and attending a party? Fasting, like all Christian Disciplines, teach us how much our lives are controlled by things we need, want, and desire. Practicing the Christian Disciplines can and does teach us our need for mercy.

Remember what Jesus told the Pharisees. “Go and understand what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’” Until we learn we need mercy, and how to receive mercy; we will remain blind to our neighbor needs and deaf to their cries for mercy. In other words we will simply choose sides and sacrifice one another on the altar of right and wrong.

Jesus says, “How can the guest of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them?” Easy! The Teachers of the Law, Pharisees, and John’s Disciples have eyes but could not see Jesus is the Bridegroom. They have ears but could not hear Jesus’s call to repentance.

All of this got me to thinking. Do we know that the bridegroom is Jesus? Do we know that while he is with us we are to join the wedding party? Listen to Jesus speaking just before he ascended to be with the Father.

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28

For 26 or so years I sided with the Teachers of the Law, the Pharisees, and John’s Disciples. I have debated, argued, questioned and challenged my peers about “worship”, “baptism”, “teaching”, and “obedience.” All of this has blinded by eyes and deafened my ears to Jesus’ promise. “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Do you hear Jesus’ call to repentance? Repentance means we learn to think a new way, and feel a new way. Friends, to be born again means we are delivered from the bondage of sin. Christ’s mercy delivers us from sin to be healed by grace! While the world waits for the Second Coming, Jesus is with us.

It seems that Teachers of the Law, Pharisees, and John’s Disciples have their minds and hearts set on sacrifice. Jesus, who promises to be with us to the very end of the age says, “I desire mercy.”

Jesus calls us to repent. It means that the mind set on sacrifice is filled with adopts mercy. Mercy purifies the heart. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”... with us, in us, and through us! Amen.

Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;* the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth (sits) at the right hand of the Father Almighty. From thence (there) he shall come again to judge the quick (living) and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Tithes and Offerings

Postlude