

Adult Education – St. Luke’s Church – Sedona, AZ
Studies on the Daily Lectionary – Lent II: I Corinthians 5-9:14 (MP2)
Class No. 7 – Week of March 17, 2019

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Monday (Fast) – I Corinthians 5 (MP2). Therefore Let Us Keep the Feast

1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. **2** And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. **3** For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, **4** In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, **5** To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? **7** Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: **8** Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: **10** Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? **13** But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

v. 1: *commonly*: actually; *father's wife*: commonly interpreted as “stepmother”

v. 11: *railer*: reviler

v. 12: *without*: outsiders

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Exegesis: Having concluded a four-chapter long discourse on divisions with the Corinthian church, Paul now turns, in this week’s lessons, to practical issues such as reports of moral laxity, and questions relating to marriage and meat sacrificed to idols. Paul seems genuinely shocked that the Corinthians have tolerated, as a member of the church, a man sleeping with his stepmother – a situation that violated even pagan practices! (v. 1) His instructions are clear: Do not tolerate such overt sinfulness. (v. 9) Essentially, Paul pronounced a sentence of excommunication upon the incestuous man in verses 3-5. But, excommunication need not be permanent. A truly repentant sinner may always be reconciled and received back into fellowship. Jesus outlined this procedure in Matthew 18:15-17, a procedure that escalates from private admonishment to excommunication for the unrepentant. Both Paul and Jesus make it clear that the church has an obligation to police itself in a spirit of love, faithfulness and firmness.

Paul’s warning in verse 8 that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” is identical with his previous warning to the churches of Galatia. (Galatians 5:9) Symbolically, Paul saw leaven as indicative of insidious, creeping corruption. Left unchecked, the whole loaf (*i.e.*, church) would eventually be corrupt. Paul’s warning applies with particular force to today’s churches, which are under attack from many angles, both internally and externally.

The earlier epistle that Paul mentions in verse 9 has been lost, although some scholars believe at least part of that letter may be found in II Corinthians 6:14-7:1. Clearly, his prior instructions “not to company” with fornicators” had not followed, which partly explains the stern tone of this epistle.

Exposition: As our Bishop notes in his Questions for Reflection below, “[i]t seems the Corinthians were a sorry lot.” Indeed! Divisions along personality lines; a man openly sleeping with his stepmother; drunkards; idolaters; extortioners – to name a few of the more noteworthy parishioners! This list of sinners is even longer in 6:11 (*see tomorrow’s lesson*). No wonder Paul mentioned his “anxiety for all the churches” in his second letter to the Corinthians. (II Corinthians 11:28 (RSV)) Yet, he never succumbed to despair. He labored on tirelessly

Questions for Reflection: It seems that the Corinthians were a sorry lot. Are there portions of the body of Christ today that are doing their own thing à la verses 1-2? Do I hang around people such as are in verse 11? Why? In order to convert them, or just for friendship's sake?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

v. 4: If then you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed by the church? (RSV)

v. 9: *nor effeminate*: male prostitutes; *nor abusers of themselves with mankind*: sodomites (the RSV combines these two terms into the single term of “homosexuals”)

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Exegesis: In yesterday’s lesson, Paul noted that the Corinthians were in no position to judge outsiders (5:12), so he now questions why the Corinthians should allow outsiders to judge their internal disputes. (6:1) We don’t know the nature of those disputes. Apparently, some of the church members were even defrauding each other (v. 8). In any event, Paul clearly feels that outside courts should have no jurisdiction.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they – with the other “saints” – will have responsibility for judging “the world” and the “angels” (vv. 2-3) Thus, taking one’s brother to a civil court is both shameful (v. 5) and petty. Surely, Paul speculates, *someone* in the Corinthian church is wise enough to judge such disputes internally. Paul’s advice here may be based in part on his expectation that Christ would be returning soon. Even so, his logic is not diluted by the passage of time.

Even though Paul’s teaching here does not betray any direct connection to specific teachings of Jesus, it is entirely consistent: “But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well.” (Matthew 5:39-40) As Paul puts it: “Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” (v. 7)

As noted in yesterday’s Exegesis, today’s lesson expands on the list of sinners who comprised the Corinthian church (vv. 9-10). The good news is that Paul follows that list with the observation: “[a]nd such were some of you.” Fortunately, the sanctifying, justifying Spirit of God had cleansed many of the Corinthians of their sinful pasts.

Exposition: Any lawyer with significant litigation experience will attest that lawsuits are usually ugly, messy, expensive affairs that tend to bring out the very worst in people. Approximately ninety-five percent of all civil suits are settled before trial, which causes one to wonder just how necessary the initial filing was. Most of these cases are settled through mediation, and it is a mantra of mediators that they feel like they have not done their job well unless both sides are at least partially unhappy with the settlement. What a poor commentary on the entire process! As hard as it might be to follow, the advice Paul (and Jesus) gave to “take the wrong” (and turn the other cheek) should be considered the first response to any perceived injustice.

Questions for Reflection: Does my life reflect a calling to be part of the saints who will judge the world (v. 2)? Should it? Can it, or am I more as if Paul speaks to my shame (v. 5)? Are verses 9-10 still in effect today? Do I live life as if I believe them to be in effect?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. **13** Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. **14** And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. **16** What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. **17** But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. **19** What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? **20** For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

v. 12: *expedient*: helpful

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Exegesis: Paul's recitation of "all things are lawful unto me" twice in verse 12 may be his way of parroting back to the Corinthians their corruption of his preaching about liberty in Christ. Corinth was a particularly licentious city, and fornication was regarded as little more than scratching an itch or satisfying a hunger. Paul argues that this "freedom" can actually lead to a form of enslavement ("I will not be brought under the power of any"), and something as holy as the body is defiled by such behavior (vv. 12-13). In chapter 3, Paul established that the church is God's temple (3:16-17). Here, he extends the "temple" metaphor by reminding the Corinthians that their bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost (v. 19) Moreover, their bodies are "members of Christ" and are joined to the Lord in "one spirit" (v. 17). It is no surprise, then, that Paul urgently warns the Corinthians to "flee fornication" (v. 18). In these few verses, Paul has invoked the names of God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost in relation to the sanctity of the human body and the corresponding importance of maintaining sexual purity.

The apex of Paul's teaching on this subject is found in his Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he discusses the mystical sanctity of marriage: "Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are member of his body. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:28-32) Thus, as Paul instructed the Corinthians in yesterday's lesson: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God." (6:9-10) Paul left no wiggle room here.

Exposition: Paul's preaching on sexual morality was clearly problematic with many of the Corinthian believers. Many struggled to comply. However, as we will see in later lessons, Paul was no hypocrite. He held himself to the same high standards he imposed on his churches: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (I Corinthians 9:24-27 (RSV))

Paul clearly establishes that the body is holy. It is the temple of the Spirit (v. 19). It is "the member of Christ" (v. 15). God resurrected Christ's body, not just his spirit. Thus, the mere thought of using the body to participate in any form of sexual vice was abhorrent to Paul: "God forbid" (v. 15). This line of thinking is so contrary to today's predominant values that it is often derisively dismissed as "puritanical". Not surprisingly, St. Peter's instructions echo Paul's: "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (I Peter 1:14-16, *quoting* Leviticus 11:45)

Questions for Reflection: What lawful things in my life are not expedient (v. 12)? Am I doing a good job glorifying God in my body? What do I need to do – and stop doing – in order to be glorifying Him more in body and spirit? With what price was I bought (v. 20)?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. **2** Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. **3** Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. **4** The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. **5** Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. **6** But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. **7** For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. **8** I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. **9** But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. **10** And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: **11** But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. **12** But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. **13** And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. **14** For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. **15** But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. **16** For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? **17** But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

v. 3: *due benevolence*: her conjugal rights

v.5: *Defraud ye not one the other*: Do not refuse one another; *incontinency*: lack of self-control

v. 6: *But I speak this by permission*: I say this by way of concession

v. 8: *contain*: exercise self-control; *burn*: be aflame with passion

v. 17: *And so ordain I in all churches*: This is my rule in all churches.

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Exegesis: Up to this point, Paul has been addressing Corinthian failings that had been communicated to him by Chloe’s people (1:11). Now, though, Paul turns to specific questions the Corinthians had asked him in a previous letter. Not surprisingly, given Paul’s previous instructions on sexual morality, the Corinthians had posed many “what if” and “what about” scenarios. What about the unmarried, the married, the widows, the engaged, and couples “unequally yoked” (believers married to non-believers)? Paul’s teaching is so extensive and so fact-specific that the Lectionary actually omits the last 23 verses of the chapter. Paul starts with the premise that it is good for the unmarried and widows to remain single (vv. 1, 8). In both instances, though, Paul continues with “nevertheless” or “but.” If celibacy proves too hard, “it is better to marry than to burn”. However, Paul does not consider those who marry to be second-class Christian citizens: “But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner (celibacy), and another after that (marriage)” (v. 7). Both celibacy and marriage are a gift from God, and Paul makes it clear that his preference for celibacy reflects his opinion, not a commandment of the Lord. It is also based, in part, on the uncertainty of the times (7:26) and the general expectation that Christ would return soon. Better for everyone to stay in their current state (7:20).

One area in which Paul is unequivocal, however, is on the sanctity of existing marriages (vv. 10-11). Paul’s use of the phrase “yet not I, but the Lord” to underscore his authority on this point is one of his few references to a specific teaching of Jesus. (See, Mark 10:9 – “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”)

Exposition: For extra credit, read the remainder of chapter 7 (verses 18-40).

Question for Reflection: What is fornication (v. 2)? What am I doing this Lent, which is extraordinary, spiritually speaking? Do I believe verse 14?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. **2** And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. **3** But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. **5** For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) **6** But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. **8** But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. **10** For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; **11** And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? **12** But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. **13** Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

v. 1: *things*: food

v. 5: as there be many “gods” and many “lords”

v. 13: Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother’s falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

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Exegesis: For the Corinthian Christians, eating meat offered to idols was nearly unavoidable. Much – if not most – of the meat offered in the markets had been sacrificed to some god or other. Generally, the Greeks only sacrificed the inedible portions of a sacrificial animal, leaving the meat for human consumption. Some Corinthian Christians (correctly) felt no scruples about eating such meat. Paul makes it clear that an idol “is nothing in this world” (v. 4), so eating meat offered to “nothing” could not bring condemnation on the Christian. But, not all Christians had such “superior” knowledge or such strong faith. The consciences of the weaker believers were “defiled” by eating the meat. Paul condemns *not* the ones with weaker consciences but those Christians who flouted their liberty in front of their weaker brothers and sisters. Their bold conduct could cause their weaker counterparts to eat meat against their consciences, thus placing themselves in spiritual danger. Paul’s solution in verse 13 was clear: even though I know I can do something without sinning, I will not do that thing if by doing so I will cause a weaker believer to sin against his or her conscience. Love and self-denial trump liberty.

The reference to being seen eating meat “in the idol’s temple” (v. 10) reflects the reality that in those days, much socialization (not involving idol worship or sacrifice) was done in such temples, particularly of social or fraternal groups (think: Lions, Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus, Elks).

Exposition: While being offered meat sacrificed to idols isn’t much of an issue these days, the principles in this passage extend to a wide variety of contemporary Christian practices as they relate to entertainment (books, movies, television, music, etc.) and participation in any variety of social groups or events. Even though my conscience may not convict me when I participate in certain activities, I should consider refraining if I suspect my participation might cause “weaker” believers to do something that violates their own consciences. Of course, it might just be that I should prayerfully search my own conscience to make sure that what I am doing is truly consistent with God’s word and His will.

Questions for Reflection: Am I edified or puffed up (v. 1)? Am I more into knowledge or charity (v. 1)? What are the “called gods” in our day (v. 5)? Has any liberty of mine become a stumblingblock for a weak person (v. 9)? How so? Is my commitment to Christ strong enough that I would live out the truth of verse 13, if need be?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?
 2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, 4 Have we not power to eat and to drink? 5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? 6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? 7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?

Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

v. 4: *to lead about a sister, a wife*: to be accompanied by a wife (*Greek*: a sister as wife)

v. 6: *have not we power to forbear working?* do we have no right to refrain from working?

v. 7: *Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?* Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?

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Exegesis: Paul makes the point here that he practices what he just preached to the Corinthians: he exercises restraint for the benefit of weaker Christians, even though he is entitled to exercise the full rights – and liberty – of an apostle who has, in fact, seen Jesus. For the benefit of the Corinthians (and his other churches), he has forfeited the right to eat and drink whatever he wants; the right to marry; and the right to demand that the churches support him and his “staff.”

Exposition: When you find the answer to the Question for Reflection below, take a moment to look at the Old Testament verse just before it. How did that verse impact Paul and Jesus in a very real way? Then, look at the verses following. How did the Sadducees use those verses to try to trip up Jesus?

Although Paul borrows the “muzzled ox” metaphor to establish his right to be supported by the Corinthians, the fact remains that the Old Testament passage does, in fact, evidence God’s concern for “all creatures great and small.” See, e.g., Exodus 23:11-12; Deuteronomy 22:6-7; Proverbs 12:10; Jonah 4:11. And, Jesus famously said: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.” Luke 12:6. The height, depth and breadth of God’s love and concern for *all* of his creation escapes our comprehension.

Question for Reflection: Where, in the Old Testament, is the directive contained in verse 9? (Use an annotated Bible.)

Spiritual Resolve: _____

