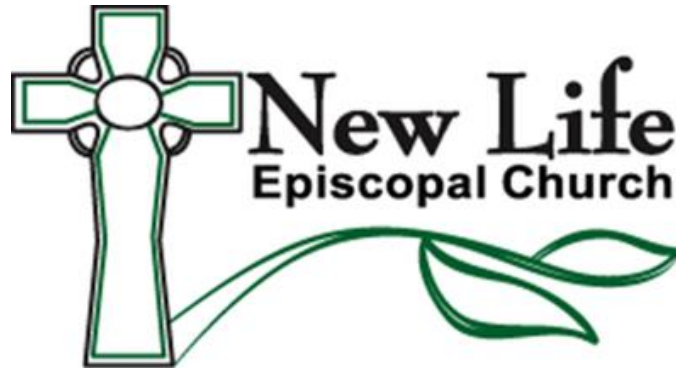


A Sermon for 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

June 9, 2024



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Click Here for today's Readings:
[Third Sunday After Pentecost - The Episcopal Church](#)

1 Samuel 8:4-20, 11:14-15; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1, Mark 3:20-35

Families

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus is having family troubles. Apparently, they think he is crazy. Well, I can relate. My family thought I was crazy when I received my call to the priesthood, and most of them haven't changed their assessment, 28 years after my ordination. It just didn't fit into their world view somehow. Jesus' family – mother, brothers, sisters – noticed an uptick in his activities that seemed a bit challenging. People were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." Not really. He was just saying things that the people, and his family, didn't want to hear. Jesus did that a lot.

I found, with my own family challenges, that I tended to adopt families of choice for support. We usually can't choose our blood relationships, but choosing a surrogate family can make a big difference in how we handle our lives and experiences. My surrogate family is the church. Jesus seems to have chosen a new family too, with his 12 disciples.

I am intrigued by his political statements. First he says, "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand..." And then he adds, "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered." I cannot help thinking of our current political situation in this country, with huge divisions between people with different points of view, and the real possibility that the electoral results will be like plundering the country. Our times are scary.

Well, the times about three thousand years ago were pretty scary, too. In the first reading, we listen in on a conversation between Samuel and God. Samuel is reluctant to accede to the wishes of the Israelites, who have asked Samuel to step down from leadership and give them a king instead, like other nations have. God assures Samuel that the people are not against Samuel; they are really against God. God tells Samuel to give the people a warning of what it is like to have a human king. And wow, Samuel does not hold back! He blasts the people with dire warnings of

consequences; truly, he tells them, you will not be happy with a king, who essentially will plunder your lives. But the people want a king and willingly allow for the coming disasters. In the end, Samuel gives them a king: King Saul, first king of the Israelites. Alas, the people should have listened to the warnings. The next twelve chapters detail the disasters and disappointments of Saul's reign, but in our sequential readings, we will skip all that, and next week Samuel anoints David as the next king.

In the choices we make in our own lives, we would do well to listen to wise people. Everyone has an opinion, and in the end, we make our own choices, and our families might think we are crazy, but if we stay in touch with God, our chances of making good choices are much better.

In the annals of history, there are plenty of examples of people making bad choices, and their lives were plundered. The example of Germany in the Second World War has been much on our minds lately, as we observed the 80th anniversary of D-Day this past Thursday, commemorating the Allied Forces (that's the British, the Canadians and the Americans) –the Allied Forces invasion at Normandy, to roust out the Germany military machine that had taken over Europe. The German people, for lots of understandable reasons, had accepted Adolph Hitler as their chief commander, and wow, did he plunder Germany and most of Europe. Historians can give us lots of reasons why the Germans were so vulnerable to bad judgment, but in the end, the whole world paid the price.

Well, we survived that horror, and through the generosity of the West, and the Marshall Plan, Germany and the western European countries were all rebuilt within about ten years, although it took the eastern countries much longer, having less support. But I take hope from St. Paul, who seems always to be an optimist, no matter how bad things become. Paul says, "We do not lose heart...our inner nature is being renewed day by day! This slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure." Yes, we will all ultimately bask in God's glory on the other side of the grave, but what about this side? We cannot help but worry. Perhaps we can say, "We have survived worse things than these challenges, and with God's help, we will do it again."

We do live by hope. We too are eternal optimists. Our hope is rooted in our faith, informed by our experience, that God loves all of us, no exceptions, and God doesn't take sides. If we can look to the future and define our own actions by love and godliness, surely better days will come.

We also have an assignment: reconciliation. We have one slogan that we embrace: *God loves you, no exceptions*. But we have another one: *Love God, love your neighbor, change the world*. We too are asked to love others with no exceptions. So I guess that includes my family! I want to be about the work of reconciliation. We are all getting older, and there may not be much time to offer love to one another. Remember that blessing I offer sometimes? "Life is short, and we do not have too much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel with us, so be quick to love and make haste to be kind."

"And may the blessing of the One who made us, the One who loves us, and the One who travels with us, be with you and those you love, this day and always." AMEN.