

To Do Good

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – June 14, 2020

2nd Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: Micah 6:1-8; Luke 6:1-11

Reflection: Psalm 34

Music: A Mighty Fortress is Our God; What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Greeting: May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you on this day! I pray that as we join together in worship, in whatever way we join together, that we be united by one Spirit, serving the Father, in the truth of the Son. Let us come together to do good. Praise the Lord!

Music: A Mighty Fortress is Our God

1. A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing:
For still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

2. Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name,
from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

3. And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

4. That word above all earthly powers,
no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever!

Prayer: O Lord our God, you are always more ready to bestow your good gifts on us than we are to seek them, and are willing to give more than we desire or deserve. Help us so to seek that we may truly find, so to ask that we may joyfully receive, so to knock that the door of your mercy may be opened to us; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 34

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed. This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. O fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all. He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken. Evil brings death to the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. (Psalm 34 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 34 and hear praise for the Lord. Praise for God's goodness, praise for his generosity, and praise for his mercy. David was in a time of trouble and found comfort in taking refuge in God. How do you take refuge in God? Where do you see the goodness of the Lord in your life?

Prayer: God, our Mother and Father, we come to you as children. Be with us as we learn to see one another with new eyes, hear one another with new hearts, and treat one another in a new way. Help us to find refuge in your goodness all our day. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading for today comes from the prophet Micah, chapter 6, verses 1 through 8.

Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord."

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?. (Micah 6:1-8 NRSV)*

Our second reading for today comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 6, verses 1-11.

One sabbath while Jesus was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?" Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

On another sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" After looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. (Luke 6:1-11 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

So I chose the readings for today as I was thinking about what it means to do good and when it is we should do good. And so, I first started thinking about the Gospel account. In it, we have two different acts on the sabbath day. In the first account, Jesus and some disciples are going through a grain field and they begin to pluck some of the heads to eat. Now, at first glance someone might think the objection is that they were stealing. However, that is not the case, as there are rules about eating grain from a field if hungry. The objection is not what, but

when. You aren't supposed to work on the sabbath day, and harvesting is work, no matter how small. If you work on the sabbath, you aren't honoring the sabbath. The reply brings up an account of David. That when David was on the run with his men and was hungry, he took the bread that was only meant to be eaten by the priests. It was unlawful for anyone else to eat it. But David was hungry and needed food. Our second account has Jesus teaching in the synagogue when he spots a man with a withered hand. Everyone is watching and Jesus knows what they are thinking. He has the man come up. He asks a very interesting and important question. "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" He looks around, and I can't help but assume that nobody answers. We aren't given any indication that there is a response. It seems nobody wants to answer because the answer would seem to be a difficult one. So, after the silent response Jesus heals the man. Which would again be considered working on the sabbath. Where you are supposed to rest.

Now, I've seen all sorts of contraptions that have been made by people who take very seriously the sabbath command. The devices help to make actions that aren't considered work do work for them. It is interesting how far people will go to preserve the letter of the law. But Jesus brings up an interesting point. If we can do good on the sabbath, why shouldn't we? Are we supposed to rest even from doing good? And Jesus gives his answer by action. If you are hungry and need to eat, feed yourself. If you find someone who is hurting, help them. Even on the sabbath. Even if it upends all the traditional stances others take. If you can do good, do it.

This all reminded me of Micah. In Micah, we hear God's challenge to Israel and his reminder that he was the God that led them out of Egypt and saved the people. Basically asking the question "shouldn't you know I'm your God?" So what does God want? Does God want burnt offerings? Rivers of oil? The firstborn? Micah's response is this: "what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" This is what God has said is good. How often do we restrict ourselves to take the opportunity to do good? How often do we take a timeout from things that ends up including everything? I'm not saying rest isn't important, and I'm not saying that stepping back for a bit is a problem. But in Luke today, Jesus and the disciples don't seem to be doing anything but walking. But when they got hungry, they fed themselves. Instead of saying "I see you and your friends are hungry, can I feed you?" they are instead approached with questions of the law. When Jesus goes to heal someone on the sabbath, he's looked at with disdain because of questions of the law. His timing is questioned instead of him getting praise. Why couldn't it wait? That is what drew me back to Micah. The idea that the sabbath had to be honored at the cost of helping others goes against what God says is good. To me, it would be like thinking that God resting on the seventh day meant God stopped caring on the seventh day. But that isn't the case. I don't think we could ever say God didn't care about his creation. I think we need to be careful about how we decide when good can be done. We so often base it on expectations that may have been formed in ideas that don't match their original form. This is true of the sabbath rules.

Jesus makes a point of healing on the sabbath because if you can't do good on the sabbath, what is the point of the sabbath at all? It's a good point to make. We have to take time

to reflect on why we have the rules we have. If we get too caught up in legalism, we get caught in the Pharisees trap. Instead of thinking “how can I help” we start wondering “should I help?” When we ask ourselves that, we are already stumbling over the same issues the Pharisees and legal experts got tripped up on. Because it requires us to imagine there is a time to not care. If Jesus shows us anything, it is that it is always the right time to care. Despite breaking with tradition, he does good when good needs to be done. He cares when people need cared for.

This becomes important to us now, because we can easily take things from the Bible and twist them into a shape and form that doesn't match the message of the Bible. This isn't helped by the fact that the Bible isn't a novel. It is not a cohesive narrative from start to finish. It is not a book put forward in chronological order with a flow from one author. It is a collection of books. It is a collection of accounts. And sometimes those accounts are collections of accounts themselves. When we think about Luke's Gospel that we read today we find a collection. Luke opens by stating that this is an orderly account put together from research. Sometimes we lose sight of the overarching themes and teachings of the Bible by focusing too hard on individual lines. We lose sight of the forest for the trees. We fall into the failing of the Pharisees, because we get caught up on something that we hang too hard on the words without considering the meaning. The Pharisees didn't like their tradition being upended and couldn't fathom that they had lost sight of the actual purpose by clinging to it.

As I was thinking about this problem, I realized we can often create traps for ourselves because we can end up focusing more on the question and the words and we forget the people. Jesus doesn't stop to lay out a large scriptural argument against the Pharisees. He doesn't cite chapter and verse to explain what he is doing. Because in the end, it isn't a single line he's upholding. His point is that if someone is hungry, they need to be fed. Just as David took bread that wasn't meant for him, sometimes we have to do what needs to be done in spite of the letter of the law. If someone is hurting on the sabbath, you help them because they need help. Doesn't that work still honor God, even if done on the sabbath? He doesn't get caught in the trap because he simply accepts that God wants us to help and care for each other, and in that he gives the overarching theme of scripture. To that extent, we must be like Christ and look at each situation in its own context. Should we ignore someone because of some traditional rule we hold? Would God want people to suffer and go hungry? Would God tell us to wait to seek justice, to love kindness, or even to walk in God's ways? I think Jesus gives us a clear answer. Know your situation, and if you can do good, do good. Because helping others is a clear directive, no matter what day it is. Will we sometimes run afoul of certain traditions and conventions at times? Yes, it happened to Jesus. But what if there is never a “convenient time” to help? What time is better than the time you can help someone? Jesus reminds us that we need to evaluate our situation and understand it, and evaluate scripture and understand it, and understand that if we seem to find doing the right thing seems to go afoul of scripture, maybe we need to read and understand better. Maybe we are taking the words out of context. Maybe we are taking rules for a particular situation and making them universal. Maybe we are focusing too much on the words and not enough on the meaning. If our faith journey brings us to a point where we ask, “is it right to do good?” we must take that question seriously with God in mind.

We often make the mistake of making everything an absolute, that one rule applies to everything at all times and that's that. But just as Jesus shows in today's accounts, not everything can be looked at evenly that will bring about a good result. The same action in two situations could bring about very different results. Which means we need to remember the spirit of law and not just focus on the letter of the law. Jesus addressed this when he asks if man was made for the sabbath day, or the sabbath day made for man. If we are created to obey the sabbath, then the letter is more important than humankind. But if the sabbath day was meant to benefit mankind, then we are the most important part of the equation. If humankind is the important part, then we need to honor the person, and if it honors the person it honors their needs. If it is to be held, or healed, or fed, or clothed, or set free, that we must do good to the person if we are to honor God. We need to be able allow ourselves to help, because if not, we ignore the spirit of the law to cling to the letter, which is the opposite of what Jesus says. Sometimes we have to ask hard questions. Sometimes we have to take another look at things we think we know. Because the world will always change. The world will always present new situations which cause us to question how to do what needs to be done. We may be presented with situations that cause us to ask if we are doing something because it is part of our discipleship and our ministry or if it is because that is what we were taught and we never asked why. Are we doing what we need to do to spread Christ's teachings? Or are we just adhering to rules that we just always blindly followed? These will be difficult questions. But we start by trying to do good. If we run into problems, ask what matters the most in that situation. It may be difficult at times and can get us into arguments and discussions that may challenge our views. But when we have those discussions, we might learn something we didn't see before. That if we use reason, experience, and tradition to understand scripture, we gain a better understanding of what God's intent for us is. Just as Micah notes that sacrifices don't matter if we aren't doing good, sometimes we must ask ourselves what it is God truly wants for his people. If we look around and cannot say that our actions would please God, then maybe we need to be like Micah and note that doing justice, being kind, and walking humbly with God are a good place to start. That we be like Christ and note that if we are given a choice between helping and not helping, that helping others should always be the priority. Will we make errors? Surely. But if we make those errors, let us err on the side of hope, mercy, and grace. Because I know that God is present in abundant mercy. I would rather make the mistake of being too kind to others than not kind enough. I'd rather err in being too on fire for justice for the least and the last than to be too timid to ever speak up for anyone. Because those are things I see in Christ. Someone with a passion for making people realize they can be and do better. Even when it goes against the status quo, even when it disrupts tradition, that doing the right thing to help people was the priority. Doing good to love others is still key. I will continue myself to try to err on the side of grace so that I may always find every occasion an occasion to do good. Be it expected or unexpected. I pray we may remember each other in all that we are and all that we do so that we may honor God in all that we are and all that we do, so that we are reminded of Christ and remind others of Christ in all the we are and do. That we strive to do all that Christ taught us to do, whenever and wherever we are. May we always be a people that is blessed with the ability to do good. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: Lord, forgive us we pray. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we say and do. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we do not say and what we do not do. It is in our doings and our failings that we seek your grace and your mercy. We haven't loved you how we should. We haven't loved each other how we should. We are a people who are sorry, who humbly seek your forgiveness. Help us to live with one another in your mercy and your grace. Let us always remember the sacrifice made by our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, that we may understand your deep love for us. May we honor that love by sharing it with one another, loving as you love and caring as you care. Help us to be of one body redeemed by one blood, serving one God. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed in the weekly update. If you are interested in online giving, please contact me. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Music: What a Friend We Have in Jesus

1. What a Friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

2. Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful

who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

3. Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge,
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you;
you will find a solace there.

Dismissal with Blessing: We go forth now that we may be ministers of the good news wherever we go. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
John & Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Bill Calvert	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers
Dave Yaw	Aaron Carrell	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Joyce Sly	Nancy Hoke	John Millsap	Larry Sidwell
Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ty Bradley	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Pat Nebel	Don Stewart	Earlene Shupe	Brenda Hurt
Sharon Button	Anne Winkler Heinrichs	Family of Jerry Jackson	Family of Tom Jester
Corine Howard's daughter	Marcia		

Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne & Charlotte Carrell
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Family of Novella Claiborn			

Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lyle Whitley	Tammy Fischer and Children	

Offerings may be mailed to your local treasurer or addressed to:

Rev Camron D St.Michael

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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6/14/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron

Greetings! Time for a weekly update!

As long as things keep moving in a positive direction for our region, we should be entering Phase 4 of the IGRC plan at the end of the month. With that, as long as that condition is met, we will begin in person worship on July 5th for all three churches. We will need to practice social distancing. People will need to be seated six feet apart and *everyone* in attendance must wear a mask at all times. There will not be congregational singing yet. We also cannot pass anything between people. No shaking hands, passing the plate, hugs, etc. This will look a little different, but I am confident we can do it. There is also a special note that for those who are older, have a respiratory illness or injury, or have a compromised immune system, you are strongly encouraged to check with a health professional on if you should be out. I will continue to provide printed materials for anyone who wants them and am at least planning on having the sermon audio continue to be posted. If you would like me to continue the video services past the end of the month, please let me know. I will be continuing that aspect based on feedback. If you have any questions at all, please contact me! I'll do what I can to help.

Annual Conference is an online only event on Saturday August 15th. Please contact me for more information. General Conference is going to be next year, and I will have more information about that later.

There are copies of the Upper Room available in Greenup in the box and at Cottonwood. You can also find the current issue online. The new Sunday school quarterly is also in the box for whoever is interested.

I am still looking for pictures and music to share in services. I'm happy to share prayer requests, video, or anything you would like to share. If you would like to use the church to record music for service, please contact me so that I can give the best guidance I can for both social distancing and recording format. I have enjoyed some of the recent music we have had for the Greenup Facebook page!

I will be continuing to have our worship services online and in print! It is on YouTube and a link can be found on my website as listed below. I am also posting the information on the church Facebook pages. If there is anything you would like to contribute, let me know! There will also be printed materials available at the churches to pick up. Please feel free to contact me for more information. If anyone is interested in doing music for any upcoming service, please let me know. There are many options for doing this. I can also share readings or any other video that you'd like to make part of the service. Participation is welcome! If anyone you know is not getting a copy and would like one mailed, please let me know. I am trying to get them mailed out weekly.

Also, in this time we are still working to keep the bills paid, our missions supported, our apportionments met, and our outreach working. As such, we do need your continued financial

support as part of the church. Offerings may be sent to your local treasurer or to the PO Box listed below. I can also arrange to pick them up if I am delivering anything to you. I am personally grateful for all your continued support in this difficult time. I cannot stress enough that the church is still active and we are still together.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus. If you do go out, please follow all distancing guidelines, and if you can, cover your face. Please let others know, and together we will all see this through safely. This is a very real and very serious pandemic. Please do not share false information about it. It only works to undermine the people doing the dangerous work of trying to keep us all safe. If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them or direct you to a source that can.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael

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