

Sermon followed by Service - Feb 23, 2025 - Luke 6:37-49

They call it “the fog of war.” You’re in a fight, a battle, a skirmish. It’s night, so dark. You hear sounds. You’re not sure where, you’re not sure who, but your life is on the line, so you shoot. Then, in the dark, you see flashes, flashes that tell you someone else is shooting. You’re not sure who’s behind those flashes, but they feel like the enemy, so you shoot. It doesn’t have to be dark. It could be the middle of the day - explosions, smoke, screams, people running everywhere. With the noise, the pounding, you don’t know who is who or what’s happening. Oh, you might think that you know, that you see clearly. But the wrong people get shot, friends get hurt, the enemy gets away, and truth becomes a casualty.

We all know something of the fog of war. We know it from our first days. We didn’t feel right. We didn’t know why. Maybe we were tired, maybe we just had gas. Something was wrong, nobody knew what, we didn’t know why. But that didn’t stop us - something was wrong. We screwed our eyes shut, balled up our fists, and kicking and screaming we went after anybody and everybody. Sometimes we still do the same. We’re hurt. We’re angry. We don’t know why, but that doesn’t stop us. It has to be something he did, she did. We get defensive; we get offensive. And what happens? The wrong people get shot at, friends get hurt, the enemy gets away, and truth becomes a casualty.

We're in a war, a war between good and evil, the war between God and evil. At the same time, we're in battle, in skirmishes, in conflict with people around us. In the fog of war we don't always see things clearly. When we feel attacked, we see people defensively - we blame and excuse. When we're not getting our way, we see people offensively - we judge and lash out. We get confused. Sometimes we don't know who the sides are, who's for us and who's against us. Sometimes we don't know what side we're on. In the battle between God and evil, we hear one thing at church, we hear the opposite all around us, and at other churches - who knows? So we might wonder: "Who's right and who's wrong?" And what happens in this fog of war? We get more confused. We take sides against people who should be our friends. We might even be on the wrong side and not even know it. And what happens? The wrong people get shot at, friends get hurt, the enemy gets away, and God's love and God's truth become casualties.

Jesus knows a thing or two about the fog of war. Jesus came into our world as Prince of Peace and he was judged to be enemy. He came as the Son of God and was judged to be in league with the devil. He came bringing life and love from God and he was judged worthy of hate and death. Jesus came to be our Champion in the fight against evil and we made him our victim. Yes, Jesus knows a thing or two about the fog of war. He knows how confused we can make ourselves about right and wrong. He knows how confused we can be in our conflicts. He knows how we take shots at the people round us. He knows how we take shots at him. And he knows what we deserve for what we have done to God's love and God's truth.

But instead of judging us, condemning us, damning us - which is what we deserve - Jesus came into our battle and he took up the fight for us. He didn't get confused about right and wrong, but he picked up his Bible and he put sin and Satan in their place. He didn't get confused or blinded by his hurt, but he prayed: **"Father, not my will, but thy will be done."** He prayed: **"Father, forgive them."** He prayed: **"Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit."** In all the fog and confusion of the war, Jesus didn't lose sight of what he came to do. Jesus stood in for us against sin and Satan. He stood in for us under the wrath and punishment of God. He stood in for us under the curse of death. And in all that, in all the hurt and anger and confusion, Jesus stood true with God; he stood true for you.

What does that get to mean for you today? For those times in the fog of war you were on the wrong side, those times you turned on the people God gave you to love, even for those times you turned against God for all those times, your debt to God is paid; God's charges against you are dropped. Jesus paid and now God forgives you. Instead of battling with God, instead of expecting God to strike back, we get to go home in peace with Jesus!

But what do we know? When we leave today, we aren't headed into a world of peace. When we leave today, we won't find everything right. We still live on a battlefield, the battlefield between God and evil. We're still surrounded by conflict and the fog of war. So what do we do? We listen to Jesus - remember, he knows a thing or two about conflict and the fog of war.

What does Jesus say? In God's fight against evil, in your conflicts, if you fight blind, you're in a world of trouble. You're going to fall and you'll lead others into the pit with you. Jesus doesn't stop there. In your fight against evil, in your conflicts, if you think you know better than the Teacher, if you think you know better than Jesus, then you're listening to the wrong teacher.

In our fight against evil, in our conflicts, who is the first enemy we need to face? It is "I - Me, Myself, and I." Let's hear it from Jesus: **"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."** In my hurt, in my pride, in my fear, in my fight, I'd like to think the problem starts with him, with her, with anyone but me. I might think that the only safe thing, the right and reasonable thing is to start against them and what they're doing. But there's a problem with that thinking: "I can't see clearly until I start with me." I need to start with my sin, my fears, my weakness, my guilt and wounded pride before I think I can go after someone else's faults.

And how do I deal with "Me, Myself, and I"? The answer isn't: "Follow the blind." And don't think you know better than the Teacher. If you think you know better than the Teacher, if you think you know better than Jesus, you'll come crashing down

and fall into the pit of the godless. Here's how to clear the fog of war - listen to Jesus. In the battle, in the fog, listen to his promise for your hurts and fears: "I'm with you; I've got you safe." Listen to his promise for your guilt and insecurities: "I've got you covered; you're right by me." Listen to Jesus' promise for you: "I love you; I forgive you; I'm holding you safe and right for heaven."

And don't stop there. Listen to Jesus' heart for the people around you. In the fog of your battles, listen to the heart of Jesus: "Do not judge. Don't think it your place to get all high and mighty over people. Do not judge. Don't think the worst of people, what they say, the look on their face. Do not judge. Don't assume and condemn." Instead, listen to the heart of Jesus: "Forgive and give your heart. Forgive and give the benefit of the doubt. Forgive and give another chance. Forgive and give the heart of God."

In the fog of war and conflict, there can be so much we don't know - who is who? ... who's side are they on? ... why did they say this? ... why did they do that? In the fog of war and conflict, there is so much we don't know. But you do know this - you know Jesus and you know his heart for you - "Peace!"
Amen.

February 22 & 23, 2025

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we hear a din of accusing and excusing. Whatever “they” do is attacked with accusing. Whatever we do (even if it’s the same thing) is covered over and praised with excusing. To some people, it might seem that the only ones who aren’t hypocrites are those who boldly and openly claim their evil as evil.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... Jesus shows a different way to live - confessing and repenting, forgiving and being forgiven. Which way seems like the better way to a lasting peace, to a life lived right?

OPENING HYMN

“Blessed Jesus, at Your Word”

Hymn 919

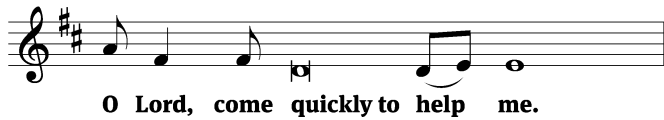
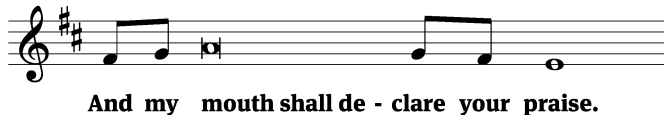
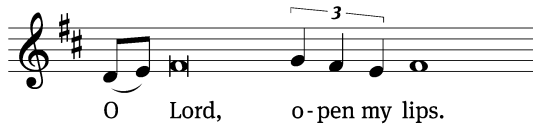
Blessèd Jesus, at your Word we are gathered all to hear you.
Let our hearts and souls be stirred now to seek and love and fear you,
by your teachings, sweet and holy, drawn from earth to love you solely.

All our knowledge, sense, and sight lie in deepest darkness shrouded
till your Spirit breaks our night with the beams of truth unclouded.
You alone to God can win us; you must work all good within us.

Gracious Savior, good and kind, Light from Light, from God proceeding,
open now our heart and mind; help us by your Spirit’s pleading.
Hear the cry your Church now raises;
hear and bless our prayers and praises.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, praise to you and adoration!
Grant that we your Word may trust, confident of our salvation,
while we here below must wander, till we sing your praises yonder.

OPENING SENTENCES



CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

- M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.
- C: Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**
- M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will. **Amen.**



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



Come, O come, let us wor - ship.

COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.



1 You are a great and a won - drous God,

2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,



cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.

kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.



You made the hills and the moun - tains high,

You are the God whom we call our own,

refrain



you made the seas and the dry land.

we are the flock that you shep - herd.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, your Word is a lamp for our feet and a light on our path. Cause the light of your Word to shine brightly in our hearts by faith that we may know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly day by day; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

James 1:13–25

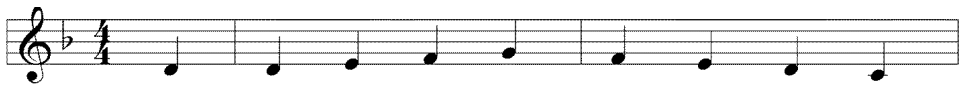
When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**



1 In hope - less - ness and near de - spair, I
 2 I see my heart's con - di - tion now, My
 3 I trem - ble as I feel your hand, Ex -
 4 For - giv - en, free of guilt and shame, Grant



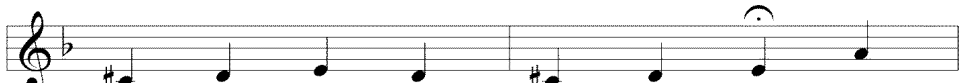
cry to you, my Sav - ior! My guilt is more than
 heart's di - verse af - fec - tions. Why do I love the
 pec - ting re - tri - bu - tion, Yet hear no curse or
 me some time to ren - der A gift to glo - ri -



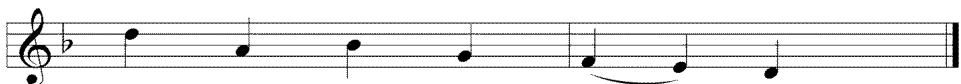
I can bear. I have not earned your fav - or. You
 things you loathe; I'm torn in two di - rec - tions: Now
 re - pri - mand, But grace and ab - so - lu - tion: With
 fy your name, Love to re - flect your splen - dor: This



know me as I real - ly am: How
 prod - i - gal, now Phar - i - see. O
 you there is for - give - ness, Lord, You
 world must know what I have learned, That



much is truth, how much is sham; Why
 God, be mer - ci - ful to me; Who
 speak the sweet, con - sol - ing Word, And
 you be - stow what none has earned: The



should you heed my plead - ing?
 else but you can help me?
 I am sure you love me!
 joy of full for - give - ness!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Happy are they who hear the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Luke 6:39–49

He also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

APOSTLES' CREED

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

I believe 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. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

HYMN

"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less"

Hymn 563

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare to make no other claim, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Refrain

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace;
in ev'ry high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil.

Refrain

His oath, his covenant and blood support me in the raging flood;
when ev'ry earthly prop gives way, he then is all my hope and stay.

Refrain

When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in him be found,
clothed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before his throne.

Refrain

SERMON

Luke 6:39-49

HYMN

"I Know My Faith Is Founded"

Hymn 797

I know my faith is founded on Jesus Christ, my God and Lord;
and this my faith confessing, unmoved I stand upon his Word.
Our reason cannot fathom the truth of God profound;
who trusts in worldly wisdom relies on shifting ground.
God's Word is all-sufficient, it makes divinely sure,
and, trusting in its wisdom, my faith shall rest secure.

Increase my faith, dear Savior, for Satan seeks by night and day
to rob me of this treasure and take my hope of bliss away.
But, Lord, with you beside me I shall be undismayed;
and led by your good Spirit, I shall be unafraid.
Abide with me, O Savior, a firmer faith bestow;
then I shall bid defiance to ev'ry evil foe.

In faith, Lord, let me serve you; though persecution, grief, and pain
should seek to overwhelm me, let me a steadfast trust retain.
And then at my departure, at home with you I'll be,
and there will I inherit all you have promised me.
In life and death, Lord, keep me until your heav'n I gain,
where I by your great mercy the end of faith attain.

OFFERING

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CHOIR

"In The Garden"

*I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear falling on my ear The Son of God discloses.*

Refrain

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known.*

*He speaks, and the sound of His voice Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
And the melody that He gave to me Within my heart is ringing. Refrain*

*I'd stay in the garden with Him, Though the night around me be falling,
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe His voice to me is calling. Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

With all our hearts and with all our minds, let us pray to the Lord, saying,
“Lord, have mercy.”

For the peace from above, for the loving-kindness of God, and for the
salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the world, for the welfare of the holy Church of God, and
for the unity of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the good earth that God has given us and for the wisdom and will to
conserve it, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who travel on land, on water, or in the air (or through outer
space), let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphans, and for the sick and
the suffering, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

[For... *here name the person and the cause of the petition*, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.]

For the poor and the oppressed, for the unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For deliverance from all danger, violence, oppression, and degradation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

That we may end our lives in faith and hope, without suffering and without reproach, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Defend us, deliver us, and in your compassion protect us, O Lord, by your grace.

Lord, have mercy.

In the communion of the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and all the saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and all our lives to Christ our God.

Amen.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.



The Lord grant you peace for all your days.



A - men.

CLOSING HYMN

"Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways"

Hymn 705

Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways to keep his statutes still!

Oh, that my God would grant me grace to know and do his will!

Order my footsteps by your Word, and make my heart sincere;

let sin have no dominion, Lord, but keep my conscience clear.

Assist my soul, too apt to stray, a stricter watch to keep,
and should I e'er forget your way, restore your wand'ring sheep.

Make me to walk in your commands— 'tis a delightful road—
nor let my head or heart or hands offend against my God.

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