

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY

1st September Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 520 329 326 458

INTROIT: Psalm 119:129-136

Your Testimonies are wonderful. Therefore, my soul has observed them.
The revelation of Your Words gives light. It gives understanding to simple people.

I have opened my mouth wide and have been panting, because I have been longing for Your Commandments.

Turn toward me and be gracious to me, as Your custom is toward those who love Your Name!

Make my steps steady by Your Promise, and let no misdeed gain power over me!

Redeem me from human oppression, that I may keep Your Directions!

Make Your face shine on Your servant and teach me Your Prescriptions!

Streams of tears have been running down from my eyes, because people have not been keeping Your Instruction.

COLLECT:

O God, the source of all that is just and good, nourish in us every virtue and bring to completion every good intent, that we may grow in grace and bring forth the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Email him at pziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com. Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.

READINGS:

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9 An appeal to keep the commands of the LORD.

Ephesians 6:10-20 Put on the Armour of God.

Mark 7:14-23 What makes a person unclean?

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

¹ “Now, Israel, listen to the Statutes and Decisions that I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, enter and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving to you! ² You shall **not add anything** to the Word that I am commanding you and you shall **not take anything away from it**, that you may keep the Commandments of the LORD, your God, which I am commanding you! ...

⁶ “Therefore, you shall keep them and observe them! For this is your wisdom and your understanding that the other peoples should see. For, when they hear all these Statutes, they will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people!’ ⁷ For what other great nation has gods who are as near to it as the LORD, our God, has been in everything for which we have called on Him? ⁸ Or what other great nation is there that has Statutes and Decisions as righteous as all this teaching, which I am setting before you today? ⁹ Only be on your guard and watch yourself carefully, that you may not forget the things that you have seen with your own eyes and that you may not fail to keep them in mind all your life! You shall teach them to your children and to your grandchildren!

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power! ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the tricky schemes of the Devil, ¹² because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against those who control this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms! ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day and, after you have done everything, to stand! ¹⁴ Stand therefore, **having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness** ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the readiness that comes from **the Good News of peace!** ¹⁶ Besides all these, take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the Evil One! ¹⁷ Take **the helmet of salvation** and the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! ¹⁸ Pray on every occasion with all kinds of prayers and requests in the Spirit! For this purpose, be alert with all perseverance as you pray for all God’s holy people! ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that when I open my mouth what to say may be given to me, that I may boldly make known the mystery of the Good News! ²⁰ Because of it I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak it!

Mark 7:14-23

¹⁴ When He had called the multitude to Himself again, He told them, “Listen to Me, all of you and understand this! ¹⁵ There is nothing that enters a person from outside that can defile him. Rather, the things that come out of a person are the things that defile a person.”

¹⁷ When He had left the crowd and gone home, His disciples asked Him about this parable.

¹⁸ He asked them, “Are you also so lacking in understanding? Do you not know that nothing that comes into a person from the outside can defile him, ¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart but into his stomach and goes out into the toilet?” — In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.” — ²⁰ He went on to say: “What comes out of a person is the thing that defiles him. ²¹ For from inside, out of people’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual sins, thefts, murders, ²² adulteries, sinful desires, greed, wickedness, cheating, shameless lust, a jealous eye, slander, pride and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and ‘defile’ a person.”

OUR SIN-FILLED HEARTS

Sermon for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost 2024

Mark 7:14-23

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before, Mark 7:14-23:

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends,

An old Lutheran theologian once said, “*Even if you were to quit all of your habitual cursing, swearing, drunkenness, lust, greed, and gossip, that would not make you a Christian. You might go to hell for all that. God is more concerned about the attitude and status of your heart!*”¹

¹ Walther’s *Law and Gospel*. Thesis VI

That statement was made in a lecture to young men training for the ministry. That old theologian's point was that these future pastors *should not go into their future pulpits to simply rant about horrible sins that may be running wild in the congregation*. No, he was trying to show them that *continual ranting would be useless*. In other words, the people will certainly quit the sinful practices that are rebuked from the pulpit, but then, in two weeks' time, the parishioners would return to their old ways. The reason why? This kind of preaching is aimed at the *surface level* and does not aim at the heart! This kind of ranting is like cutting down the top of a bad weed, which, as you know, the weed will just grow back. Clean the outside of a cup without cleaning the inside; the water will never be poured out clean. Put a Band-Aid over a portion of skin cancer; it becomes concealed, not destroyed. Wash, polish, and wax the outside of a coffin; it does not change the fact that it is full of dead man's bones.

The point is that ranting against these visible sins without getting to their sources does not accomplish much. Evil and visible intentions come forth from within, *from the human heart*.

Now, it is true that God created humanity as good; however, sin is like a nasty virus that corrupts mankind. It goes deep. As a virus is a small infectious particle that invades living cells and wreaks havoc on the whole human body, sin likewise is throughout all of mankind as well. This means that you and I are not slightly infected with the virus of sin, but rather, this corruption is so deep that there is nothing complete or uncorrupted in the human body or soul. Everything is infected: our thoughts, our emotions, our external actions, and our doings. *All are infected*.

Furthermore, the damage of this virus of sin is so bad that we typically do not even recognise it within our body and soul, but we sure do recognise it in outward actions, especially the sinful actions of our neighbours! We can see this virus of sin at work, not in fevers or cold shakes or runny noses, but rather we see this virus of sin at work in the visible actions of “**sexual sins, thefts, murders,²² adulteries, sinful desires, greed, wickedness, cheating, shameless lust, a jealous eye, slander, pride and folly**” and so on.

The religious leaders during Jesus' day were certainly serious and attentive to these visible sins. It can be said, though, that these religious leaders did not recognise or see sin as an infectious internal virus, but rather, they saw sin like a *germ*, and as you know, germs can be found everywhere! They are found throughout the house, in kitchens, toilets, handrails, doorknobs, mobile phones, pencils, and keyboards. These nasty germs are lying upon unclean things,

just waiting to pounce on you to make you sick. To the point, the religious leaders saw sin not as an internal virus within mankind but as germs that were out there *on dirty things*. Thus, in order to protect themselves from these germs of sin, spiritual masks and spiritual gloves were needed. So they had concocted some 613 rules to protect themselves from germs and to keep themselves away from sin. All these man-made rules said, “*Do not do this, but do that.*” “*Keep away from this and keep away from that.*”

Please know that this was not and is not all bad. You and I should avoid any sin-germs. The Apostle Paul says, “*Test everything! Cling to what is good!*” ²² *Keep away from every form of evil!*” (1 Thess. 5:21-22). Exposing oneself to sin-germs is not good. No rational mind knowingly eats filthy germ-infested dirt. But as we heard from our opening illustration, even if you or I could keep all the germs away, that would not make us a Christian, for we have not dealt with the real issue. That is to say, we have not dealt with the virus of sin within... the virus of sin that is at the root of all problems. You may sanitise yourself of these sin-germs, and you may purify your surroundings of these sin germs as well, but you have not dealt with the sin virus that lay within.

Jesus is right, and we must listen to Him. He said, “**There is nothing that enters a person from outside that can defile him. Rather, the things that come out of a person are the things that defile a person.**” This means that the greatest threat of evil for you and me is not some germ out there but rather an infectious virus right in your midst, the virus of sin that has permeated your whole being.

This idea of sin as a virus that has infected our thoughts, words, and deeds should terrify us. While we can perhaps somewhat deal with the idea of sinful germs out there that we need to avoid, yet to hear from Jesus that we carry the sin-virus around inside of us? That is not good.

Indeed, Jesus says, “**from inside, out of people’s hearts,**” is the source of evil, not good. Jesus says that we cannot trust our hearts for good or truth. Jesus basically says that we cannot trust our hearts - that our hearts are infected within. You and I carry within us a deep core of rotten viral filth that is our sin. It is disturbing to us to hear from Jesus that what is closest to us - our hearts - betrays us.

Furthermore, do you know what the most troubling characteristic of this sin-virus within us is? The most troubling aspect is that ***you and I can do nothing about it***. Every righteous deed we try to do... every pure thought we try to have is infected by the evil that is within us. We cannot help ourselves because our

own heart betrays us and works diligently to drag us down to hell. What hope do we have against such a severe sin-virus?

Dear friends, we would be lost and infected forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation by a salvation that is beyond us – outside of us – greater than us.

Hear the Gospel! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has given Himself - all of Himself, nothing held back - to sin-infected, virus-stained people like you and me. He has withheld nothing for us.

If anyone asks you about yourself, you can actually confess that you are one of those virus-infected sinners. But you can also confess, and you should confess with boldness that Jesus Christ is your Lord and that He has redeemed and forgiven you from the infectious consequences of sin. You are forgiven! You, who have been baptised into Christ's death and resurrection, confess confidently that Jesus has snatched you from the jaws of hell, won you, delivered you from the sin-virus-death you deserve, and restored you to the Father's favour and grace. Confess confidently in this world that is infected by the virus and germs of sin that you are not possessed by the grips of this sin-virus but belong to the Lord, who was made to be this sin-virus for you. Confess unashamedly that this Lord Jesus Christ has taken you under His cleansing and healing protection because He was damned in your stead.

Now, it is true that as we live life in this vale of tears, this sin-sick-virus will continue to cling to us until our death. Day by day, as long as we live, this sinful nature is carried around our necks. Otherwise stated, it is true that the germs of sin will still abound around us. And it is also true that we shall suffer setbacks to this virus and these germs in our times of weakness. When this happens, though, we may be tempted to run and grab some bleach, hand sanitisers, masks, cleaning rags, and so forth. In other words, when we are deceived and suffer defeat to this sin-virus and sin-germs, when sin has its way with us, we may be tempted to try and scrub the sin out of our life. We may be tempted to bleach it out. We may try to concoct our own antibiotics and medicines to fight the virus and germs of sin. Do not go here. The reason why? No matter how hard you scrub, no matter how much you clean, and no matter how much you sanitise, you cannot eradicate this sin-virus. You cannot do surgery on yourself. You cannot cleanse yourself. You are not the Great Physician. You are not the antidote to viral-sin.

Instead, ***remember your baptism.*** Your sin-sick-viral-infected old Adam is wicked, deceitful, lawless, slanderous, prideful, envious, foolish and unbelieving,

yet it finds its end in the waters of your baptism, a baptism that connects you to Jesus' death and resurrection.

Definitely scrutinise everything carefully and be aware of the sin-germs of life that you come against, but remember your baptism more.

Definitely cling to that which is good and true while resisting the sin-germs of life that are all around you, but remember your baptism more.

Definitely recognise and confess your viral-sin-infected nature within, but remember your baptism more.

You are baptised! Your baptism was not some scrawny, weak, and empty ceremony in the church but an aggressive flood that covers you completely in the righteousness of Christ. The power and effect of your baptism is the slaying of the old Adam, the slaughter and destruction of the virus of sin. Therefore, as your virus-sin-filled heart continues to yield sin, remember and return in repentance and faith to your baptism, where this sinful nature finds its end and where you may be reminded daily that your baptism is the daily garment that you are to wear at all times. Every day you are to be found not in the virus and germs of sin, neither are you to be found in your own attempts to scrub and sanitise these sins away. That is not who you are. Rather, you are in this baptismal faith - you are baptised! You are clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness that covers all your sins!

Do not forget! You have been washed. The robe of Christ's righteousness covers you and holds you in this sin-sick world. Do not fear; do not fret; your baptism and forgiveness remain day by day as long as you live, for He is faithful to you. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord our God, we rejoice to stand in Your presence and to come before You in prayer, praise, and thanks through Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. We thank You for showing us Your power and glory in this vast universe, and for enabling us to see Your majesty and might in the creation around us. We praise You for filling the earth with life and goodness, and for renewing it continually according to Your laws. Help us to harvest the fruit of honest effort, to find joy in the coming of each new day, and to rest in the peace of each night.

Above all else, we thank You for the gift of Your only Son Jesus Christ, and for revealing Yourself and Your saving love to us through Him. We praise You for His holy life of true manhood, for His innocent sufferings and death on our behalf, and for His glorious resurrection to eternal life, so that, through Him, we have the forgiveness of our sins, the power to conquer all evil, and the sure gift of eternal life. Bring us finally to the everlasting kingdom that You have promised us through Your Son.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of Your Word to be the lamp to light our path through life. Give us Your Spirit that we may listen to Your Word with eager understanding. Enrich our lives with the endurance and the encouragement that the Scriptures give, and fill us with hope, now and for ever. Lead us by the Spirit, so that we may not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Teach us to ignore the desires of our sinful natures. Give us confidence that there is wisdom in Your commandments, and grant that we may take delight in them. Fill our lives with the Spirit's fruit of love, joy, peace, humility, patience, goodness, and faithfulness.

We pray for Your Church. Rule and direct it to accomplish Your purposes and plans. Defend it against all error and doubt, and keep it in the truth. Make it alive by Your grace, that it may seek to praise You in every good work.

Uphold all leaders in our land. Help them to know and follow Your will, so that they may maintain law and order with firmness and love, and so that we may live in peace and quietness, and serve You without hindrance.

Bless our homes. Guide all parents that Your Word and will may have pride of place in their lives. Help the young to live in the light of Your Word and to know the happiness of a life of faith and purity.

We pray for all who are facing hardship, sickness, suffering, and danger. Fill their lives with Your grace, and hold before them the perfect peace of Christ.

These prayers, and all our unspoken desires, and anything else we should have asked of Your mercy, give us for the sake of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Article: Confess Your Sins Boldly

One of the ways that both the ideologies of *Legalism* and *Lawlessness* war against the Christian can be seen in how they treat and interact with the issue of sin.

The Legalist typically conceals sin. Otherwise stated, the Legalist typically conceals sin by misusing the Law and by inflating their perceived abilities to fulfil the Law. Logically, from a Legalistic perspective, this strategy makes sense. Keep in mind that the main force of the Law is to reveal original sin and all of its fruits; however, the Legalist misuses the Law by defanging it. The Legalist makes the Law into something that he can fulfil by his own strength. Therefore, if the Law is misused and if mankind's abilities are inflated, then man can successfully manage, overcome, and be victorious over sin. For the Legalists, both success and positive progress are manifested in his ability to supposedly overcome sin thus resulting in him talking less and less about his struggles with sin. Alas, sin is concealed, not confessed.

The Libertine, on the other hand, typically celebrates sin. Otherwise stated, the Libertine typically celebrates sin by minimising the demands of the Law and by deflating the Holiness of God. Logically, this strategy also makes sense, from a Lawless perspective. If the Law does not make stern demands and if God is not that serious about righteousness, then mankind is o.k. and free to do what he or she so desires. For the Libertine, a prosperous life is marked by liberty from binding religious ethics and a joyous disposition of free, unrestricted living according to the desires of the heart. Alas, sin is celebrated, not confessed.

Did you notice that Legalism and Lawlessness are two sides of the same coin? Legalism misuses the Law, and Lawlessness minimises the Law. Legalism inflates mankind, and Lawlessness deflates God. Indeed, both of these errors end up in the same place: the denial of God's Law and the preservation of the sinful flesh (i.e., the old Adam). More specifically, Legalism conceals sin, whereas Lawlessness celebrates sin; neither of them, though, confesses sin. In other words, the Legalist and the Libertine are both the same; they both do not own their sin, and they both flee from contrition. Yes, Legalism and Lawlessness both flee from and abhor confession of sin, confession which is the visible sign of contrition. Truly, the sinful nature likes to hide in the shadows of Legalism and Lawlessness and does everything possible to keep from being exposed.

The Christian needs to be protected from both of these grievous errors, for both of these errors draw the Christian away from contrition, which then draws the Christian away from the cross of Christ. Otherwise stated, both of these errors attempt to deceive Christians into believing that they do not have a sin problem (1 John 1:8). Indeed, concealed sin (i.e., closed sin) and celebrated sin (i.e., open sin) avoid confession of sin, which then negates the need of Christ's cross.

Thankfully the message of the cross is constantly confronting both concealed and celebrated sins. Yes, the cross of Christ is at war with both Legalism and Lawlessness. For the legalists, the cross destroys the illusion that we can do something apart from God thus rendering God less than almighty. For the person bent on lawlessness, the cross says, ‘look how awful all the lawlessness is that the holy Son of God must suffer so for the sin of mankind!’” What this means is that Lawlessness is not a way to overcome Legalism and Legalism is not a way to overcome Lawlessness. Rather than reactionary tactics, the Christian lives life in the shadow of Christ’s cross; the Christian lives underneath God’s Word of Law and Gospel. Life in the cross is one where God’s Law leads mankind to the identification, comprehension, and confession of concealed and/or celebrated sin. Thus, the point of God’s Law is to bring about contrition in the person and to open their eyes to their corruption so that they may be prepared to hear and receive the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus (i.e., the Law puts one in the grave; the Gospel puts one in Jesus’ grave). Yes, the life of the Christian is daily confession of sin and daily reception of the absolving Gospel.

What does all of this actually look like? Practically speaking, confession of sins is obviously not the same as concealing sin. Furthermore, confession of sins should not be mistaken as if one is celebrating sin. Rather, confession of sins is a mark of the Holy Spirit working contrition through the Word of Law. Thus, spiritual health is not marked by one believing that everything is simply awesome, as is often the case with Lawlessness. Furthermore, spiritual growth is not marked by one talking less and less about sin because they are supposedly becoming less and less sinful, as is often the case with Legalism. Rather, spiritual health and spiritual growth are demonstrated by us moving away from the conviction that we are self-sufficient to the repeated experience of spiritual bankruptcy. We move on from delusions of our spiritual importance to a growing sense of our utter insignificance and the glory of God. We move on from delight in our own power to the painful recognition of our spiritual weakness. We are brought from our self-righteousness to the increasing consciousness that we are sinful.

Being a sinner though, should not result in complete and final despair. The reason why? The Lord does not despise spirits that are crushed, crippled and wrecked. Thankfully the Lord does not disapprove of collapsed, broken, and torn down hearts (Psalm 51:17). But rather, the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18). When we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us (1 John 1:9).

Beware of denying that you are a sinner or aspiring to such purity that you will not wish to be looked upon as a sinner, for Christ only dwells in sinners. Undeniably, God’s Word of Gospel is that Jesus came for sinners, that there is forgiveness of sins in Christ. Therefore, confess your sins boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ’s forgiveness for sinners even more.

Children's Message:

What is a book we use each Sunday in church? It's a hymnbook. We use it because it guides us in what we say to God and what God says to us.

At the beginning of the service, we say to God the confession of sin. We say, "*Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we confess that by nature we are sinful and unclean.*" Put your hand on your heart. This heart of mine and that heart of yours are "unclean" because of sin. So at the beginning of the service, God wants us to say that we have "unclean," sinful hearts.

Why does He want us to say that? So that He can make our hearts clean! Would we want God to make our hearts clean if we didn't know our hearts were unclean? No! Would you wash your hands if you didn't think they were dirty? No! But when you say to God that your hearts are "unclean," He cleans them! He cleans them by forgiving them. Yes, "*Almighty God has had mercy on us, and has given His only Son to die for us, and for His sake forgives us all our sins.*" Jesus gives us the forgiveness He won for you on the cross. And this forgiveness, which you believe in, makes your hearts clean before God. God says that to you!

As the hymnal says, I forgive you "*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" Does that remind you of anything else that happens at church? It reminds me of my baptism. Whenever you hear the pastor say the word of forgiveness "*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*" remember that you are a baptised child of God. Remember, your heart is washed clean by God!

You want to stay clean, too. That's why we sing a beautiful hymn from this important book. "*Create in me a clean heart O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing Spirit.*" Every day, we want to live as God's obedient children who have new, clean hearts through Jesus' forgiveness.

Thank You, God, for cleaning my sin-stained heart with the blood of Your only Son, my Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.



WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

8 September 16 Pentecost	15 September 17 Pentecost	22 September 18 Pentecost
8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR
Sunday, 8 September		
READINGS: Isaiah 35:4-7a; James 2:1-10; 14-18; Mark 7:31-37		
HYMNS: 16 450 818 (335 848) 618		
Sunday, 15 September		
READINGS: Isaiah 50:4-10; James 3:1-12; Mark 9:14-29		
HYMNS: 336 241 447 (847 289) 383		
Sunday, 22 September		
READINGS: Jeremiah 11:18-20; James 3:13-4:10; Mark 9:30-37		
HYMNS: 54 356 277 (282 283) 199		

Tuesday, September 3, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Aubigny. Opening devotion: Don.

Wednesday, September 4, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Trinity Marburg. Opening Devotion: Kylie. Choose a verse from Deuteronomy 1-3. Item of Interest: Something orange.

Saturday, September 14, 1.00pm. Fellowship afternoon at Bethlehem Toowoomba. All are welcome to attend. Please bring a shared afternoon tea.

Saturday, September 24, 7.00pm, YAY (Young Adults and Youth) is on at Aubigny. The hall will be open for games and socialising from 6:30pm. All young adults and youth are most welcome to attend. Please remember to bring your Bible and something for supper.

SEPTEMBER BIBLE STUDIES

Lowood: Thursday, 12 September, 10.00am.

Marburg: Sunday, 15 September, after worship.

Greenwood: Wednesday, 18 September, 7.30pm in the hall.

Toowoomba, Sunday, 22 September, 8.00am.

Aubigny/Oakey: Friday, 26 September, 7.30pm at Aubigny.