



Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Holy Eucharist D

12 January 2023

The Episcopal Church of the
Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio

Seeking to know and serve Christ
in loving service to the campus, the
community, and the world.

Today's printed [Order of Worship](#)

Lessons

Lessons for Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

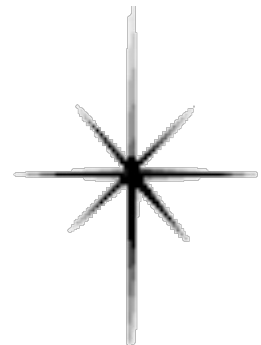
Old Testament – Sirach 15: 15-20

Psalm – 119: 1-8 (Sung)

New Testament – I Corinthians 3: 1-9

Gospel – Matthew 5: 21-37

<https://www.lectionarypage.net>



The Collect

O GOD, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Gospel



Matthew 5:13-20

JESUS SAID, “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”

Gospel Engagement Question:

The Sermon

But Jesus Says

There are many ways to make decisions. How do you make yours? Some people need to gather information, make a list of pros and cons, ask for advice, consider potential outcomes, even factor in how others might be impacted by or judge the decision. Some people rely on intuition. Others rely on previous experience. There are those who prefer spontaneity. A few consider how decisions may or may not align with or support their core values, religious, spiritual, or political beliefs.

The ability to make decisions is a common theme in all our readings this morning. Each reading highlights how decision making can be a conduit for the love to God can shine through our words and our actions. In Sirach the author reminds us God does not command anyone to do harm, that we can choose to follow God's ways and we can choose not to. So if we cause harm, it is most likely our decision, not God's. Paul goes a little deeper in his letter to the new church in Corinth by bringing up the role maturity plays in decision making. Maturity has nothing to do with age in this letter, it has to do with how a person behaves and how they treat others. When factions formed over which leader they preferred, Paul reminded them God is the provider of growth, and maturity means looking for God's glory in a community, not their own.

The Gospel reading for today is a continuation of Jesus' long sermon called the Sermon on the Mount and goes even deeper into how followers of Jesus who were listening to him then and those of us living today are to make decisions. Jesus takes the law and reveals how it can be interpreted to living a whole, full life that gives glory to God. The author of Matthew's Gospel reminds us that we have heard it said many times that humans are essentially bad and cannot help doing harmful, selfish acts which is why we need the law to keep us from doing the wrong thing. But the Gospel goes on to say Jesus reminds us we are not made for ourselves alone, we are made for each other and for God because we are lovingly made in God's image which means humanity is not bad, we were proclaimed by God to be good.

This does not mean everything we choose is good. It means we have the potential and the possibility to live into God's love that is already part of us, if we decide to. In today's Gospel, Jesus helps us figure out how to do this, to make every decision in the light of God's Love.

To do this, the author of Matthew's Gospel sets up a specific speech pattern for Jesus who begins with "you have heard it said," and then counters with, "but I say to you..." For example, the Gospel begins with Jesus saying, "You have heard it said you shall not murder.... but I say to you if you are angry with a brother or sister you will be liable." Now, there is a big difference between feeling anger and committing an act of murder.

Anger is inevitable, we are all going to get angry over various things. Jesus is not saying anger itself is wrong or bad, it is part of being human, which means it can have the potential for doing good, it can even be an opportunity for love to grow and relationships to grow stronger. When something or someone makes you angry, there is an opportunity to explore why, to step back and wonder what about a situation or person is making you angry. Often times anger can be a surface emotion for a deeper one like grief or fear.

Not long after my husband and I were married, we were having an argument and in the middle of the argument my husband asked why we were fighting. I said the situation we were facing made me afraid. Then he said he was afraid too and asked me, "Can't we just be afraid together?" That was an incredibly mature realization and is probably why in that moment I grew more in love with my husband. It helped make our relationship stronger.

What Jesus was saying in today's Gospel is anger does not have control our decisions and actions, it can enlighten them, and be a means of love in action, revealing God with us. In this way, the love of God is not only *not* hostile or violent, it prevents and overcomes hostility and violence with trust, vulnerability, and care.

Likewise, when Jesus mentioned what we have heard about lust and divorce what he said can be summed up that the love of God is not predatory; it recognizes all people are made in the image of God and are not on this earth to be exploited. Marriage is not a business transaction, it is a relationship between two people who need compassion, trust, and forgiveness to create a life together. It is also true there are so many people who disagree with this there are industries that make obscene amounts of money exploiting people, but as followers of Jesus we are called to listen to another way, his way, and treat all people with respect.

Respect for ourselves and others is at the heart of Jesus' final point about vows. It is about being honest because the Love of God is truthful. These days we hear that opinions carry the same weight as the truth, but opinions can change, especially as we mature, and how we share our opinions matter because they can cause harm. So, we have to be careful about how we distinguish the difference between an opinion and the truth.

For example, there are people of the opinion that divorce is bad, and it can be. That does not mean it is the right or wrong thing in every circumstance. It is also harmful to force someone to stay in an abusive

marriage, or in a relationship that has ended. Relationships are like living things, they can die. And while divorce is not always ideal, like someone changing and becoming respectful and loving instead of abusive, it is better than forcing someone to repeatedly receive abuse. The discernment is in remembering what Jesus says about compassion, being honest, and letting the love of God shine through whatever the circumstance is.

Without the compassion of God's love, emotions like fear, lust, hate and anger can eat a person alive, until a person forgets they are made to be in relationship with God and others. When that happens, a person can create for themselves what the Gospel writer called hell, or Gehenna, which was an actual place. It was where the people of ancient Jerusalem dumped and burned their garbage. It was a smelly, hot, smoldering mess that Jesus warned is what any life can become when we repeatedly choose hate and by so doing decide to separate ourselves from God and each other.

That is why Jesus not only says there is another way, he lived that way, even took on the anger and fear and hate of the world that nailed him to a cross for proving the way of God's love does work. God's Love works so well, even death was not able to stop Jesus from bringing God's love to fruition through the resurrection.

I know it is not always easy to live the way Jesus says in today's Gospel. But we can try because it is empowering to realize our decisions can give God glory and shine the love of God into the world. It is true that sometimes we might fail or fall, but forgiveness is part of the resurrection life Jesus brings, and forgiveness is one of many opportunities to grow closer to God and each other. This growth is the maturity mentioned by both Paul and the author of Sirach in their letters. The same maturity they encourage us all to consider when we make our decisions about what we do and say, today, tomorrow, all week, all month, all year, all our lives. Perhaps one way we can practice this in our lives today is whenever we have decisions to make to remember the same pattern set up in today's Gospel where we have heard it said.... but Jesus says whatever we do to love God and each other with compassion, forgiveness, mercy, trust and truth. By doing so, we bring glory to God.

A sermon by The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, But Jesus Says, 12 February 2023, at The Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens, Ohio.

Sermon Engagement Question:

What decisions do you have to make that you will try to apply Jesus' suggestions to?

Please include in your prayers

IN OUR WORLD, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for all families and law enforcement affected by gun violence. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray for the people who are suffering from war, especially the people of Ukraine, and we pray for all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

IN OUR DIOCESE, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops.

IN OUR PARISH, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community.

THOSE WHOM OUR PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED: Al S., Bud and Carol, Chris L., Connie D., Gloria R., Jean R., Lia, Miriam, Sharon, T.C., Ann Carswell, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Richard DeNune, Roy DePue, Norm Fox, Lindsey and Regina Golden, Debbie Hunsberger, Bob and Nancy Jackson, John Jefferson, Peter Kachenko and family, Ann Lloyd, Christine McGinn, Jeff Maiden, Julie Nehls, Betty Oltorf, Donald Oney, Sandy Oney, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Virginia Richards, Flo and Jack Roach, Annette Secoy, Dale Showman, Michael Vaughn, Mary-Anna Welch, and we pray for all who care for them. **

BIRTHDAY: Katyana Sayrs (2/14), Luisa Lescano (2/18)

** Full names are normally not published online. However for the Sunday 10:30 service we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or grahammowery@aol.com.

At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched anytime later.

<https://cincinnati.cathedral.com/cccljoin-online/>

Washington D C -- there's much to explore at the the National Cathedral's online portal. <https://cathedral.org/worship/>

Coming up on the Calendar

Tuesday, February 14, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting (Nehls Hall)

Tuesday, February 14, 11:30 p.m. - - Valentines to Go

Sunday, February 19, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, February 19, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist (Discretionary Sunday)

Sunday, February 19, 3:00 p.m. - - Celebration Concert II featuring our Choral Scholars and other guests.

Tuesday, February 21, 5:30 p.m. - - Pancake Supper

Wednesday, February 22, 11:30 p.m. - - Ashes to Go

Wednesday, February 22, 5:30 p.m. - - Service from Book of Common Prayer

Sunday, February 26, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, February 26, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Tuesday, February 28, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting (Nehls Hall)

Coffee Hour Schedule

Feb. 19 David Burton

Feb. 26 Anne Walker

Taken Dates for Altar Flowers

During Lent there are no flowers and for Easter we will have an announcement for lilies.

Notes & Announcements (additional items in the Friday Bulletin)

Reflection: A Message of Love from God to YOU

In Psalm 49 verses 15-16 there is a beautiful love note that makes a perfect meditation for Valentine's Day. In summary, the psalm first gives voice to God's people who feel despair and worry God has forgotten them. In the Bible, "forget" doesn't mean can't remember, it means to turn attention away from or intentionally ignore. In the psalm it means the people feel abandoned.

Then, the psalmist gives voice to God who says, "I will not forget you, see I have inscribed you in the palms of my hands."

This verse has been used to give comfort a lot; so much so you can sometimes find it on mugs and journals and cards. But there is something deeper than comfort in those words, there is an enduring love that perseveres with us.

In ancient cultures, especially in ancient Mesopotamia and Phoenicia, there was a practice of tattooing symbols on the palms of a person's hands. These special tattoos were and are still called *hemsa* tattoos. They were believed to bring good fortune and happiness. Hands were recognized as being important in even the earliest civilizations and were connected with creativity and productivity. A tattoo on the palm of a hand celebrated the link between humanity and creativity. Therefore, what specific tattoo was inked into the palm of a hand was given very careful consideration. Such a tattoo would only be revealed to another person when shaking hands or being intimate so what was put on the palm of the hand would naturally be what is cherished or loved.

Modern tattoo artists can add that the skin on the palm of the hand is very tender and is one of the most painful places to get a tattoo. Because hands are so active and the skin cells on the palms of the hands wear away and are replaced faster than other parts of the body, tattoos on the palm of a hand have to be re-inked multiple times a year or they will fade.

In light of this, to read God has inscribed (inked, tattooed) YOU on the palms of God's hands means you aren't just loved in a superficial way, you are cherished. You are held close to God's heart.

Take a moment to think about that.

What does that mean to you?

As we celebrate Valentine's Day this week, I hope you can have some fun. Maybe join me on the porch at the church to give out valentines to passersby from 11:30-12:30. If romance is in store for you, that's good too. But I hope you will also take a moment to pray and reflect on God's love for you, a love so deep God is willing to endure much and persevere with you all the days of your life. And I hope you will take a moment to tell God you love God back.

Many Blessings and Much Love,

Mother Deborah



Let's Spread Some Love on Valentine's Day 11:30 – 12:30 February 14

On OU's campus it is unfortunate that some visitors who claim authority in a Christian church come on campus loudly proclaiming a message of hate. This understandably causes students as well as faculty to feel angry or hurt. Most ignore them, a few might try and argue with them, and there are others who believe their message. In response, Mother Deborah would like to proclaim a message in line with the teaching of the Episcopal Church: God Loves You, No Exceptions.

To do this, she will be decorating the church lawn with large hearts giving away little valentines with the message "God Loves You No Exceptions" on them from the front porch of the church on Valentine's Day, a day associated with love.

**Mother Deborah will be in front of the church - rain or shine -- from
11:30 am – 12:30 pm.**

Please join her for all or part of the hour to help spread the message that God is not a god of hate, but a God of love, and what the world needs now is love, even if it is in the form of a fun reminder like a valentine.



Mother Deborah is preparing a banner for this occasion and has very involved feline assistance adding some more color with festive paw prints.

**Burning of the Palm Branches
Sunday February 19**



On the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany, it is tradition to burn the palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday service to make the ashes that will be used on Ash Wednesday. Although we purchase ashes for the service, we can still practice the enjoyable tradition of burning palm branches. It's fun for all

ages and an ancient practice in the church.

The Sunday service will conclude with the burning of the palm branches from last year's Palm Sunday service. If you still have your palm branches, remember to bring them that morning. If you can't be with us in person that day, feel free to drop last year's branches off at the church and we'll throw them in the fire for you.



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Celebration Concert II
Sunday, February 19, 3:00 p.m.

CELEBRATION CONCERT

SUNDAY, FEB 19 3:00 PM

Hear the restored 1952 Aeolian-Skinner organ

Marsha Reilly, organist

Maira Urbano Nieto, flute

Choral scholars of the Church of the Good Shepherd



CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
64 UNIVERSITY TERRACE, ATHENS, OHIO
WWW.CHOGS.ORG (740) 593-6877

**"Steve Steward"
Shrove Tuesday
Pancake Supper**

Mark your calendars for **Tuesday,**



February 21. That's the day the great tradition of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday returns to Good Shepherd!!!

Since we're returning in a smaller version of former years, we'll only serve from 5:30-6:30. And our offerings will be a little different. We'll provide regular pancakes, gluten-free pancakes and coffee.

We ask YOU to volunteer to bring butter, syrup, and juice.

We also need volunteers to help set up (beginning at 5), to cook, to serve and to help clean up.

Sign-up sheets are available in the Narthex and in Hobson.

Ash Wednesday February 22, 2023

Ashes to Go 11:30 – 12:30

Mother Deborah will be distributing ashes on the front porch of the church.

Service from the Book of Common Prayer 5:30 p.m.

Please join us as you are able for this lovely liturgy to begin the season of Lent.



Something to Look Forward To

A March Lenten Program - - "Practicing Compassion"

Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. (Nehls Hall downstairs)

[TO MORE DETAILS](#) Please consider joining us.

For Bishop Transition News and Updates

[-- Follow this link --](#)

If you want to help the folks who have been negatively impacted by climate disaster and war anywhere in the world (including Ukraine) please consider contributing to [Episcopal Relief and Development \(ERD\)](#) which is the official ministry of the Episcopal Church.



No, this is not the alleged "weather balloon" but the full moon making a late afternoon appearance last week and it looks like many more daffodils are going to make an appearance in the churchyard.





Contacts, Information

Quick Links

[Parish website](#)

[Sermons](#)

[Parish calendar](#)

[Staff](#)

[Campus Interest](#)

[E-News Guidelines
and Back Issues](#)

[Diocese Southern Ohio](#)

Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines
for in-person worship](#)

In light of local conditions we request all persons wear masks inside the church building **regardless** of vaccination status.

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and

[Bishop Transition](#)

[\[E\]Connections](#)

[Episcopal News Service](#)

[Episcopal Journal & Café](#)

gatherings but during office hours the thrift shop and chapel are available for individuals. Masks are required.

CrossRoads Café is temporarily closed.

Contact Information

For pastoral needs, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

For maintenance matters, please leave a note at the office or contact Dana Carlson, Junior Warden, at 740-664-2022 or by e-mail at carlsondana@hotmail.com.

For emergencies, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895.

NON-emergency messages can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877).

The parish office administrator is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or barbara@chogs.org.

[DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

The above takes you to the Parish page where you can find instructions or donate on-line via PayPal, If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube Channel](#).

LIKE us on Facebook [Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

Office Hours:
Masks are required.

**The Episcopal Church of the
Good Shepherd**, 64 University
Terrace, Athens OH 45701

740-593-6877
chogs@chogs.org
www.chogs.org

10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Monday - Thursday
740-593-6877
chogs@chogs.org

Blessings !

Church of the Good Shepherd | 64 University Terrace, Athens, OH 45701

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