

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Warm Up

Sunday's Gospel is one of two accounts where the Lord instituted the Keys. Our most common use of the Keys is in the General Confession and Absolution in our Sunday Worship Service. The General Confession and Absolution was added to the Lutheran Liturgy during the time of the Reformation. Some Lutherans argued that it should not be included in the service because Absolution may be pronounced on someone who didn't sincerely confess their sins. They argued that Confession and Absolution should be done privately or personally, not generally or publicly.

In some early Lutheran Services Confession was made, but the Sermon and its gospel message served as the Absolution. How would that strike you?

Share:

Should we be concerned that the impenitent falsely believe they are absolved?

What role does the Confession and Absolution in the Sunday service play in your life?

What's your sense or impression of how our people view the Confession and Absolution? Especially considering that in the past we've had people show up to church after Confession and Absolution.

1. Sermon for September 20, 2020

Text: **Romans 13:1-10**

*Theme: **The worship of our God transforms us into civil engaged neighbors.***

Share your questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon.

Share your questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon **text**.

2. The Holy Spirit is blunt and leaves no room to wiggle out of this.

Everyone must submit to the governing authorities. For no authority exists except by God, and the authorities that do exist have been established by God. ² Therefore the one who rebels against the authority is opposing God's institution, and those who oppose will bring judgment on themselves.

What is the criteria to know that a civil authority has God's authority?

On what basis are all people, especially God's people, to obey civil authorities?

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

In Genesis 1 God conveyed this divine authority to humans.

²⁷ God created the man in his own image.

In the image of God he created him.

Male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

God established authority in the home, placing parents in authority over their children. This is the foundation of God's societal or civil authorities. That's why Luther includes civil and church authorities in the commandment: *Honor your father and mother....*

3. Paul reiterates that every civil authority is acting on God's behalf with God's authority.

...he is God's servant for your benefit. ...He is God's servant, a punisher to bring wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore it is necessary to submit, ...because of conscience. ⁶ ...the authorities are God's ministers, who are employed to do this very thing.

When you look at a civil servant (fire police to President, tax collector to Speaker of the House, code inspector to Magistrate to Supreme Court Justice), imagine God standing over that person's shoulder with his hand on their shoulder. We are conscience bound to treat God as the authority. Thus we are conscience bound to treat his authorities as speaking for him.

What if the authority commands you to disobey God, by doing something wrong or forbidding you to do what God commands? Are they acting as God's servants?

Look carefully at Peter's words in Acts 4:

¹⁸ Then they summoned them and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, "Decide whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God. ²⁰ For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Peter appeals to conscience - to treating God as my God - obedience to God.

It is commonly said, *Obey the government. The only exception is when they specifically command you to disobey God. But* is that really an *exception* to the principle? When you understand that you obey God by obeying the government, obeying God in such circumstances is not the exception. It's following the principle. God's holy will doesn't have exceptions.

When you follow this principle, you avoid the temptation to subsequently ignore or disrespect a civil authority who had previously commanded you to disobey God. **Explain.**

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

4. Paul further wrote:

⁷ Pay what you owe to all of them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, and honor to whom honor is owed.

According to this context, who are the ones Paul is saying we owe this respect and honor?

Trusting that Peter and John understood this truth, what manner or tone do you think Peter and John answered the High Priest and Sanhedrin in Acts 4?

It was stated in the Sermon that the commandment, *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*, was addressed by Paul before he listed the commandments in v. 9. This was a reference to *owing respect and honor*. How is that an application of the 8th (the Protestant 9th) Commandment?

Civil discourse on civil matters seems to be an endangered species in our country. What is contributing to that? Reflect on the reasons some on the far left and some of the *Christian* right have come to be known for their lack of civility.

Comment on these claims: *Civility is being wishy-washy. It's timidity that flows from a lack of principles. It's the behavior of those who cave in and compromise.*

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

5. Let's consider what Paul teaches us in these words:

³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to evil. Would you like to have no fear of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will receive praise from him, ⁴ because he is God's servant for your benefit. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because he does not carry the sword without reason. He is God's servant, a punisher to bring wrath on the wrongdoer.

What is God's purpose or mission for his civil servants?

Recognizing and identifying good behavior and wrongdoing requires moral judgment. Since civil authorities exist all around the world, even in places that don't have the Bible, what is the basis for such moral judgments?

What does this phrase teach us? *...he does not carry the sword without reason. He is God's servant, a punisher to bring wrath on the wrongdoer.*

In Genesis 9 we read:

⁵ In fact, I will hold each animal and each person responsible for your lifeblood. I will hold each man responsible for the life of his brother. ⁶ Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for God made man in his own image.

What are the 2 reasons God holds humans and animals responsible for taking a human life?

Who does God authorize in Genesis 9 to implement the death penalty for taking a human life?

The authority of the sword is a tool to be used for the benefit of those under the authority of civil servants. Civil servants are authorized to use it to preserve law and order, to protect against those who would threaten life, and to protect against outsiders who are hostile to its citizens.

What would you share with a Christian who argues, "God commands us not to murder. It is a sin for the state to put a human being to death. In fact war is sinful."?

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

How would you comfort a soldier or police officer who is struggling with the fact that they killed humans?

6. When these verses of Romans 13 are left to stand by themselves it comes across as 100% law, a heavy burden, hard to carry. The Sermon pointed out that this is actually part of our new life spoken about in the opening words of Romans 12.

Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice — holy and pleasing to God — which is your appropriate worship. ² Also, do not continue to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you test and approve what is the will of God — what is good, pleasing, and perfect.

We are surrounded by the patterns of this world - the ways people speak about those who govern and especially those they disagree with. We see how rudely people deal with neighbors they disagree with. Not to mention how people live as citizens, focused on rights and privileges, showing little care and concern to get to know neighbors whose background and circumstances are different than our own.

What story did Jesus tell to illustrate what it meant to *love your neighbor as yourself*?

What was surprising, yes even shocking, about this story?

Do you recall how the expert in the Law answered Jesus - defining love for neighbor?

Knowing this, how would you explain to others that your positive civic engagement is part of your gospel-centered and gospel-motivated worship life (live treating God as your God)?

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: Ezekiel 33:7-11

7. A legalistic view of this reading could be summarized as: *Ezekiel, you better do the hard work of warning the wicked just like I told you, or you will suffer their fate - my eternal death.*

Verse 11 reflects God's heart - his true colors. Verses 7-10 need to be read in view of v. 11.

¹¹ Say to them, "As I live, declares the LORD God, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from their way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why should you die, O house of Israel?"

What is Yahweh's heart - his attitude toward people?

This heart of Yahweh is reflected in v. 7. Where is his heart found in these words?

⁷ But I have appointed you, son of man, to be a watchman for the house of Israel.

8. Why would a watchman even consider not sharing God's warning?

9. Compare these 2 Bible passages. Note the parallels and how they inform each other.

¹⁶ The Lord God gave a command to the man. He said, "¹⁷ ...you shall not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die." Genesis 2

⁸ When I say to a wicked man, "Wicked man, you shall surely die," Ezekiel 33

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 18:15-20

10. Jesus is clear. *If your brother sins against you...* Who is your brother?

11. Jesus offers these instructions because honestly this is not the way we are inclined to react when someone sins against us. List common ways Christians deal with being hurt.

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

12. What is at stake here? Demonstrate that this is not about my injury.

13. How can you approach someone *who has sinned against you* in a manner that communicates you are on a rescue mission. That you are not out to prove you are right and they were wrong or that you are there to make them pay for wronging you?

14. What makes this mission hard? Why are we inclined to avoid doing this?

15. What commandment explains why Jesus would counsel us to go and talk about it just between the 2 of you? What kind of situations/sins would call for a different approach?

16. These words should not be viewed as a legalistic process to be executed over a specific period of time. The purpose of the mission sets the pace and approach.
What's the twofold purpose of taking 1 or 2 fellow believers with you? What criteria should be used in selecting these witnesses?

What's the purpose of taking it before the community of believers? What's the difference between excommunication and shunning?