

Lessons for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 22, 2021

(tweaked for Christian Education Emphasis)

Psalm 14 ~ *A description of the age-old arrogance of those who think there is no God.*

Isaiah 29:11–19 ~ *When people think they have all the answers, God will surprise them with His plans.*

Ephesians 5:21–33 ~ *Marriage, modeled on Christ's relationship to the Church, is not a human tradition.*

Mark 7:1–13 ~ *Jesus called the Pharisees to task for putting rules taught by men in place of God's Word.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Learn the Rules, but Trust the Ruler!

In Isaiah's day, rules taught by men gave people a false security even while they ignored God. They sealed up the scroll of God's Word by pretending they knew all of God's plans. Jesus taught the Pharisees that their obsessive attention to rules prevented them from following God's commands. Even in a marriage, keeping all the rules is not what makes it strong, but the love and trust between husband and wife. That's the way it is in the church: we can learn all the rules, but we trust the Lord only when we know His sacrifice of love for us. Christian Education includes the rules for Christian living, but if it doesn't teach us to know the steadfast love of God, it doesn't really teach us what we need to know.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord, I have not always trusted You; sometimes I have thought Your teachings -- and Your commands -- were too hard for me. Touch me again with the power of Your Spirit that I may serve You in word and deed always. Help me lead others to Your Word of Life through my loving deeds. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Rules for living are "a dime a dozen," even adjusted for inflation, but the steadfast love of God that presents us to Himself holy and blameless, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, cannot be bought at any price, other than the blood of Christ who gave Himself up for us to make us His for all eternity.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, it is good to know You and to know we can trust You.
Thank you for those who teach us, not just Your rules, but Your love.
Use these gifts to teach us more – and to teach more of us –
to know and to trust and to love You. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: It is easier to keep the traditions we have become accustomed to, than to obey God's commands. Outward forms fit us comfortably, but the spirit of the law requires commitment from our hearts. When we are just keeping the rules, but don't care what the rules are for, it is time to unseal the Word of God and rediscover that Christ gave himself up for us to make us clean by the washing of the water and the word. When we know the One who has claimed us, we will give ourselves, not just our actions, to God.