

# The Lessons Appointed for Use on the Sunday Closest to June 15



Proper 6  
Year A  
RCL

Romans 7:15-25a

Psalm 145:8-15

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

## The Collect

### The Collect

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

***Exaltabo te, Deus***

- 8 The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, \*  
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 The LORD is loving to everyone \*  
and his compassion is over all his works.
- 10 All your works praise you, O LORD, \*  
and your faithful servants bless you.
- 11 They make known the glory of your kingdom \*  
and speak of your power;
- 12 That the peoples may know of your power \*  
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; \*  
your dominion endures throughout all ages.
- 14 The LORD is faithful in all his words \*  
and merciful in all his deeds.
- 15 The LORD upholds all those who fall; \*  
he lifts up those who are bowed down.

## Romans 7:15-25a

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this

body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

## **Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

Jesus said to the crowd, “To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Fa-

ther; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

## SERMON

We had a small attendance last Sunday because of the holiday, so bear with me while I bring everybody up to speed.

When I got back from Pennsylvania, Kathy fixed me with one of her steelier glares and said, “It’s 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Do NOT preach anything political.”

I got whiny and asked what I could preach and she snapped, “Sin. You’re agin it!” Trying my best not to be political, we embarked upon a sermon from Paul’s Letter to the Romans on his understanding of this devilishly difficult word, “Sin”.

When we speak of sin, we think of a list of things one ought not to do. We speak of “sins”, plural. The problem as we see it, then, is that other people do bad things even though they know better and if we could get rid of these people, or at least get them to behave, the

world would be healed. Paul did not understand sin in this way – as the bad things people do. He almost never speaks of sins, plural. When Paul speaks of Sin, he addresses it as if it were an entity invading our world, manifesting itself in the bad things people do. He writes:

do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.

For Paul, Sin is the covert systemic power which whispers to us that there is, in this instance or that, good reasons to do evil things. It is a sin to kill, but Sin whispers that it's OK if the one you are killing killed somebody else first or is a citizen of a nation with which your country is at war. It's a sin to steal, but the hon-eyed words of Sin whisper that it was OK for the Pilgrims and those who came after them to take land already occupied and to treat those there first as vermin.

Dropping an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and another on Nagasaki, incinerating mothers with their babies at their breasts, was very evil, but was a good thing to do, Sin convinced us, because it shortened the war. Sin isn't simply the bad things people do – it's the force that excuses the bad things we do. We live in a world which offers us only choices between evils. A world ruled by Sin is a place where things are loved while people are used. Keep that in mind. A world ruled by sin is a world in which things are loved while people are used.

All is not without hope, though. With the coming of Jesus, God is seeking reconciliation with His Creation, and has given His son to do so, ushering in the promise of a world freed of sin's influence. A world freed of sin's sovereignty will be one in which people are loved, and things are used.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Though we're trapped in a world in which sin reigns – a world which offers us only evil choices then tells us that's OK – Paul assures the church in Rome that in the end times, God will set all right. Until that time, the church is to reflect into the rest of creation what life will be like in a world no longer ruled by Sin. We have work to do, church. We're to show the world that there are more choices than the evil ones presented to us by Sin.

How are we to do that? The sin is systemic. We're trapped in it. We would like to ease the suffering, but we are powerless to do so. In Paul's words:

I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the

law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

We are, at once, in mortal need of rescue and utterly powerless to save ourselves. Our first task is to admit that we are wretched and unable to fix what is wrong with this world. That doesn't mean that we are to be satisfied with doing nothing, though. We have work we CAN do, and we have some folks here who can explain to you how they have chosen to reflect God's assurance that the world CAN be made right, following the devastating loss of their son, Cody. I've spoken to you several times about Cody. Please welcome Elliot and Lee Ann Gollihue.

## PRESENTATION BY GOLLIHUES

We grieve with you, and we so admire your turning of this loss into a celebration of God's promise for the world. Every cup of coffee bought for the car behind you in line, every hand offered to an elderly person attempting to navigate a stair, every act of kindness, however small, kindles a light in the darkness.

Jesus said to the crowd, “To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;  
we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

The world ruled by sin demands that we dance to its flute, while God requires something very different from us – that we reflect God's love of his children even upon our enemies, loving them as ourselves.

AMEN

## BENEDICTION

Sin might well turn your mind to ask, “Why should I do a random act of kindness for a stranger?” God replies, “Why would you not?”

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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