

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2020 - 17TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 (NRSV)

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.

Rather than assuming responsibility for the situation they were in, the Israelites were trying to blame those who came before them for the exile.

Do you ever find yourself not wanting to take responsibility but instead wanting to blame someone else? What are some examples today of people's not wanting to take responsibility but instead wanting to blame someone else?

Ezekiel 18 eliminates the excuses of the children.

Exodus 20:5-6 gives a warning as well as a promise to the parents. These verses are part of the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me."

"I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of the parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Children do suffer because of the sins of their parents, and they are blessed because of the faith and godliness of their parents and grandparents.

I know so many children whose lives are deeply blessed because of the faith and godliness of their grandparents.

"To the third and the fourth generation" vs. "to the thousandth generation."

God would much rather bless than punish.

³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

Cf. Ezekiel 33: 11 – from the First Reading for September 6

Psalm 51: 10 – "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me."

Psalm 25:1-9 (NRSV)

⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

Makes me think of some of the really stupid things I did when I was younger, including during my youth director days during seminary.

Philippians 2:1-13 (NRSV)

⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

How do you do at looking to the interests of others – when they are the same as yours – when they are supportive of yours – when they are different from yours – when they are in conflict with yours?

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

What would it mean to you to have the mind of Christ Jesus?

“May the mind of Christ, my Savior, live in me from day to day.

By His love and power controlling all I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour

So that all may see I triumph only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father rule my life in ev’rything

That I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.

May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe,

Looking only unto Jesus as I onward go.”

There is a basic, fundamental difference between Christianity and every other world religion.

Every other world religion tells us what we need to do to get up to God and/or to satisfy God.

Christianity tells us what God has done to come down to us.

The structure of Christ’s humbling Himself and then being exalted is very similar to the structure of the second article of the Apostles Creed.

Conceived by the Holy Spirit through descended into hell – third day rose from the dead to sits at the right hand

Because of its form, many think that these verses might have been an early Christian hymn.

⁶ Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Matthew 21:23-32 (NRSV)

There are at least four different kinds of travelers on the road of life, two of which are mentioned in the parable of the two sons in verses 28-31.

1. NO - BOTH NOW AND LATER

2. YES NOW – NO LATER

3. NO NOW – YES LATER

4. YES - BOTH NOW AND LATER