

God's Message for Today

Division in this world

We wonder why the world is in such a mess. We have the Covid-19 pandemic. We have racial discord, rioting and violence. We have a world whose basic fiber seems to be ripping apart. Is it really so surprising?

People have abandoned God and turned power, money, and pleasure into their Gods. They have claimed to know the true God, but they worshiped false gods and demanded that Christians change God's Word and declare their false gods to be righteous.

As the devil deceived mankind in the beginning by lies and by twisting God's word, so today he works his evil in the world by the same devices. The freedom that is proclaimed in this world is the same as the freedom the devil proclaimed to Adam and Eve when He enticed them to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "Did God really say?" He coaxed.

In 2004, 60 percent of Americans polled said they opposed homosexual marriage. In 2019, the same polling company found that 61 percent of Americans support homosexual marriage. The change has been stunning and quick. In 2019, over 750,000 abortions were performed in the United States. The media demonize churches that uphold the Biblical concepts of Creation, absolute Truth, Holy Matrimony, sin, and salvation by grace through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These are now considered radical fringe ideas and dangerous.

We talk about love when we mean lust and selfishness. We talk about black lives matter when the highest rate of abortion is among black people. The lowest rate of two parent households is among black people. And the greatest predictor of poverty, educational failure, and criminality is the lack of a father in the family.

We now consider women's reproductive rights to be the right to destroy the life that has been created in the womb. As a grandfather who lost his grandchild in the 8th week of pregnancy, I vehemently disagree that this person, with a unique genetic profile, who God foreknew, and who God knit together in his mother's womb, that this life my daughter carried was not a real life. O Lord, deliver us from evil!

The new creation

We need deliverance. Jesus came into the world to deliver us. He makes all things new. The deliverance He proclaims is not only for the world "out there" that doesn't get it. It's for us who do. We need a Savior, not just from the world but from ourselves and the wrath we've rightly earned. Before we're overwhelmed by the fear and anger we have toward the world, we need to understand our deep need as well. The church is the home of rebellious sinners who seek comfort and pleasure. We have sinned in every way the world has. We share the world's obsessions.

But the church is also the home of forgiveness and peace brought by Christ's death and resurrection. Forgiveness and peace is brought by our Father's unquenchable love and poured out on us by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament. We reach out with the world's only hope because we have already drunk deeply this cure of souls. Our sins are forgiven, and we get to share that undeserved gift.

In the end, it becomes clear that the world hates the church for all the wrong reasons. They hear our words of rightful condemnation of sin and they fear the loss of their earthly power, self-

righteousness, and self-concept. They are so quick to defend the evil they have embraced that they too often do not hear the salvation that Christians proclaim amid their futile strife.

The summation of the Law is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind and your neighbor as yourself. The summation of the consequences of sin are division from God, division from our neighbor, and death. We have no remedy that will change the fact that we cannot fulfill the Law or escape the consequences of our sin. Left to our own devices, all we can expect is division, brokenness, and death. No wonder we cannot get along with one another. No wonder hatred seems to reign and pain, disease and death are everywhere.

For this reason, God, the Creator of all things, came into His world in human flesh to deliver us. He became the man/God Jesus Christ. And although we cannot, by our own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him. God's Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us by His gifts, sets us apart, makes us holy, and keeps us in the true faith to life everlasting.

In Christ, all things are made new. He died to pay for the sins of the world and was raised again to bring us new life. In baptism, we are put into the middle of God's very name; God, the great I AM says, "I with you AM, even unto the end of the age." And just so, God forgives us all our sins, and He does this out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us.

What shall we do?

Jesus Christ is a voice of Truth in a world still under the spell of the king of chaos. God's steadfast love drags us back to confession and absolution of our sins, drags us back to live in the washing and rebirth of our Baptisms, calls us to receive Him, to receive his body and blood given and shed for us, welcomes us to His Holy, life-sustaining nourishment at the Lord's Table.

We are forgiven freely and so we should forgive others freely. We did not merit such grace, so we should not condition the giving of grace to others on their merit. We are loved by God as his precious creatures created in His image. We love each other because He loves all of us, enough that He gave His only begotten Son to die for the sins of the world. We should speak the truth in love to one another because He first spoke the Truth in love to each of us.

He gave us prayer to ask anything that was on our hearts and He promises to always hear us. As He prayed (and still intercedes) for us, we pray for others, that not one would be lost.

Love covers a multitude of sins. He gave us a new commandment: love one another. Love is not selfish. Love sacrifices. Love puts the needs of others before one's own. The love that unites us is greater than that which divides us. In Christ Jesus there is no longer Greek or Jew, slave or free, male or female, black or white, only creatures created in the image of God. Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to you all. Amen!