

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany February 12, 2017

LUTHERAN

## LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

Available on line at:

[www.bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies](http://www.bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies)

or

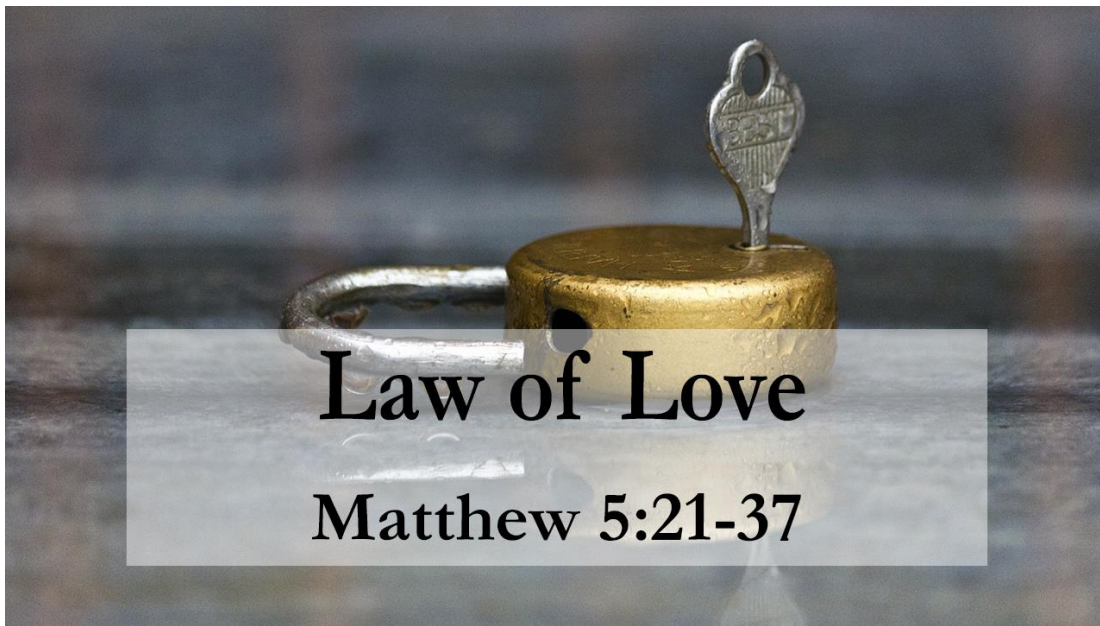
**through Facebook at either “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”,  
“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

February 9, 2017 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH

*(Presented as a part of the bible study/worship weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, a newly formed assisted living site and used by Lutherans in Africa.*

*E-mail [puritaspastor@hotmail.com](mailto:puritaspastor@hotmail.com) for details.*



Law of Love

Matthew 5:21-37

<http://www.marturia.net/blog/mandi-preaches-law-of-love-matthew-521-37/>

**Hymn of the Day**

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 394 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 134**

*“Songs of thankfulness and praise”*

“Christopher Wordsworth (b. Lambeth, London, England, 1807; d. Harewood, Yorkshire, England, 1885)...wrote this hymn in five stanzas. It was published in his *Holy Year* (1862) John 3:13-17 with the heading "Sixth Sunday after Epiphany." Wordsworth described the text as follows

[It is a] recapitulation of the successive manifestations of Christ, which have already been presented in the services of the former weeks throughout the season of Epiphany; and anticipation of that future great and glorious Epiphany, at which Christ will be manifest to all, when he will appear again to judge the world.”

[http://www.hymnary.org/text/songs\\_of\\_thankfulness\\_and\\_praise](http://www.hymnary.org/text/songs_of_thankfulness_and_praise)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnGPiIBPsUM> with lyrics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjseYDesglU> An alternate tune – “Salzburg”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6B5SiSGhMD4> A third alternate tune – “St. Edmund”

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

### **Deuteronomy 30:15-20; RCL, the same or Sirach 15:15-20 (Next Week: Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18; RCL, the same reading)**

*“After what is surely one of the longest sermons in history -- all of Deuteronomy! -- Moses makes his final appeal to Israel in this passage.*

*Two long poetic passages follow in chapters 31–34, “The Song of Moses” and “The Blessing of Moses,” along with narratives recounting Moses’ death and the transfer of leadership to Joshua. Just prior to our text, Moses announces wonderful blessings for an obedient Israel and blood-curdling curses for an apostate Israel (chapter 28). These benedictions and maledictions are followed by a prediction of eventual exile (29:18–29) and return (30:1–10), predictions sufficiently prescient that most scholars deem the words of post-exilic origin.*

*In the four verses immediately preceding 30:15–20, Moses assures the people that the commandments of the LORD are neither too hard nor too remote...” (continued after reading)*

<sup>15</sup>“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. <sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God<sup>[a]</sup> that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules,<sup>[b]</sup> then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

- a. [Deuteronomy 30:16](#) Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God*
- b. [Deuteronomy 30:16](#) Or *his just decrees*

“...Having assured the people that what God commands they can do, Moses launches into his final call for a decision. He reiterates the essence of God’s covenant, focusing especially on the promise of blessing for obedience and the threat of a cursed existence in exile for failure to obey. With these words, Moses concludes and descends from his pulpit. The terms of the covenant are clear; the community must now decide....The choice is laid out bluntly. It is yes or no. The options presented do not include ‘maybe’ or ‘I’ll have to think about it’ or ‘I’ll give it a try.’ As Yoda famously tells Luke Skywalker who has half-heartedly promised to “try” to do as Yoda asks, “No. Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try.” Moses’ strident call for decision also brings to mind the words of philosophers and theologians more orthodox, Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer, for example. Both remind Christians that Jesus made stark demands upon his followers. A decision is required; we must choose and we must act...”

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1758](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1758) [Brian C. Jones](#)  
Assistant Professor of Religion, Wartburg College

### Sirach 15:15-20 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

*The **Book of the All-Virtuous Wisdom of Joshua ben Sira**,<sup>[1]</sup> commonly called the **Wisdom of Sirach** /ˈsɪræɪk/ or simply **Sirach**, and also known as the **Book of Ecclesiasticus** /ɪˈkliːziːˈæstɪkəs/ (abbreviated *Ecclus.*)<sup>[2]</sup> or **Ben Sira**,<sup>[3]</sup> is a work of ethical teachings from approximately 200 to 175 BCE written by the Jewish scribe Shimon ben Yeshua ben Eliezer ben Sira of Jerusalem, on the inspiration of his father Joshua son of Sirach, sometimes called Jesus son of Sirach or Yeshua ben Eliezer ben Sira. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirach>*

- <sup>15</sup> If you will, you can keep the commandments,  
and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.
- <sup>16</sup> He has placed before you fire and water:  
stretch out your hand for whichever you wish.
- <sup>17</sup> Before a man<sup>[a]</sup> are life and death,  
and whichever he chooses will be given to him.
- <sup>18</sup> For great is the wisdom of the Lord;  
he is mighty in power and sees everything;
- <sup>19</sup> his eyes are on those who fear him,  
and he knows every deed of man.
- <sup>20</sup> He has not commanded any one to be ungodly,  
and he has not given any one permission to sin.

#### a. [Sirach 15:17](#) Gk *men*

Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**Psalm 119:1-8; RCL, the same reading (Psalm 119:33-40; RCL, the same reading)**

*“Since this pericope represents the first eight verses of Psalm 119, it might help to say a word or two about the entire psalm.*

*Psalm 119 is among several psalms that are arranged acrostically, according to the letters of the Hebrew alephbet. Psalm 119 is the longest of these -- and the longest of all Psalms -- with 22 eight-verse sections corresponding to the letters aleph, beth, gimel and all the way through tav. Even more impressive is the fact that in each eight-verse section, the first word of each verse begins with the letter assigned to that section. So each one of verses 1-8 begins with aleph, 9-16 with beth, 17-24 with gimel, and so on, through verses 169-176, each of which begins with the letter tav.*

*Martin Luther would have been very familiar with Psalm 119, likely knowing it by heart. As an Augustinian friar doing his daily devotions, Luther regularly recited the entire Psalm, all 176 verses. In Luther's day, monks recited long sections of Psalm 119 as part of the Liturgy of Hours (or Divine Office). As a young man, Luther prayed Psalm 119 at 6:00 am, 9:00 am, noon, and 3:00 pm at the beginning of the week. According to the Rule of Benedict, a faithful monk meditates on all of Psalm 119 once each week, beginning on Sunday and concluding on Monday...”*

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1487](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1487) [Hans Wiersma](#)  
Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN

## Your Word Is a Lamp to My Feet

### Aleph

119 <sup>[a]</sup> Blessed are those whose way is blameless,  
who walk in the law of the LORD!

<sup>2</sup> Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,  
who seek him with their whole heart,

<sup>3</sup> who also do no wrong,  
but walk in his ways!

<sup>4</sup> You have commanded your precepts  
to be kept diligently.

<sup>5</sup> Oh that my ways may be steadfast  
in keeping your statutes!

<sup>6</sup> Then I shall not be put to shame,  
having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

<sup>7</sup> I will praise you with an upright heart,  
when I learn your righteous rules. <sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>8</sup> I will keep your statutes;  
do not utterly forsake me!

- a. [Psalm 119:1](#) This psalm is an acrostic poem of twenty-two stanzas, following the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; within a stanza, each verse begins with the same Hebrew letter
- b. [Psalm 119:7](#) Or *your just and righteous decrees*; also verses [62](#), [106](#), [160](#), [164](#)

“...It, like Psalms 111 and 112, is an alphabetic acrostic in form, but it is vastly in substance. While Psalm 111 consists of only seventy-two words and Psalm 112 of seventy-nine words,

Psalm 119 has 176 verses, in which groups of eight verses of the psalm begin with each successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The three psalms, however, share a common theme of reverence for the Torah, the instruction given by God to the ancient Israelites at Sinai. Psalm 119 begins with the words "(*ashre*) are the ones whose way is sincere, the ones who walk in the Torah of the LORD."...

...The acrostic structure of Psalm 119 marks it as a wisdom composition, as do its content and message. Wisdom psalms are defined as those that provide "instruction in right living and right faith in the tradition of the other wisdom writings of the Old Testament--Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. And in most of these psalms the path to wisdom is through adherence to the Torah, the instruction of the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Within the poetic lines of Psalm 119, seven Hebrew words are used in synonymous interchange with the word torah (translated below as "instruction"), which itself is used twenty-five times in the psalm. The words are:

- 'edah, "decree" (used 23 times)
- mishpat, "ordinance" (used 23 times)
- choq, "statute" (used 22 times)
- dabar, "word" (used 22 times)
- mitsvah, "commandment" (used 22 times)
- piqqud, "precept" (used 21 times)
- 'imrah, "promise" (used 19 times)

While each synonym carries a slightly different nuance of meaning, little is gained by attempting to distinguish a separate meaning, theological or otherwise, for each of them...

...In Psalm 119, then, the instruction of Yahweh is not presented as a strict set of rules and regulations, but a way of life or approach to being that brings one closer to God. The psalmist repeatedly implores God to "cause me to live" (verses 25, 37, 40, 77, 88, 107, 144, 149, 154, 156, 159) because of the torah, that is the instruction, the decree, the precept, the ordinance, the words, the promise, the statute, the commandment--because of all of the teachings of God for the good of humankind..."

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=824](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=824)

**Nancy deClaissé-Walford** *Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages, McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA*

**I Corinthians 3:1-9; RCL, the same reading (1 Corinthians 3:10-23; RCL verses 10-11, 16-23) The Corinthian readings began January 15 and will continue through the rest of Epiphany, February 19.**

*"After a heady exposition of how true, Godly wisdom is given by the Spirit of God, Paul returns to directly address the Corinthians' divisions--and the assessments of themselves and their leaders upon which those divisions are based.*

*For people who considered themselves wise, Paul has some hard words about true wisdom..."*  
(continued after reading)

#### Divisions in the Church

3 But I, brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not

ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? <sup>4</sup>For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

<sup>5</sup>What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup>I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup>So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup>He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. <sup>9</sup>For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

a. [1 Corinthians 3:1](#) Or *brothers and sisters*

“...In a series of images, Paul proceeds to put his and Apollos' ministries in proper perspective. Different leaders in the church should not be seen as rallying points for competing parties, but as co-workers performing complimentary tasks for the achievement of a common goal.

In 1:21 Paul had contrasted God's wisdom with the world's by saying that God saves by means of the belief that comes when people hear the word of the cross. Now, he urges the Corinthians to see that both he and Apollos are servants through whom the Corinthians have come to such believe (3:5).

Notice how Paul has undermined their efforts to flock to one leader over another. Although worldly wisdom and God's wisdom are antithetical concepts, he places both himself and his purported competitor Apollos on the side of God's wisdom and the gospel. Rather than villainize Apollos, Paul insists that the only way to rightly interpret the work of God in Corinth is to see that both men have been working together, under God, to build the church.

Paul uses two metaphors to help the Corinthians imagine his and Apollos' complimentary ministries. First, in an agricultural metaphor, he depicts himself as the one who scattered the seed and Apollos as the one who cared for it by watering it. But any growth is only from God--which means that God is the only person in that whole interchange who is worthy of allegiance (3:6-7). The imagery shows why all the Corinthians should be allied together under God.

If Paul and Apollos are one, united in their work for and with God (3:8-9), where does that leave the Corinthians? They are the field over which the leaders are working (3:9), or the building they are helping construct (3:9-12). The Corinthians are dependent on both workers, and should not be allying themselves with one against the other...”

...Perhaps the most formidable call of 1 Corinthians is not simply to recognize that our own divisions are not God's best for God's people, but to take up its insistence that we make the gospel message of the one, crucified Christ our own canon for measuring the church. Are we, in fact, a cross-shaped people?”

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=799](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=799) **J.R. Daniel Kirk**  
*Pastoral Director, Newbigin House of Studies Fellows Program, San Francisco, California*



**“The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 5th Chapter”**  
**“Glory to You, O Lord”**

**Matthew 5:21-37, RCL, the same reading (Matthew 5:38-48; RCL, the same reading) Chapter 5, which began on January 29, will continue through today, February 19.**

“My dear friends in Christ,

Two weeks ago we began our look at Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, his first (and also the longest) recorded in the gospels. We began with the Beatitudes. Do you remember what Jesus taught us in those first 12 verses? We are blessed! Last week, Jesus told us that we are good, good because he made us good and calls us good. Jesus encouraged us to let our goodness season the world like salt and shine out like light to everyone else.

Jesus went on to explain what he expects when it comes to being good. He wants us to do more than talk the talk. He wants us to walk the walk. Everyone likes to talk about being good...”

Read the rest of Pastor Jon Brohn’s sermon at <http://www.salemlutheran.org/sermons/saviors-sermon-talk-talk-and-walk-walk>

#### Anger

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother<sup>[a]</sup> will be liable to judgment; whoever insults<sup>[b]</sup> his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell<sup>[c]</sup> of fire. <sup>23</sup> So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.<sup>[d]</sup>

#### Lust

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

#### Divorce

<sup>31</sup> “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

#### Oaths

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say to you,

Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,<sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.<sup>36</sup> And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.<sup>37</sup> Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.<sup>[e]</sup>

- a. [Matthew 5:22](#) Some manuscripts insert *without cause*
- b. [Matthew 5:22](#) Greek says *Raca* to (a term of abuse)
- c. [Matthew 5:22](#) Greek *Gehenna*; also verses [29](#), [30](#)
- d. [Matthew 5:26](#) Greek *kodrantes*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/64 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a laborer)
- e. [Matthew 5:37](#) Or *the evil one*

### “This is the Gospel of the Lord”      “Praise to You, O Christ”

“It may sound trite to say that I think Jesus is being radical in this week's portion of the Sermon on the Mount -- after all, isn't Jesus always kind of radical? -- but I'm going to say it anyway. Trouble is, we often miss just how radical or, maybe more, in what way he's being radical.

Maybe I should explain. You see, I've most often heard two nearly opposite interpretations of this passage, each claiming that Jesus is being radical in his approach to the law. In the first reading, Jesus is being radical by urging us to take the law far more seriously than we'd ever imagined. He is, in fact, initiating a new law that both exceeds and supersedes the law of his forebears...The second line of attack goes in the opposite direction: Jesus is radically taking the law to extremes precisely to show us that we are utterly helpless to follow the law. This reading puts a decidedly theological twist not just on this passage, but indeed on the whole of the law, as suddenly the law's chief value is not to guide the Christian life but instead to drive us to Christ for mercy. While this version underscores our dependence on God for forgiveness, it nevertheless empties the law of any significant moral content. Worse, it makes it sound like Jesus didn't really mean what he says...Okay, so if I don't care for either of these two readings, in what way do I think Jesus is being radical? Well, to tell you the truth, I don't think Jesus' main concern is with the law at all. Seriously. I think Jesus is talking about God, specifically, the kingdom of God, the kingdom that is coming and, indeed, is made manifest in his life, death, and resurrection. And whenever you're talking about God you're also talking about relationships...But the law is actually concerned with relationships...

<http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=1521> [David Lose](#) President, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Penn



Agnus Day appears with the permission of <http://www.agnusday.org/>