



# HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

## WORSHIP SERVICE FOR JULY 3, 2022



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Sermon by Pr. Meredith Bedker Musaus

The Reading: Galatians 6:1-16

The final chapter of Galatians ties up what Paul has been discussing throughout the letter to the people of Galatia. In the first half of the chapter Paul continues the theme of healthy living in the community, and in the second he addresses, for the final time, the particular pressing issues in Galatia.

**Because some of these conversations still happen in our modern day life – I lift them up in a Dear Abby type of Advice column for my sermon today.**

**Dear Paul,**

**I have a friend who is a Christian. She comes to church all the time, is very “religious” but outside of church she is very judgmental and talks about people behind their backs.**

**Help! I want to stay friends! Signed ... exhausted**

Dear exhausted,

We certainly are not perfect as Christians are we? Being a Christian is more than our personal piety and what “we do” when it comes to church. It is so tempting to point out other people’s wrongs especially when we can’t see our own shortcomings. However, the Christian life is best shown through how we treat others. I’d work at changing the subject or point out the good points of the person being criticized.

**Dear Paul,**

**My relative boasts all the time about their accomplishments – how they got accepted into the best college, how they got the best job, and how they now can afford to do anything .. anytime .. anywhere. Signed ... feeling insignificant**

Dear feeling insignificant,

Being around people who aren’t humble isn’t easy. None of us can be successful without the help of a wider community. The grade school teacher, the crossing guard who said good morning, the grandma who picked you up for preschool so your parents could work, the high school principal who gave you detention for that prank really made you think, the opportunity to have a car, the savings funds that helped you in college.

Your first boss who took a chance on you. As Christians we are part of a community where we are to support one another – whether we know each other or not. Maybe you can gently remind your friend to be a bit more gracious, thankful and use their success not just for their own wants but to pay it forward to give someone else a chance.

**Dear Paul,**

**I'm worried about my cousin's drinking. She thinks she can quit on her own without any help but it just causes her to be angry, depressed and critical. What can I do?**

**Signed ... Love my cousin but I'm worried**

Dear Love my cousin but I'm worried,

We so often think we can do things on our own. Sometimes we need to gently help our loved ones see what we see. But only your cousin can do it. People in AA have found that living a life of sobriety means taking it one day at a time. People in AA gather in meetings because they need each other to support their sobriety. We in the church could learn from them – they support each other in good times and in bad – if they fall they are there to lift one another up without judgment. Maybe you could invite someone you know who is in recovery to speak with your cousin but again only she can get sober. Sober or not we can't do this life alone!

**Dear Paul,**

**Our niece was arrested for doing something illegal. Some of the church people say she isn't welcomed at church anymore. Signed ... is that Christian?**

Dear is that Christian?

To live in the spirit of the crucified and living Jesus means we have new life. We are all given second chances in Jesus Christ. Your niece should know in a profound welcoming way that the church is a safe place and support her during this time.

**Dear Paul,**

**My friend's pastor says that we have to follow a long list of laws – do's and don'ts to be saved by Jesus. When I heard her preach it made me wonder if I am good enough to be a Christian. Signed ... confused.**

Dear confused,

There is only one thing that saves you and that is what God has done in Jesus Christ. It is only through Jesus that we are saved. Period.

**Dear Paul,**

**Someone from church I know leads a reckless life – there are too many things to name that are troubling. How can I set him on the right path of life? Signed ... willing to help.**

Dear willing to help,

Most people don't want advice. They just want someone to listen. We all have a story. I would invite them out for some pita bread and wine and ask, "how is it going"? Don't bring up the stuff that worries them because they may get defensive—just listen. Ask them some inquisitive questions. What is a favorite memory of their childhood. Where did they grow up. Who were their childhood friends. Was there ever a time in their life that life was really difficult. After an initial contact reach out again and listen some more. You know we never know what a person is going through until we hear their story or in even a small way walk in their shoes.

**Dear Paul,**

**Why do churches disagree and have different opinions when we read the same Bible? Signed ... just asking**

Dear just asking,

One of the many difficult things to understand as we walk this Christian life. We all know people who are Christian who follow other teachings. Yes, Christians read the same Bible but other traditions may interpret it much differently. After I was in Galatia another preacher came that had a whole different way of interpreting how we are saved in Jesus. It made me so angry! Sometimes as Christians we are led into sin by thinking we have the only way to Jesus. Or to think that some of us are better than others. Or some belong and some don't. I have to confess that I have difficulty talking to those preachers who came to Galatia after I left – they so confused everyone. But I take my lead from Jesus – who welcomes – who forgives even me and Paul, a former oppressor of Christians. We need each other as people of faith but it isn't always easy as you have discovered.

**Dear Paul,**

**What do you hope for us as we live out our Christian faith? Signed ... inquiring minds want to know**

Dear inquiring minds want to know,

I do pray for you to have an inquiring mind that is always asking questions of how our faith interacts through the world. Back in my letter to the Romans I asked a rhetorical question, "What then shall we say to this? That is the question I would invite you to ask when you read the morning paper, listen to the news, have conversations with friends with whom you disagree?"

What then shall we say to this. Being a Christian is constantly asking how does my faith inform this thing in the world. Being a Christian is about learning new things, asking questions, being open to change and in case you forgot welcoming the stranger. Most of all I would pray for your inquiring mind that in Jesus Christ you are a new creation and everyday is a new beginning!

**Can I get an amen?**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

United in Christ and guided by the Spirit, we pray for the church, the creation, and all in need.

You send your church into the world to proclaim Christ's new creation to all. Renew the church as it carries out your mission of welcome and belonging. We pray that our actions and words reflect your love for your people.

Your creation abounds with flowing waters and diverse creatures. Guide the work of climate scientists as they develop and advocate ways to restore earth's natural balance. Motivate humankind to adopt lifestyles that protect and sustain the earth.

Work through the world's leaders to defend the most vulnerable and work for the good of all. We continue to pray for the people of Ukraine and Russia who are suffering such senseless violence and oppression.

You desire abundant life for all. As we celebrate Independence Day, instill in us gratitude, generosity, and persistence in working toward freedom and equity for all people. Help us to right the wrongs, include those excluded and educate ourselves about our Nation's history all as an expression of our faith.

Mothering God, you care for all people in need. Nourish those who are hungry, homeless or struggling. Heal those who are sick, and comfort all who are dying or grieving.

We remember the saints who proclaimed your reign on earth and now rest in you. Make us faithful in our witness to Christ's new creation.

God of every time and place, in Jesus' name and filled with your Holy Spirit, we entrust these spoken prayers and those in our hearts into your holy keeping. **Amen.**