

Through today's Scripture readings, God is at work to guide and strengthen us in our various vocations as His called and redeemed children, who reflect the light of Christ to the lost, helpless souls of this world. But these lost souls are not always humbled by their helpless, sinful condition. Instead, encouraged by the forces of evil in the world around us, they are often proud of their sinful ways.

We live in a country where this sinful pride is on the rise, and influencing the laws of our land. This is evident in our Supreme Courts decision to redefine things like marriage to include same sex couples. And even though the Supreme Court overturned it's decision to legalize the premeditated murder of unborn children, it's still legal in states like Colorado, along with assisting someone in committing suicide. Add to this our governments support of things like reassigning the sex of children, and it's easy to see that we live in a world and country where God's Laws, such as the 10 Commandments mentioned in our OT reading from Exodus, are considered by a growing number of people to be from a bygone age of ignorant, "behind the times" people.

But let's not forget that there is a sinful nature in each one of us which supports such ungodly thinking. We can, therefore, understand where evil comes from, especially when we understand and believe in what God reveals to us in the Bible. In fact, like the people St. Paul was writing to in our Epistle reading from 1 Corinthians, we all have some past history of being actively involved in the sinful ways of the world because we're all sinners. Acknowledging this truth about our sinful nature is helpful when it comes to living out our lives as God's people who, by the grace of God, are repentant and forgiven sinners through faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Speaking of Jesus Christ, let's consider for a moment what the world was like when Jesus lived under Roman rule. Those who today say that Christians are "behind the times" and hanging on to old-fashion traditions, especially in the area of marriage between one man and one woman, are usually unaware of some of the traditions that existed in the society where the Christian Church was born. When Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthians, he was calling on them to make a break from some of the long standing traditions in their culture—to dare to take a stand and admit that the culture around them was wrong. Ironically much of our society today is returning to ancient tradition when it comes to morality, not Christians.

The Roman culture of Jesus' day had no problem with, for example, promiscuity among married couples, homosexuality, or even sexual relations with minors (see "Sexual Morality in a Christless World," Matthew Reuter, CPH). And yet, even though we know from God's Word that Christ was opposed to these and all other sins, what did He mainly focus on when it came to the sins of His day? It wasn't the sinful Roman culture, it was the sins in His Father's house.

The reason for Jesus focusing more on the sins that had crept into the church was because the only thing that can enable people in the world to

repent of their sins and rejoice in God's forgiveness is the Word of God. So, if God's people/His Church is not teaching the Word of God then there would be no hope for the world.

How, then, can we apply Jesus' actions in our Gospel reading to our lives today? We're told that Jesus made a "*whip of cords*," and drove the money changers out of the temple grounds, along with others who were making His "*Father's house a house of trade*." But let's also think about how Jesus deals with the sins you have brought into His house this morning.

Did you this past week allowed God's material blessings to rule your life instead of God? Did you bare false witness or gossip about others behind their back, instead of caring for them as God cares for you? In order to set you free from your sinful ways, the Lord would need more than a whip. He would need a cross on which to put you and your sins to death.

But instead of using a whip on us, Jesus allowed a whip to be used on Him. Instead of putting us to death on a cross, He allowed Himself to be put to death on a cross in our place to set us free from our sins. That's why, when you confessed your sins this morning, instead of driving you out of the church with a whip, our Lord said, "*I forgive you*."

Through our faith in this good news, how does the Lord want us to deal with the sins of others in the world around us? He first seeks to humble us daily as we meditate on the sacrifice He made to pay for our sins, so that we live in daily repentance and faith as sinner/saints. Then, restored and strengthened by His Word and Sacraments of forgiveness, He seeks to work through us as we share His Word of Truth, both the Law and Gospel, with others in ways that mirror Christ's sacrificial love. His love includes being willing to suffer persecution and even death rather than to compromise God's Word of Truth. For it's only through God's words of Law and Gospel, revealed most clearly in Jesus' death and resurrection, that He convicts us and others of our sins so that we can rejoice in His forgiveness.

All glory be to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's Sermon] What often happens when you stand up for what is right while the rest of the kids at school are doing something wrong? Do they make fun of you? Let me help you see that it's best for you and others when you do what God wants you to do.

Let's say, for example, you heard on the news that a recent shipment of strawberries were contaminated with a bacteria that would make you very sick. But your teacher at school and the kids at school don't know that. So when you go to school and your teacher, as a special treat, offers all the kids in your class a choice between these chocolate covered strawberries or these prunes, what do you do? You warn them that the strawberries will make them sick, and you choose to eat a prune. But the other kids laugh at you for eating a prune, and they all eat the chocolate covered strawberries. That would be hard, wouldn't it. But later that day they all get sick, and wish they had listened to you. So the next day at school they say they're sorry, and want to be your friend.

Something similar is true when it comes to telling others that Jesus died on a cross and rose from the dead to save us from our sins, death and the devil. While people may at first make fun of you, when God works through the words of the Bible that you have shared with them to give them faith in the Good News about Jesus, they will thank you later (like you thanking me when I tell you that these chocolate covered strawberries are not contaminated and you're all welcome to have one).