

# Apostles Anglican Church

*The Second Sunday after Pentecost*

22 June 2025

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Text: Zechariah 12:8-10; 13:1, Psalm 63, Galatians 3:23-29, Luke 9:18-24

Title: The Way of Christ in Troubled Times

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Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, you gave your Apostles grace truly to believe and to preach your word: Grant that we might love what they believed and preach what they taught through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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## Introduction

The Green Bay Packers ended their 1960 season with a loss after blowing their lead in the 4th quarter of the NFL Championship Game.

When the players returned after the off-season, they expected to get some training on a new system that would change how they played and give them an edge over other teams.

As they gathered around, their coach, Vince Lombardi, held up the ball and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football!"

Lombardi took them back to the basics of the game. They focused on the fundamentals: blocking, tackling, throwing, catching, and so on. They went on to win the NFL Championship that season, beating the New York Giants 37-0. And, Vince Lombardi went on to win five NFL Championships in seven years.

We, too, when faced with difficulty and uncertainty, must return to the fundamentals. And we live in difficult and uncertain times.

Our country and other places around the world are divided over political and social issues. We're divided on racial and social justice, gender, education, and even our rights.

There are conflicts in Israel and Gaza, Ukraine and Russia, and in Haiti. We learned this morning that we bombed Iran overnight. This political and social climate makes for a boiling pot of tension.

Over the last several weeks, I have been asking myself,

**“What are we as Christians to do in difficult and uncertain times?”**

And

**“How am I responsible to act as a priest in these times?”**

The answer lies in the hands of Coach Lombardi. We have to return to the core of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

When times get tough, we don't need a complex new approach to face the days ahead; we need to get back to the fundamentals.

### **Transition**

And to do so, we must start with Jesus.

### **# 1 – Follow the real Jesus**

However, there's a problem with Jesus, though. . .

Many people make Jesus into their own image and shape him into a likeness that conforms to their views.

But Jesus isn't what we make him out to be. A disciple must be shaped by the master and not the other way around.

So, let's return to the fundamentals and examine what characterized Christ's life and teaching during His earthly ministry.

### **Love and Compassion**

One of my favorite passages, which reveals the heart of Christ, is found in Luke 7.

In this passage, Jesus enters a city and encounters a funeral procession. A widow is weeping and mourning for the loss of her only son. In the social system of the day, having no husband or son to provide for her, she was most likely now destitute.

Luke tells us, "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her."

Jesus was filled with compassion and raised her son from the dead.

Jesus was compassionate! He cared deeply for others.

And this isn't the only place in Holy Scriptures we see Jesus' compassion drive him to take action.

Matthew tells us that the thing that drove Jesus to feed the 4,000 was his **compassion** for the crowd because they were hungry.<sup>1</sup>

In Matthew chapter 14, Jesus had just learned that his cousin John the Baptist had been killed, so he went away to try to get some privacy, but the crowds followed him. Now, thank God I'm not Jesus, because I know I would be annoyed.

But not Jesus. Mathew tells us, "When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had **compassion** on them and healed their sick.

**Jesus was compassionate to the needs and troubles of others.**

**He was also humble.**

In the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus provides the perfect portrait of what it looks like to be humble.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 15:32-39

He said,

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

But Christ doesn’t just preach on humility; he demonstrates it. While there is nothing comparable today to the utter humiliation of washing another’s dirty feet, this act demonstrates just how humble Christ was.

This act is regarded as such a humiliating task that a Hebrew slave couldn’t be compelled to wash feet. Normally, the host would provide guests with water so they could wash their own feet. But instead, Jesus (the Host) does it for them. He becomes a living sermon, demonstrating what it means to love others through humble service.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:3-12

Jesus was humble in spirit.

**And he was forgiving.**

When the Pharisees brought him the woman caught in adultery, Jesus forgave her and told her to go and sin no more.<sup>3</sup>

But his forgiveness doesn't end there. So loving and compassionate is Christ that from the cross, he forgave those who fought for his execution and those who were nailing him to the cross.

This, my friend's, "is JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!!!"

This is the Jesus we follow.

### **Transition**

Compassion, humility, and forgiveness characterized Jesus and his ministry. This is the Jesus whom we are called to emulate.

### **# 2 – What Jesus requires of his disciples**

In today's reading from Galatians, St. Paul doesn't allow any wiggle room. He writes, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."<sup>4</sup>

He takes this even further in his letter to the church in Rome, writing, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"<sup>5</sup>

We have died with Christ in baptism, and having risen from the waters of baptism, we are to put on Christ.

We are commanded to live a life in the way he did, with compassion, humility, and forgiveness.

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<sup>3</sup> John 8

<sup>4</sup> Galatians 3:27

<sup>5</sup> Romans 6

We are to be like him. We are not only called to say and teach the things He said and taught, but also to do the things He did.

To have compassion on others in their troubles and needs.

Christ didn't stop to take inventory of each person's issues to see if they deserved his kindness.

He simply sees their hunger and feeds them.

He sees the sick and heals them.

He doesn't look at filthy feet and say it's too much; he washes them.

He doesn't seek the upper hand before he offers forgiveness; he simply forgives.

Again in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil."

There are no caveats. Be compassionate, be humble, and forgive as you have been forgiven.

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Living a life like his, a life of compassion, humility, and forgiveness, is the cross Christ asks us to bear daily with him.

We have to deny ourselves and love with compassion.

We must lay aside our glory for humility.

We must relinquish our need to be right and learn to forgive.

Christ calls us to do this at all times, but especially in difficult and troubling times.

When we ardently disagree with others at home, at work, or out in public, we must ask ourselves, “Is what I’m saying and doing loving and compassionate?”

When we KNOW we’re right about something, are we humble or haughty?

When someone else wrongs us, do we forgive them?

### **Conclusion**

What should we do in times of social and political unrest?

Well, I would love to give you a map to help you navigate these difficult and troubling times, but frankly, there’s not one.

But I can offer you this compass: in all you do, in all your interactions on social media and in public, in whatever you choose to do and say, let the compassion, humility, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ guide your words and actions.

**Amen.**