

Many members. One body united in Christ.

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

St. Matthew 5:20-26

12 July, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We've all been there. A disagreement becomes a heated argument. Words fly through the air that make razor blades look dull. Accusations are made – sometimes true, sometimes not. Threats. The anger continues build and boil. No one wants to back down or concede ground because that would be defeat. There must be total victory. Soon thoughts and words drive fists forward or to reach for whatever weapon is close. And as we see happening night after painful night on the news, people end up dead – sometimes even innocent bystanders.

Anger is a beast that breeds nothing but more anger and hatred. Left unchecked, anger can pour out in physical violence and just as terrible, murder that is committed in the mind and heart. The only difference between the two is that the threat of punishment keeps the hands from carrying out the desires of the heart. And while there is no city ordinance against anger, the Lord Jesus today tells you that in eyes of God anger IS murder and earns the offender the exact same punishment – hell fire. It is not overlooked, or excused, or just accepted as the way people are. Both are sin. Both break the Fifth Commandment. Both defy God and seek to play God. Both are deadly to your soul.

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Anger is insidious. It can start to stir in us through small frustrations and irritations. We may not be yelling and screaming or throwing punches but our hearts grow cold. Our words grow sharp. Our faces fall. We speak to others out of disdain rather than concern. The hard and slow work teaching and training in righteousness are replaced with immediate brute force and words that are meant to degrade and humiliate and put the other in their place...beneath us. And sometimes our anger drives us into silence, an unwillingness to speak with those who, purposefully or not, have gotten under our skin. We make our anger clear by ignoring them or saying as little to them as we possibly can.

When you stew in your anger and let the fire smolder, when you go and share your anger with all your friends instead of the one who has offended you, so that your friends will get on your side and be angry with you, when you plot your revenge and make threats of retaliation, when you refuse to actively work toward true peace and restoration of a good relationship with the object of your anger, you invite the very pure and righteous anger of God to burn in the same way against you for your offenses against Him. This is true of anyone, but most especially when it comes to your Christian brothers and sisters.

You ask the Judge of heaven and earth to treat you the same way you are treating your neighbor. If, as we sing in our hymn of the month "And treat your foe as your friend", how hard are we to work to not simply not be at war with our Christian family but to live again with the deepest love and concern for one another? How often have you come to the altar to receive the Lord's forgiveness, to be reconciled to God, knowing full well that there is someone, maybe someone here, that even the thought of sets your teeth on edge, someone you can't even stand to look at let

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alone talk to? You receive the Body and Blood of Jesus and walk away still brimming with murderous thoughts. Do not be deceived. God will not be mocked.

Repent. Jesus today calls you to reconcile with one another, whatever the offense, whether you were in the right or not. Whether you are the offended or the offender, be reconciled. It doesn't matter how old or deep the scars are. It doesn't matter how complicated it is. It doesn't really even matter what it might cost you. Be reconciled. Freely forgive and seek forgiveness as you have been freely forgiven by God. He has set aside His just anger by enduring it Himself and calls you, frees you, to set aside your petty anger.

Reconciliation, just another word for forgiveness, is the heart and soul of the Christian faith and reconciliation begins with the cross of Jesus. Those marvelous words from St. Paul in today's Epistle are a fresh reminder of who you are and what has been done for you. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

Jesus died to sin. He quietly endured the false accusations, the punches, the lies, and the blasphemies even though He had every reason and right to respond. But because He trusted the will of His Father, He didn't respond. He didn't call down the legions of angels that stood ready with flaming swords. He just took it. He took it so that He could reconcile His persecutors and you to God. Hatred was fought with love. You were made right with God. The sinless Lamb of God offered up His life so that you would not be judged according to your sin, handed over to Satan, and cast into hell. And all those legions of angels filled the heavens

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with songs of praise to God when Jesus bowed His head and breathed His last because sin, death, hell, anger, and Satan were all defeated and you were set free.

In Jesus' holy and innocent suffering and death you were reconciled to God. Jesus' death to sin is made your death to sin and anger by your Baptism. In Holy Baptism you died and were buried right along with Jesus. That means our pride and desire to be right and "strong" have and must die. Whatever vengeance needs to be poured out, God will do as He alone knows best. But Jesus didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead and so have you. As you make your way to the day of judgment, Jesus invites you to His altar today to receive His Body and Blood and to be reconciled to your heavenly Father. You now walk in newness of life. You are dead to anger. You can forgive and let go of your anger against your brother and even your enemy because you are Baptized. Go quickly and be reconciled to one another. You have been reconciled to God.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.