

Sermon for Sunday, July 6, 2025
St. Luke/San Lucas Episcopal Church
2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30; Galatians 6:7-16; Luke 10:1-11,16-20

Almighty God, who has given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech you that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of your favor and glad to do your will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in your Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to your law, we may show forth your praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in you to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.¹

This is the prayer in our prayer book for our national day, which took place on Friday. I don't say that we celebrated it, because, for a lot of us, it wasn't a celebration. Rather, we lean into the parts of the prayer that speak of those days of trouble, we pray that, in these times of violence, discord and confusion, these days of pride and arrogance, these seasons of every evil way, we pray that our trust in God does not fail. We pray for wisdom, for peace and justice, we pray that we may prove ourselves glad to do God's will. Mostly, we pray, we pray.

This has been a challenging week for many of us. As many of you know, I spent over 27 years serving this country as a commissioned officer in the US Foreign Service, working in Embassies and Missions around the world, often side by side with colleagues from USAID and other development agencies. We were trying to bring peace and prosperity to the world. On Tuesday, July 1, USAID was eliminated as an agency, and thousands of people, Americans and nationals of other countries, who had dedicated their lives to helping others, are now out on the streets, without jobs. Millions of people who depended on us, who trusted us, to supply life-saving drugs, are facing death. Millions of infants and children who looked to us for food now have empty bowls, empty bottles, empty bellies.

It is easy, oh so easy, at this point, to rage, to cry out to God in anger. It is easy, oh so easy, to become overwhelmed with frustration, with resentment, with bitterness. It is easy, oh so easy, to fall into the blackness of disappointment, of discouragement, of despair.

It seems particularly appropriate that our Epistle lesson for today is from Paul's letter to the Galatians. It's almost as if God, with infinite wisdom, knew we needed to hear these words. Let's start with a bit of background. Paul's letter to the Galatians is one of the earliest books in the New Testament, two decades earlier than any of the gospels. And one of the few letters attributed to Paul is widely believed to be authentic to him.

¹ Book of Common Prayer, pg. 820

Paul is writing to the Christian community at Galicia, and he is not happy with them. In fact, he is furious, and he doesn't hold back. As Diana Butler Bass notes in her *Sunday Musings*,² "if [Paul] were writing it now, it would make for a viral thread on social media." Paul was angry because the Galatians were having a huge theological fight: Did non-Jews have to become Jews before becoming Christian? And this infighting made Paul angry. He was angry at a faction of his co-religionists who were putting unwarranted requirements on new Gentile converts. He defended the newcomers, an outsider group, those not welcomed, and those marginalized. In effect, as Diana puts it, "Paul was standing up for the religious immigrants to Christianity."

"What was his answer to the problem? Welcome outsiders. Bring them into the community. Treat them as full citizens of God's kingdom, siblings in the household of faith. Do not exclude others. Do not put unrealistic requirements on inclusion. Do not treat them cruelly."

Toward the end of Paul's letter, we have our lesson for today. Do not be deceived. Do not be fooled. Do not be lead astray. I could preach an entire sermon on those words alone. Today, in our era of misinformation, or time of AI and deepfakes, of partial truths and lies, it is easy, oh so easy, to be deceived. To get lost in the miasma of distorted information coming at us at such high speed from so many directions. To become disoriented, angry and confused. Yet Paul grounds us with these simple words, do not be deceived: God is not mocked.

God, who stands for justice and peace. God, who stands with the marginalized and abused. God, who calls on all to show love to one another, just as God has shown love to us. That God, will not be mocked. Yes, there are many in our world today who are out there mocking God. Some are even doing it in the name of God. Calling for cruel acts, for separation of families, for withholding of food to the hungry, for cutbacks of healthcare to the sick. Yes, there are those who, in this moment, are out there mocking God, discarding God's teachings, and celebrating, yes, celebrating, their victories.

But Paul is clear in his writings, God is not mocked. Because, because you reap whatever you sow. I actually find this to be the most scary part of this text. We will reap whatever we sow. And right now, I am extremely concerned about what we as a country, we as a people, are sowing. Putting immigrants in wire cages, surrounded by alligator and snake-infested swamps. That's not going to end well, for them or for us. Bombing another country. That's not going to end well, for them or for us. Cutting food to children, healthcare to the sick, support to the aged. That's not going to end well, for them or for us.

² Butler Bass, Diana. *Sunday Musings*, July 6, 2025. <https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/sunday-musings-665>

Reflecting on this text, spending time on just what we have been sowing, on what we will be reaping. You can see why this week was difficult, why there were times when I found myself sinking into despair. I am not looking forward to harvest time.

Fortunately, the passage does not end there. Remember, Paul was writing to real human beings, people like us that did not control all the world around them. People who also struggled with the powers, principalities, and rulers of the darkness of this world. And so, to them and to us, Paul inspired by the Spirit, writes these words, “So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all.”

Don’t grow weary. Don’t give up. Keep doing right. Even when it’s hard. Even when it seems like we are swimming against the stream, that we are being pushed back rather than moving forward. Don’t grow weary. We can’t change everything in this minute. We can’t change what is happening in Washington DC.

But we do have something we can do. Whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all. So let us feed the children and adults who come to us for lunches. Let us provide shelter for the 17 women who live on our property. Let us fill our food pantry. Let us till and harvest our community garden. Let us provide clothes and bus passes and umbrellas. Let us welcome the 19 different support and community groups that use our building. Let us go to the park in support of freedom, of inclusion, of peace and social justice. Let us treat our neighbors, our family members, with kindness, even those whose political and social views we find abhorrent. Let us continue to hold our doors open for strangers, for immigrants and refugees, for all who come to us in need.

We can’t change everything, but we can continue to work for the good of all. We can continue to sow to the Spirit. So that is the challenge we leave with here today—don’t be fooled. Don’t grow weary. Don’t give up. Whenever we have an opportunity, work for the good of all, and rest assured that God will take care of the rest. Amen.