

but it may have helped you learn to believe that her rules were for your benefit. The Law of God (as expressed in the entire Old Testament) is a Law of Love and benefit. Jesus was not giving us a new law, instead He was explaining how little we are able to understand the Law of God because of our sin. The last example (verses 33-37) says a lot about our human condition. Our human flesh is so easily able to tell a lie. We would have no need to swear on something outside of us, if our "yes" would mean yes, without having to swear it was the truth. God always fulfills His promise. Without swearing on anything He made the promise to send us a Savior. Jesus was born, the promise is always fulfilled.

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

Ⓟ Almighty and Merciful God, we praise You for being more ready to forgive than to condemn. Because You are willing to cover our sin with the blood of Your Son Jesus Christ, we come to You in His name.

We thank You that You have: called us to faith in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, made us to be citizens in His eternal kingdom, and clothed us with the armor of righteousness. Give us the spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind. Preserve us, fill us with the fruits of righteousness and make us living epistles of Your Son Jesus Christ.

We pray, O God, that we would always be mindful that the church is the body of Christ and that He is our only head. Help us, then, in all testing, in all temptation, and in all trial to be loyal to Him, and steadfast in faith. In every opportunity to advance the borders of His kingdom, lead us forward to possess the land. Let us take hold of every challenge so that we, Your people, would not be conformed to this world, but would be transformed by the power of the Gospel. Give us the mind of Christ. Let none of us glory in our own power, or riches, but only in this, that we may know and receive Your power and riches in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus.

Preserve the liberty and freedom for which our nation stands. Be a source of strength to the weak and joy to the sorrowful and depressed. Grant companionship to the lonely and assurance to the discouraged. Above all, help us to show You our thanks for being cleansed through the blood of Your Son Jesus Christ.

Send us Your Holy Spirit that He may strengthen our faith and help us to accept Your forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Lord. May our lives constantly reflect our gratitude for Your great mercy. Give us courage as we reflect our faith in Christ in our daily life. Help us always show forth His light to the people of the world.

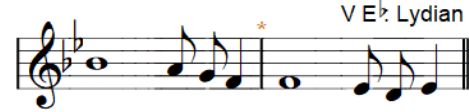
Hear us as we bring to You our private petitions. **(Time of silent prayer.)**

Help us as we share our prayers of care and thanksgiving with others. We ask this in name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

© **Amen.**

**EPIPHANY SIX**

**Chant Tone**



**ENTRANCE PRAYER:** O righteous and gracious Father, because You sent Your Son in the form of a humble servant, create in me the mind of Christ that I may be Your servant. Destroy in me false humility that is really pride, false pride that is really fear, and false hopes that will not face reality. Expose the shabbiness, phoniness, and emptiness of my pretenses and lofty schemes. In Christ accept me as I am and give to me the blessing of His innocence. Help me at all time to let my "yes" mean yes and my "no" mean no. By His dying and rising again, permit me to rise out of the death of pride to new life in humility. All this I ask that I would be blessed through He Whom You exalted to be my Lord. Amen (So be it, Lord.)

**I WAS A HALF HOUR LATE FOR WORK.** I knew my supervisor would be angry with me. I decided to "face the music" and let him write me up. I stepped into the elevator with the head of the agency. An "incident at home" and traffic had him running late. He started chatting with me about this and that. When we got to our floor he continued the chat as we walked past everyone to his office. There he said, "Thanks for the info, now get back to work." My supervisor assumed I was late because I had been talking to the big boss. My tardiness had been covered by a higher authority. Jesus covered our sin by taking it into His flesh. As far as everything is concerned we are perfect people living out a perfect life. Therefore, when Jesus quotes the Law to us it is to improve an even more perfect people who have been set aside in His name.

**THEME OF THE DAY:**

Faithfulness

**INTROIT**—(Antiphon: Psalm 98:2;) Psalm 98:7-9

Psalm 98 is identified only as "A Psalm" without identifying the author. In verse 2 we proclaim the wonder that God has revealed Himself to us. In verses 7-9 we praise the righteousness of God's unfolding revelation. The world is an orderly place. Seasons follow seasons, daylight follows darkness. Everything declares the just and righteous nature of God. We therefore can expect Him to judge our worth with a just and equitable scale.

**COLLECT**

Our sin brings trouble into our life. We ask to be delivered from our sin so that we are able to have life in the name of Jesus.

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**—Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Deuteronomy means "second law." (For some reason in modern English we change the letter order and say "duet" for two.) In Exodus 20 Moses received the Ten Commandments. In Deuteronomy 5, they are repeated and the book exemplifies and explains the Law of God. God gave us His Law for our benefit. "If" we loved and trust God we would follow the Law because in it we are promised life. These are called "if...condition" statements. If we follow, the condition we have life. If we don't follow the condition (usually faithfulness to God) we have death.

**GRADUAL**—Psalm 117:1-2a, 96:8

God showers us with great Love which is given to the believers and the unbelievers every morning. Verse 2 of Psalm 117 expresses our theme for today. "The Love of God shows forth in His faithfulness." As with our Introit we view the order in nature which has continued in an uninterrupted stream from the beginning of all time. We know that God will never vary from any part of His promises.

**EPISTLE LESSON**—1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Paul was smart enough to know that denominational differences would erupt over interpretation of the Word of God. Paul was insightful enough to tell us that those divisions are the result of sin (they are the result of our "flesh.") The best line is the last line from our text. We are both that which God created (the result of His "building") and we are the structure in which (by reason of our Baptism) God dwells (His "building.")

**GOSPEL LESSON**—Matthew 5:21-37

Moses stood in for God when he delivered God's Law to the people. Today, the Messiah (God with us,) explains His Law in all purity and Love. When your mother told you not to touch the hot stove you may or may not have believed her. Once you burned your hand it was too late to believe her,