

Koinonia Year One—October
Content from *Growing Faithful*
Scripture from the NRSV Bible

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Second Sunday of Luke

2 Corinthians 4:6-15 or 2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9 Luke 6:31-36

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

HEAR the Word of God—

(This is one of the Sundays in the liturgical year when the Epistle reading varies. Please check the designated reading for this year and follow below with that passage of Scripture.)

2 Corinthians 4:6-15

6For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. 8We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. 11For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. 12So death is at work in us, but life in you.

13But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe, and so we speak, 14because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. 15Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

16So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 11:31-12:10

(The actual liturgical Epistle reading does not include verse 10.)

31The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ (blessed be he forever!) knows that I do not lie. 32In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas set a guard on the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

12:1It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up into the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. 3 And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— 4was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. 5On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my

weaknesses. 6But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, 7even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. 8Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, 9but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for (my) power is made perfect in weakness." So I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Luke 6:31-36

Jesus said, 31*"Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

32"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

SHARE thoughts and insights—

These Scripture verses are some of the most challenging and clarifying in the whole Bible. How we respond to them is vital to—and reveals—our life in Christ.

- How would the world be different if everyone were to *do unto others as you would have them do to you* (verse 31)?
- Delving deeper into verses 32 thru 35 of the Gospel reading:
 - How do you *love those who love you*?
 - How do you *love your enemies*?
 - How do you *do good to those who do good to you*?
 - How do you *do good, expecting nothing in return*?
 - How do you *lend to those from whom you hope to receive*?
 - How do you *lend, expecting nothing in return*?
- Twice in this passage, when Jesus talks about doing good to *those who do good to you* and *lending to those from whom you hope to receive*, he says, *"What credit is that to you?"* The word commonly translated as credit is, in the original Greek, *χαρις*, which means "grace." So a much more accurate translation would be *"What kind of graciousness is yours?"* (CCB translation)
 - Discuss the difference in meanings and implications between the words *credit*

and *graciousness*.

- Which word do you prefer – *credit* or *graciousness*? Why?
- Which of these words do you think is closer to the meaning Christ was and is trying to convey to his listeners?

- Who is the *Most High* Jesus speaks of in verse 35?
 - How does Jesus describe him?
 - In that same verse, what does he say we are to do to *be children of the Most High*?

- In verse 36, Jesus says, "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*"
 - Who is our *Father*?
 - What does it mean to *be merciful, just as your Father is merciful*?
 - How would your life be different if you were to be genuinely merciful?

If the Epistle reading is 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

- Who and what shine in our hearts when we are truly Christians? (See verse 6.)

- What does Paul mean when he wrote, *we have this treasure in clay jars* (verse 7)?
 - Why do *we have this treasure in clay jars*?

- Paul wrote, *Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day* (verse 16).
 - What does he mean by this?
 - What do you think about this?
 - How do you feel about this?

If the Epistle reading is 2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9

- Why is Paul willing to boast in his weaknesses?

- What do you learn about Paul's character and ministry from reading this passage of Scripture?

GROW in faith—

If the Epistle reading is 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

- Consider and meditate on 2 Corinthians 4:8.
 - What do you do when
 - you are *afflicted*?
 - you are *perplexed*?
 - you are *persecuted*?
 - you are *struck down*?
 - What does Paul write that Christians are to do when
 - *afflicted*?
 - *perplexed*?
 - *persecuted*?
 - *struck down*?
 - How do your answers compare to the Christian ideal Paul sets forth in this Epistle reading and Christ sets forth in the Gospel reading?

If the Epistle reading is 2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9

- Why and how can Paul write that he is *content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ* (verse 10)?

In light of this Gospel passage, you might want to explore some other Scripture passages that shine light on this reading. See 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, Psalm 145:8-9a, and Exodus 34:6b-7a.

SERVE one another in love—

- These Epistle and Gospel readings give us much to practice in our lives. Let us live the love we learn about in these Scripture passages. *Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God* (1 John 4:7).

PRAY—

Lord have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Christ our God, who at all times and in every hour are worshiped and glorified in heaven and on earth; long-suffering, generous in mercy, and rich in compassion; loving to the righteous and merciful to the sinner; You call all to salvation through the promise of blessings to come. Lord, in this hour accept our prayers and

direct our lives in the way of your commandments. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds and deliver us from all affliction, evil and distress. Encompass us with your holy angels, so that guided and guarded by their company we may reach the unity of the faith and the knowledge of your unapproachable glory, for you are blessed forever. Amen.

May God be merciful to us and bless us; may He shine the light of His countenance upon us and have mercy upon us.

(My Orthodox Prayer Book)