

Today's sermon is based on verses 15-17, and I titled it: **The Mysteries of the Church.**

Jesus said: ***"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.***

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

In our text for today Jesus said, we too are to seek the lost, we too are to help our fallen brothers and sisters, no matter where they come from.

But just how do we do that, well first we will need to point out to people their own sin, and then offer them God's forgiveness.

Look, Jesus sets up the formula for helping sinners for us, and it starts with individual believers.

Again, Jesus said: ***If your brother sins against you go and show him his fault just between the two of you.***

That's right were to go and talk to them, to remind them that they're going down a path to destruction, rather than, a path of forgiveness and salvation.

Now, this is the optimum result, isn't it? That the person who is sinning would recognize their sin, and admit they are in the wrong.

Then this fallen brother or sister, is able to change, and come back into God's fold.

And what joy there is over one sinner who repents. But of course, that isn't always the case is it?. No! Some just refuse to repent, so what then.

Well, the Lord says there is another step to take. Jesus said: ***But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'***

Here the Lord says that we are to take one, or two witnesses along with us, so in that way, all the things that are spoken, would be recorded.

So, if there really was a sin committed, the witnesses would be able to acknowledge that yes, this person is doing wrong.

Therefore, hopefully, and prayerfully, he or she does in fact repent of their sin, once again joining God's flock.

Then Jesus continues: by pointing out that maybe this person still isn't going to listen to you or one, two, or even three witnesses.

He says yet another step is to be taken, Jesus says: ***If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.*** Now the church is the whole body of believers.

In this way the church, God's body of believers, would know that this person is still in sin, and still refuses to repent.

Jesus then says: ***and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector.***

Another words, They're to be looked at as totally lost unbelievers. Now this isn't the judgment of the church, its actually the judgment of God.

If he or she wants to continue to live in sin, and sees no need to repent, continuing to deny God's grace, and walking down a path of destruction.

Then the Lord says, in short: "So Let Them". Remember, Jesus said that we are to treat them as outsiders, unbelievers. Sure this sounds drastic.

But you, and I must realize that if one is going to lose his or her soul, drastic steps need to be taken. It is after all a life or death matter.

Again, what are we to do with a fallen brother or sister? Again were to go and talk to them one on one.

Then, if that doesn't get them to repent, the Lord says we are to take one or two Christian witnesses and talk to them again.

And finally, if that doesn't bring the fallen brother or sister to repent, the Lord wants us to bring them to the church, meaning all believers.

And if that doesn't work, the person will be set outside God's kingdom. Now for some they believe this punishment is very harsh.

But don't forget, the sinner or sinners have brought this punishment upon themselves. This isn't done out of revenge, or vengeance, or to show God's righteous punishment.

But, it is to show the love, and concern God has for the church and for the fallen brother or sister.

And also to show the love, and concern that you, and I as individuals, have for a person's soul.

Look, sadly when a person's soul is lost, eternity is also lost. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 5: ***hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.***

When one is set outside the church maybe it's then, and only then, that they realize the seriousness of their sin.

And its then, that some realize that they are in danger of spending eternity in hell, being separated from God forever.

Then if they do repent, God says they can be saved on the day of the Lord all because they recognized how serious losing ones soul, really is.

We too look at our lives, and we realize that but for the grace of God, we too could walk down that very same path of destruction right into hell itself.

And when we look at ourselves, we realize that we also commit every sin under the sun, either in thought, word or deed.

But, by excepting God in His grace, and in His loving mercy, we will, and have been kept in His kingdom.

But still the Lord gives us the responsibility; yes, even the privilege, to lead someone back away from destruction, and into eternity.

Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 6: ***“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted”***.

Our Lord reminds us: yes, we look at ourselves, and we realize as we restore someone else.

It can be very dangerous for us, that is, if we ourselves don't take the necessary steps to keep ourselves from falling into that same sin.

You know, its true that in our day and age, these steps aren't taken as often as they should be.

Today the world would rather call sin a sickness, or a disease, or something that everybody else is doing. Rather than a personal weakness.

As God has warned us, many people will, and have fallen into the temptation of their own flesh.

As well as, falling into the temptations of the world, even the temptations of Satan himself.

And yet as we warn people against their sin, we also give them hope that they can change, but, not on their own.

Nor can you, or I change on our own either. It can only be done through the grace and power of God Himself.

We read from James chapter 5: ***“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins”***.

Now, here is our divine encouragement. Jesus gave up everything that He might turn us away from sin, giving us the key to eternal life with him in heaven.

So, we too, find joy in turning those away from their sin, that they might enter heaven along with all the other saints who's sins are forgiven.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.