GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH, **August 15, 2021**; Pentecost XII Lectionary / Selected: Psalm 34:12-22; Joshua 24; Ephesians 5:6-21; John 6:51-69 Sermon Hymn: The God of Abraham Praise (stz. 1-4, 9, 11) (LBW 544) Anthem:

History Neither Lies Nor Changes

'A female ... [television] journalist heard about a very old Jewish man who had been going to the Wailing Wall to pray, twice a day, every day, for a long, long time. So she went to check it out. She went to the Wailing Wall and there he was, walking slowly up to the holy site. She watched him pray, and after about forty-five minutes, when he turned to leave, using a cane and moving very slowly, she approached him for an interview. "Pardon me, sir, I'm [journalist] Rebecca Smith May I ask you some questions?" "Sure", he replied. "Sir, how long have you been coming to the Wailing Wall and praying?" "For about sixty years". "Sixty years! That's amazing! What do you pray for?" "I pray for peace between the Christians, Jews, and the Muslims. I pray for all the wars and all the hatred to stop. I pray for all our children to grow up safely as responsible adults, and to love their fellow man". "How do you feel after doing this for sixty years?" "Like I'm talking to a [stone] wall"."

In other words, he felt that nobody was listening to him. People throng to the Western Wall to pray, thinking that they are somehow closer to God there because His Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant, had been there two thousand years ago. Many Christians also feel closer to God at the Wall. But this old Jewish

man in this joke exemplifies the vast majority of people who even bother to pray. They don't see, hear or feel anything back. They hope that God, or some vaguely defined, probably unknowable, hopefully benevolent, deity hears them and answers their prayers favorably. That however isn't real prayer. For real prayer begins with faith in God, Who calls Himself, "I Am". He is the one and only, real and living God. In other words, He's not dead. Not an inanimate object of wood or metal overlaid with gold, or colorfully ornamented in great beauty. And He will respond to the one praying in some tangible way. For real prayer is akin to a conversation between the creature and the Creator. As it should be.

God speaks to and communicates with us in many ways. The Holy Bible is a primary way He instructs us directly. Not just through the words as we read, but directly to us as we meditate on their meaning, and ruminate on our lives in the world. But it all starts with faith. We have faith that the Bible is true. This is an objective fact, but this world temporarily under the devil is constantly screaming at us that the Bible is false. Yet even archaeological finds prove it's true. From the first page to the last, it speaks of Christ Jesus Who saves us, Who rescues people from the lies and deception of the devil and all people under his sway.

The final chapter of the Book of Joshua summarizes the entire history of the Hebrews, who became the Israelites, who later became the Jews, up until that point in time. For history doesn't change. God reminds the people through the aged, dying Joshua

of all they and their ancestors had experienced from the gracious hand of God. It was all there, and written down for them in case they should ever forget. Even the inanimate rocks of God's creation can be called upon to witness what the people then did, and what we do in our own time. Nothing is ever forgotten for God sees and remembers all. With the glaring exception of anything that is put under the Blood of Christ Jesus, which is forgotten as if it had never existed in the first place.

The last few years America has been under assault from within and without, but mostly from within. Historical facts have been reimagined, revised, and rewritten wholesale. People want to believe certain things, so they conveniently revise history to say what they want it to say, regardless of whether or not their new version of events bears any likeness to the actual historical facts or not. For they live in a delusion, an illusion they prefer to make their reality rather than the actual state of the world. Vast numbers of Americans are now functionally insane and in need of counseling. Problem is, they won't listen to counselors, and even if they do, they choose those who will aid, abet and condone their insanity. A prime national example recently has been the fiction that the founding of America's primary purpose was to propagate and enslave black people. The "1619 Project" given supposed credibility by the New York Times claims that America was truly established when the first slaves were brought to these shores, this month in 1619. Its myriad inaccuracies, distortions, omissions and outright lies revise history to attempt to change our identity. For if we don't know where we came from historically, we won't know who we are now and where we are going.

But these satanic attempts to rewrite history have been ongoing for hundreds and thousands of years! A comparison of history books relating the same events over many decades, even centuries, clearly reveals the devilish "drift" of the interpretation and description of past events, to the point that some events never happened at all. The best example of this is the insistence by the Palestinian governing authorities that the Jews never lived in Jerusalem. Rather they only recently invaded the Holy Land and are illegal occupiers of the land that rightfully belongs and has always from ancient times belonged to the Palestinians. All lies!

In Joshua 24, God reminds the Israelites of their "recent" history, with a warning that if they ever repeal, revoke and disavow the pledges they made this day, judgement and curses will certainly follow. In short, because of the historical facts, they will never be able to go back and claim that they never said, did, or agreed to something in the past that they now want to annul. Yet, this is exactly what many Americans are doing these days, even those who claim to be Christians. They say things now that only a few years ago, or even just days or hours prior, contradict them. It's become so bad that society is in danger of screeching to a halt because no one can be sure what's real and true anymore. The "controversy" over mask wearing and vaccine efficacy is the case

in point. Public mandates are routinely violated by the very people issuing them. What is real? Who can keep up with the constantly changing pronouncements? We Christians have a true and continuously reliable source of correct guidance, and that is Holy Spirit. If we but earnestly pray for His wisdom and guidance in every decision we make, we can be absolutely assured that He will steer us through the minefield of our current social landscape unscathed and protected. And at the same time, being a witness and example to our fellow citizens who do not have the light of Christ within them. So don't lean on your own understanding!

While Antifa, BLM and other marxist/communist anarchist groups pull down monuments to historical heroes and notable figures because of "unforgivable sins", usually relating to having mentioned or worse, kept slaves at some point in their lives, they create a crisis of identity, making people hate themselves, their parents, their culture and their country. This is all blatant sin for God tells us that we must love each other and love ourselves as well. Because He loves us, then we must also love one another. Not loving others and ourselves results in enslavement and killing, the very things these insane groups claim to be against. What a great example of Lord Jesus' parable of people trying to pick a speck out of a neighbor's eye when there's a log in their own.

If we Americans are woefully ignorant of our national history, the same can not be said of another people group to which we are related, namely the Jews. Truly they are a miracle people. That they did not fade away in the mists of time over two thousand years, not being assimilated into other ethnic groups, like all other peoples have before them who lost their homelands, been conquered, suffered genocide, is plain and undeniable testament that God has chosen this people and will never renege on His covenants. The miracle of the reestablishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is irrefutable proof of God's providence. Never in all history had such a thing ever happened. And will never happen again. That the land itself, then barren wilderness and mostly uninhabitable all, now is blossoming since that its assigned people are living upon it again, is more evidence that God is with them.

Looking back at Joshua 24, God specifically recorded that Joseph's bones were now buried in the Promised Land, after being carried around for over 400 years! Yet, when the land had been conquered, Joseph's bones were finally laid to rest in the Holy Land. Talk about respect for one's elders and ancestors! Would most American young people even imagine such a thing? Folks, we need to study our own history, and see the hand of God guiding us through these few hundred years of our own country. And we need to personally correct the lies and deception that are being taught to the younger generations, so that they will know who they really are, and carry on the purpose God ordained for America from the beginning, which is to be a light of the Gospel to all the nations! Be glad for God is still on the throne, and you are in Christ! Regardless of how dark it gets, His light is brighter still!

