



## *Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast for August 29, 2021*

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### **Scripture for This Sunday (Revised Common Lectionary):**

- Song of Solomon 2:8-13 – “Songs” is a collection of love songs.
- Psalm 45:1-2, 7-10 – A song for the King.
- James 1:17-27 – The author exhorts Christians to befitting conduct.
- Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 – “it is ... from the human heart, that evil intentions come...”

### **“Fire’s destruction”**

*When fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, the one who started the fire shall make full restitution. (Exodus 22:6)*

Chapter 22 of Exodus lists damages and restitutions. Given the times this was written, it is no surprise that the damages listed are related to agriculture and land. The noted English Particular Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) approached this passage from a unique viewpoint: what if the fire was sin, in its many forms, such as theft, slander, and so forth? If we acknowledge that rumor, misinformation, and lies start “fires,” we can read today’s Gospel from a deeper perspective.

Jesus chastises the Pharisees and scribes who criticize Jesus followers for breaking ritual purity laws relating to the food they eat. After quoting Isaiah to point out their hypocrisy, Jesus astounds them further.

*Then [Jesus] he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.” For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come...” (Mark 7:14-15)*

Where does evil come from? “We have met the enemy, and it is us!” What comes out of us, lying, stealing, taking advantage of the defenseless, is our personal evil intent, not some external “Satan.” Mosaic law was adamant about personal responsibility, and as Christians today, we are accountable for our behavior. If we enable the fire of deceit to spread, we are culpable. But the one who started the fire is ultimately responsible.

Instead of following “human precepts” (Jesus quoting Isaiah in Mark 7:6-7), let us renew our belief in and focus on the love and mercy God extends to each and every one of us, each and every broken human being, through grace by the birth, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

**Please offer prayers for . . .** the people of Afghanistan and of Haiti; comfort for those suffering from severe weather; continued prayers for those suffering from wildfires in the Western US and Canada; prayers for those with COVID; pray for God’s blessing for Harry; Wanda’s and Rita’s recovery.