

Readings for July 2, 2023

United Church of Strafford In Person and Zoom Service

Responsive Reading *adapted from Psalms 16*

Leader: Protect me, O Spirit, for in you I take refuge.
You are my God. I have no good apart from you.

People: **Holy ones can still be found in the land
upholding the law of love.
They are springs of delight in a desert.**

Leader: Those who bow down before the false gods
of selfishness, greed and ambition
create suffering and sorrow in this world.
They sacrifice the blood of the earth
to their own gain.

People: **O Spirit of God, you are my chosen portion,
I sacrifice all I have to your service.
I place my life in your hands.**

Leader: The boundary lines fall in pleasant places for me—
a goodly heritage in you and in all that is holy.

People: **You give me counsel, O Spirit, and I thank you;
in the night my heart instructs me.**

Leader: I keep you always before me;
because you are at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

People: **Therefore my heart is glad,
and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.**

All: **You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

adapted from Galatians 5:1, 13-14, 16-25, 6:10a

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery...For you were called to freedom, friends; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become servants to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the selfish, materialistic ego. For what your selfish self desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the selfish self, and as a result you are internally divided, and it prevents you from doing completely what you want in either the material or spiritual realm. But if

you are led by the Spirit, you are not divided and can fulfill both material and spiritual laws and goals.

Now the works of the selfish ego are obvious: abusive or manipulative relationships, impure motivations, addictions, obsessions, resentments, conflicts, jealousy, anger, quarrels, polarization, factions, envy, drunkenness, life out of balance, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things block themselves from the spiritual realm.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things in the material realm.

Those who have the heart and mind of Christ have crucified the ego with its selfish passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.... so that we will work for the good of all and we will live as one.