**Sermon:**

**Is there Anything New Under the Son?**

**These past few weeks have left me raw and bludgeoned by our government’s shenanigans. No, I am not going to talk politics today—we each need to know our own heart about our opinions and how we vote. But I do want to talk about how people behave and treat each other in Washington DC. You have been battered by it as much as I have.**

**First, there is the anger with its brutal, rude, and intentionally hurtful comments and actions. Indeed, this is not new—it has been building over time, to the point that we now have come to expect it and are nearly numb to it.**

**Second, there is the obvious lack of respect for others. That disdain undermines the dignity of every human being—whether of political adversaries who are portrayed as ignorant and ridiculous, or in the ‘Me, Too’ realm where women are treated as objects and not people. We read that even our school-age children now bully with that same nastiness.**

**We have also become numb to what is said, no matter how loud or forcefully stated, because the truth is twisted and changed moment to moment.**

**Wow. Yes. We are all subjected to this every day. Constantly. And whatever our political position, it erodes our spirits.**

**Then, along come today’s Gospel readings for this church service. These are a heavy duty set of readings—some that many preachers choose to step passed and instead preach about Valentine’s Day or another issue. But our government’s behaviors have made these readings so relevant that I cannot step aside. Clearly, there is Nothing New Under the Son, since Jesus walked the earth 2000 years ago.**

**First, some background: these readings are part of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount,” also named the Beatitudes, which describe when Jesus was discussing the Commandments for those who were gathered with him. In this reading, Jesus describes three commandments and then explains how to live their fullness.**

 **First Jesus re-states the commandment that we should not kill and explains how living this commandment means we when we are angry or feel hateful, we reconcile with one another directly. Then Jesus reviews the commandment that we should not commit adultery; he explains this Law means that we are not disrespect others or treat them as objects instead of people. The third commandment Jesus repeats in this teaching is that we should not swear falsely, meaning that we should not manipulate others or deceive them with lies or falsehoods.**

**In this part of his sermon, Jesus is describing how the commandments represent how God would have us relate to one another. Jesus is teaching that these laws describe how we are to walk the Way of Love.**

**Jesus said these things to his followers so they would live the Way of Love in all their relationships, too. In that era, the scribes and Pharisees were enforcing these Commandments using fear as a mechanism of oppression and control. Jesus was describing how to use love rather than fear in our relationships with one another.**

**And this is how today’s reading really impacts us, today, 2000 years later. Think about the behaviors that have become common for our politicians and in society. The anger and rage, the demeaning and disrespectful words, the lies and false truths. Every one of these issues is addressed in today’s Gospel reading; Jesus’ teaching these Beatitudes reminds us what it is to be walking the Way of Love. And they also clearly demonstrate how distant today’s experiences are from this path.**

**Like Jesus’ followers, we 21st century Christians are called to live in relationships that deal with our anger through reconciliation, to address our desires with respect, and to relate with truthfulness instead of manipulation. We hunger for peaceful, non-confrontive relationships; we crave the respect for the dignity of every human being; and we want commitment to the truth in what we hear and say.**

**You and I can change our society in the direction that is so desperately needed. Let’s walk the Way of Love together, loving God and loving one another. Our world, our community, our lives, we each, all of us truly need it. AMEN**