

IN NOMINE JESU

GOD'S MERCY AND FAITHFULNESS TURN ONE FROM EVIL

Hear again the Word of God for this ninth Sunday after Trinity:

*In mercy and faithfulness iniquity is expiated;
And in fear of YHWH one turns aside from evil.¹*

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

In this week's Old Testament reading, we have heard a selection from what has been called for centuries, Wisdom literature. Its subject is wise living in this fallen Creation. That is its tie to Jesus' words from the Gospel of the week:

And I say to all of you, "Make for yourselves friends from the mammon of the unrighteous, in order that when it fails, they will welcome all of you into the eternal tents."²

Christians are born into, live, work, and die in a sin-filled creation. Though Christians have been washed clean from human bondage to sin, we still feel, know, and experience its effects in ourselves. That becomes painfully clear at times in our lives as we deal with and in our relationships to God and our neighbors. For His reasons, the foremost of which God has clearly revealed – the continued rescue of some from eternal separation from God – we who are named by our Father – “the Children of God” – must continue to live in the midst of the world that is unholy, unclean, and cannot remain as it is in the holy, clean, Presence of God. It is on account of the sin that adheres to us (and inheres in us) that sinner/saints like you and I need to hear the Word of God as it is given for this day:

*For man plans from (the) heart;
But from YHWH comes the answer of the tongue.³*

¹ Proverbs 16:6.

² Luke 16:9.

That was the first of nine parables given for us Christians to hear in the Church today. Like all the others, it is able to stand as a wise saying - or part of wisdom literature - on its own. Like the eight that follow, the first parable is best heard, received and applied by faithful believers in the context of Scripture.

That means finding Christ in the text. In other words, the wisdom sayings in the Bible are not merely rules, standards, or guides for holy living. Those components exist in the texts. But for humans, even the “best” Christians, the wisdom teachings are impossible to self-execute. The true believer who pays more than passing attention to the texts finds that he or she often fails to follow the wisdom of the Bible. That brings the realization that one is not in perfect communion with the Author of Wisdom. That leads one who is self-honest and not self-deceptive to the realization that one is unable, by one’s own power, reasoning, emotions or efforts to come to God, believe in Him, and follow His Word to the end of days. That is when the central theme of Holy Scripture – Christ Jesus crucified for the forgiveness of sin – must arise. It is God’s mercy and faithfulness that turn one from evil. Hear again the first parable, which as all the others for today, is declared in two parts:

*For man plans from (the) heart;
But from YHWH comes the answer of the tongue.⁴*

The first truism rings out – every human plans from the center of his or her being. You make plans each day as to what you will eat, drink, do, and so forth. You

³ Proverbs 16:1.

⁴ Proverbs 16:1.

make plans for vacations and for work. You even make plans about what to do in case of emergency, illness, or death. Every human who has the ability to reason has some capacity to make plans, and does so, whether or not they are Christian.

But only the Christian who has remained in communion with God through the means He provides – Word and Sacraments – is able to discern whether his or her plans are in accord with the will of God. At times, knowing that one’s plans are in line with the Almighty’s is a simple task. (For example: you have the explanations to the Commandments to help in discerning God’s concurrence with your plans).

At other times, understanding whether or not your plans are in accord with the Father’s comes after struggle, trial, and, at times, pain and suffering. Those times in particular are when it is beneficial to remember that Jesus knows perfectly the will of the Father for your life. Then, in Christ, you are returned to the living Word, and by it to petitions in prayer that God may show you His will with regard to your plans. In holding fast to the Word, and beseeching God in your prayers from that Word, God opens your understanding to His will, His counsel, His wisdom – in His time. That thought leads us to the second parable for the week:

*All (the) ways of (a) man are pure in his own eyes;
But YHWH weighs the spirits.⁵*

If God left us each to our own decisions, we would each be tempted to say that every plan we have made we determined with the purest intentions. We could even maintain that we checked our plans against the intent of God.

Yet, even if you did that for every decision you made, you would still fall short of the purity that the holy God demands. To anyone's self-thoughts about keeping pure in this fallen world, God answers, "you cannot!" He shows clearly, from myriad examples throughout Holy Scripture, and in the daily life of the Church, that even the "best" Christian does not have the ability to remain pure in all his or her ways before God at all times. The Lord weighs the spirits – and finds them all wanting.

That is why He provided His Son, the Perfect Man, the pure, holy, undefiled Son of Man. Only by taking the impure from His children and placing it upon the Pure Man, could God declare you truly pure. That happens when He puts His purity upon you – in Baptism, in Absolution, in the Sacrament of the Altar, and so forth – in all His Means of Grace. In them, in Christ, is the sinner/saint free to:

*Commit your works to the YHWH;
And your plans will be established.⁶*

Are you able to hear how that parable fits with the previous one? In it, you heard that all the ways of a person are pure in his or her own sight. Here you hear that it is in commending your works and plans to YHWH that He will make them firm. (Some of you like to refer to this biblical teaching by referring to prayers that declare: "Thy will, not my will, be done"). Anyone who is in communion with God is able to understand that He will make the works, ways, and plans of His people come into line with His will.

⁵ Proverbs 16:2.

⁶ Proverbs 16:3.

As our next parable declares, that is even true when it seems that the pressures of this world and the devil are hindering God's plan to work His ways in us. Hear it anew:

*YHWH has made everything for its own purpose;
Even (the) wicked for (the) Day of Evil.⁷*

Take heart, dear repentant sinner. Nothing in all of creation, whether mortal or immortal, physical or spiritual, seen or unseen, known or unknown, nothing exists without God. That means that even the evil that exists – of which God is not the Author – even the bad in creation is restrained and constrained by God. When wicked people, ideas, governments, corporations, and so on seem to be prospering, and you, dear Child of God, are suffering in mind, body and/or soul on account of them, you are to know that such tribulation, in the span of eternity, is but a moment, and that God is in control.

Christians do suffer on account of evil in Creation. We have a mortal enemy who desires to turn our suffering into unbelief in the One God who rescued us forever by bearing eternal punishment's weight upon His sinless head, back, hands, feet and side. Therefore we are able to stand firm in the Day of Trial, under the assaults of the devil and the world, for we know that their momentary triumphs will pass into eternal destruction and our unending victory in Christ will never pass away. All that leads us to the next parable:

*(An) abomination to YHWH are all (the) haughty in heart;
It is sure that they will not go unpunished.⁸*

⁷ Proverbs 16:4.

⁸ Proverbs 16:5.

You are free to be firm, dear ones, when the unrighteousness of the fallen comes upon you. God has declared them abomination. He will give them what their unrepentant self-exaltation merits. He will do so in His time, at the End of Days.

Take heart, dear Christian, if you recognize that you have been haughty of heart. If your pride has lifted you up, and the Word of God has knocked you down, you do not have to remain broken forever. The heart of the parables for the week is upon us. It breaks through the condemnations just declared and pours forth the only remedy that will cause one to be free from them. First, though, hear as Jesus Himself gives comfort:

Temptation has not come unto you except (that which is) human; but faithful (is) God, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you have power, but He makes with the temptation also the way out, with the power to endure.⁹

God recognizes that His people, His chosen ones, those who hear the Word and believe in the Christ, will be tempted, and will fall from time-to-time. Jesus names all temptation for believers for what it is – part and parcel of the human estate.

Christians, like all people, sin because we are sinners.

But Christians, unlike any other people, are held fast in the Faith by God. He has promised to never let His chosen ones, you, receive more testing that you are able to bear – in Him. (There is the divine key to bearing trial, temptation and tribulation – remaining in God Father, Son and Spirit through the means He provides, which are? (Word and Sacraments)). God holds you firm when the onslaughts of the devil and

⁹ I Corinthians 10:13.

world come because of His declared truth and promises from this week's Old Testament Gospel:

*In mercy and faithfulness iniquity is expiated;
And in fear of YHWH one turns aside from evil.¹⁰*

The Lord declares His nature: to be both merciful to sinners, and faithful in all He does. The scriptures testify repeatedly to God's mercy, especially in the mercy that He showed sinners when He sent His Son to be the sin-bearer. He expiated you before God, that is, He made amends for you with the Father.

God's faithfulness is also revealed over seven times in parallels to today's texts. That means God wants you to know of, believe in, and trust that He will always be faithful and true to His Word. All others, even you to yourself, are unfaithful. Only God has the perfect divine nature that displays itself in pure faithfulness on behalf of repentant sinners. In Him alone, can the sinner whose sins are expiated – atoned for – fulfill the perfection described in the remaining parables, the next which promises God's victory to those who in Christ, remain pleasing to Him:

*When the ways of (a) man are (a) pleasure to YHWH;
Even his enemies (God) causes to be at peace with him.¹¹*

God provides the fruits of His Wisdom to those whose sins are forgiven. The ways of the forgiven, his paths, are straight as he remains in Christ, who is the Way to the Father's eternal pleasure. When all is said and done, all your enemies, the true fiends who are the enemies of Christ, will be at peace with you, for they will be separated

¹⁰ Proverbs 16:6.

forever, removed from your sight, hearing, and life. God will cause this for the everlasting benefit of those who remain in the Way who is Christ. Yet that does not mean that this mortal life will have the fullness of eternal bliss, as God's Word comes to drown your Old Adam:

*Better is (a) little in righteousness;
Than great revenues with injustice.¹²*

Godly virtue has again been extolled. It is accomplished in you by Christ. It enables you to live in an unjust world, full of love of worldly things, and still keep your heart and mind fixed on Jesus. And, when you lose focus on Christ, the Word comes again, and brings us back to the opening thoughts of this week's reading:

*From (the) heart man plans his way;
But YHWH causes to direct his steps.¹³*

Make your plans from the center of your being. You cannot help but do so. In making your plans, know that you are free in Christ to test them against God's Word. Believe that your sins are forgiven, your failures have been atoned for. God will guide your life in this fallen world. God is faithful, and He will do as He promises.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Trinity IX (LSB One-year series with Historic One-Year OT reading)

Proverbs 16:1-9; I Corinthians 10:6-13; Luke 16:1-9

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

¹¹ Proverbs 16:7.

¹² Proverbs 16:8.

¹³ Proverbs 16:9.

SECOND DRAFT TRANSLATION:

*For man plans from (the) heart;
But YHWH from (the) answer of (the) tongue.¹⁴
(But from YHWH comes the answer of the tongue).*

*All (the) ways of (a) man are pure in his own eyes;
But weighs (the) spirits, YHWH.¹⁵
(But YHWH weighs the spirits).*

*Commit to the YHWH your works;
(Commit your works to the YHWH);
And will be established your plans.¹⁶
(And your plans will be established).*

*All has made YHWH for its purpose;
(YHWH has made everything for its own purpose);
Even (the) wicked for (the) Day of Evil.¹⁷*

*(An) abomination to YHWH are all (the) haughty in heart;
Hand-to-hand not go unpunished.¹⁸
(It is sure that they will not go unpunished).*

*In mercy and faithfulness iniquity is expiated;
And in fear of YHWH one turns aside from evil.¹⁹*

*By pleasure of YHWH are (the) ways of man;
(When the ways of (a) man are (a) pleasure to YHWH)
Even his enemies (God) causes to be at peace with him.²⁰*

*Good is (a) little in righteousness;
(Better is (a) little in righteousness):
Than great revenues not in justice.²¹*

¹⁴ Proverbs 16:1.

¹⁵ Proverbs 16:2.

¹⁶ Proverbs 16:3.

¹⁷ Proverbs 16:4.

¹⁸ Proverbs 16:5.

¹⁹ Proverbs 16:6.

²⁰ Proverbs 16:7.

²¹ Proverbs 16:8.

(Than great revenues with injustice).

*From (the) heart man plans his way;
But YHWH causes to direct his steps.²²*

²² *Proverbs 16:9.*