

IN NOMINE JESU

THE FATHER RESCUED US

(The Father) rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred (us) into the kingdom of His Beloved Son

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

It is no mistake that the nearing of the end of the Church Year brings readings that proclaim the unity in Christ, and the inheritance that comes from His death, to the assemblies of the Church on earth and in heaven. This is especially true of this day, which may hold one or more minor feasts of the ancient Church. The unity of God's people, in heaven and on earth, is even depicted on the title of today's bulletin. It was reinforced in the three Collects of the Day.

Having the Feast of All Saints yesterday, All Souls (or, as modern liturgists re-named it, the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed), and the proclaimed record of another healing of the unclean, and resurrection of the dead at the touch of Jesus, provides a very powerful witness. The testimony is this:

The Lord of Heaven and Earth brings life and light to His Holy Ones through His Word and Touch.

That is found today most clearly, to those whom God has taken out of the world's darkness, in the Divine Service. Here is where God has gathered for Himself the ones on earth He has named holy, by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, as the Word speaks, and Jesus touches. Here is where God serves the ones in Heaven who have been made completely clean in Him. To make this reality clear:

At this Table, when Jesus comes veiled in, with, and under the elements of Bread and Wine, He touches everyone who eats and drinks. All the while, those who have departed this mortal life in the faith are in the presence of the same Jesus. How this happens is a divinely revealed mystery. Simply put, where God's Word is proclaimed publicly, there the Holy Spirit is at work.

That Living Spirit, through the oral Word, draws the faithful hearer to Jesus. He then, through the means He chose - firstly the Water and Word of Holy Baptism, then repeatedly through the Sacrament of the Altar - Jesus touches those who in faith have been drawn to Him for healing. That healing comes in the forgiveness of sins - Holy Absolution - and raises those once dead in sin's darkness to new life of light in Christ. That places them, you, in the throne room of the Father. That is, the Holy Spirit, through the Word, leads you to Jesus, who presents you to the Father - spotless, holy and right with Him. That is because you have a share in that which was won for you on the cross, as St. Paul still declares,

With joy giving thanks to the Father having made all of you sufficient for the portion of the inheritance in the light with the saints

You who remain in Christ have a share in the inheritance of the eternities. That is, that which the incarnate Christ restored for a time for many, light and life (as He did for the little girl in today's text), life and light are yours in this time. And, as you in the Faith cling to Him, that life and light are yours forever. Since the inheritance of light and eternal life are already yours, does this then mean that you will never doubt that reality?

As you are human, as sin still clings to you, you will have times of doubt about your eternal security in Life and Light. If you haven't, beware, for the old Foe will use your security to bring such doubt to you. If you have doubted the life and eternal healing that are even now yours through the death of Jesus, then you are a normal human. If you even now are troubled with your eternal security, turn and believe the Word of God. The Holy Spirit will use this to bring you comfort:

(The Father) rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred (us) into the kingdom of His Beloved Son...

If you still wonder about your place in the reality of the divine inheritance, if doubts creep into your imaginings, then take heart. God knew that you would face such times. For that reason, He has given you the narratives of the lives of the saints who are even now in the heavenly realms. First, in the place where heaven meets earth, the Divine Service, you regularly hear words like these:

Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we laud and glorify Thy Holy Name...

Are they just words that the pastor uses to transition you to the Sanctus?

No, they are a declaration of the revelation that heaven is joined to earth where Christ Jesus is present. Where the Lord is with His people in Word and Sacraments, there heaven is in its fullness, seen and unseen. Seen - in those around you - in the Table and elements before you. Unseen - to mortal eyes - in the multitudes of the faithful departed, with the Holy Elders, the Angels, and all the company of the Holy One. It is no mere trifle, or human whim, that the three-fold Holy of Isaiah's Divine Throne Room

vision follow on the declaration of the company in which you are found! This reality is declared as the ones Whom God has gathered to Himself grasp with Divine Wisdom the truth:

(The Father) rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred (us) into the kingdom of His Beloved Son...

That kingdom is among us now. We have the saints remembered in our liturgy as a present reality. We also have the record of their lives, whether it be from Mother to daughter, Father to Son, or the History of the Church to the Church of today. That is why the Church has taught for centuries that the saints who have entered fully into glory with Christ, who have put off completely, through death, their mortal flesh and all its sinful desires, that the saints deserve a threefold honor.

First, we give thanks to God for using the faithful departed as examples of His mercy. Through them, their sins and His forgiveness, He reveals anew, each time they are remembered among us, His will to save all men, women and children. Those saints who have died in the faith and now live in Christ were our teachers in the faith. For faithful deceased parents, pastors and teachers, we give thanks to God. They were his instruments to bring and keep us in the Faith.

The second honor the saints on the other side of the altar deserve is that their witness serves to strengthen our use of the Faith. When we see the forgiveness that comes to the woman who violated the Holy Law of God to touch the tassels on the hem of Jesus' outer garment, we learn that we, no matter how unclean we may be, may be

cleansed by the Faith of Jesus. We receive encouragement that God's grace is greater than the effects of Adam's sin, and even our "worst" sins.

The third honor the Church, and her called members, gives to the saints comes when we imitate their faith and their virtues. That is one reason that this congregation, from this pulpit, is bold to declare at the funeral or memorial services of those who died in Christ that they are saints!

With the society about us seeking after saviors and heroes – political, military, or fictional (not that the first two aren't) – we may be so bold as to declare that the real heroes are those who, in faith, the faith of Christ, clung to His death for the forgiveness of their sins until they breathed their last. We have the historical records of those first killed for and in the Faith – brief stories about them are on the wall in the Narthex. That is good.

The Church also has stories today, from around the world, of those who have been persecuted, and are being killed for their confession of Christ and Him crucified. We know from the reports of the unjust murders of the faithful throughout the centuries, that it under such persecution that the Church grows and flourishes. Further, in our family here we have stories of the faith of the saints who have died in our midst. Their names are in the records of the congregation, and their lives are now lived in perfect holiness in heaven's eternal light. Finally, we each have records – mental images, photographs and videos, written letters – of those who we know outside this congregation who also have

died in the faith. All serve as examples of the reality declared in the Letter to the Colossians today:

(The Father) rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred (us) into the kingdom of His Beloved Son in Whom we have the redemption by the forgiveness of the sins.

This leads us to the final revelation from that Letter for we who are still sinners even while being named saints in the Kingdom of Light. That is, St. Paul's continual prayers for the congregation to deeply, intimately know the will of God *in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*, (which is still our prayer for the congregations of Christ), are fulfilled in grasping the truth that God's grace is sufficient for our salvation. The old Reformation spiritual battle cry – Faith Alone, Grace Alone, Scripture Alone – declares that the work of salvation from darkness and eternal death has all been done by the Father in Christ, and declared by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

The Apostle declares the *Beloved Son in Whom we have the redemption*. What does this mean?

It means that He has paid the price (redeemed) us from the wages of sin- that is death and hell. (If you have not sinned, that will not make sense to you. There is no need for redemption for one who is sinless. If you think yourself sinless, then, I declare to you the revealed truth of the Word of God – you are a sinner in need of Christ's redemption). You who have sinned have been bought back, at a price, a blood-price that is once-for-all time.

That purchase won by Jesus as He poured forth His sinless blood into the sin-stained earth is granted to you by the forgiveness of all your sins. Redemption comes to you *by the forgiveness of sins*. Thank God you know you have sinned, for you may now, and again, and again, receive the forgiveness of your sins. It is here, it is free to you, for the full price has been paid!

Hear the Word again, and own it, for it comes to you with its cost fully paid:

(The Father) rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred (us) into the kingdom of His Beloved Son in Whom we have the redemption by the forgiveness of the sins.

Now, come, when all has been prepared, and rejoice in the company of the saints. Receive from the King's banquet the fruits of the Light in order that you may carry on in this sin-darkened world until God has finished with His work through you to those still lost in sin, dead in trespasses, and without true hope. May God use you to bring them to touch Jesus where He has promised to be.

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

Trinity XXIV, All Saints, All Souls (One-year series)

Isaiah 51:9-16; Colossians 1:9-14; Matthew 9:18-26
Deuteronomy 33:1-3; Revelation 7:2-13; Matthew 5:1-12
Isaiah 35:3-10; II Peter 3:8-14; John 5:24-29
November 2, 2008

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT

*On account of this also, from the day we heard, not we have ceased concerning all of you praying and asking that it might be fulfilled the intimate knowledge of the will of Him in all wisdom and understanding spiritual
to walk about worthy of the Lord for every pleasing in all work holy fruit-bearing and growing with the intimate knowledge of God
in all power powerful making according to the might of the glory of Him into all long-suffering and endurance. With joy
giving thanks to the Father having been made sufficient you all for the portion of the inheritance with the holy ones in the light*

*Who rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of the unconditional sacrificial love of Him
in Whom we having the redemption by the forgiveness of the sins*

LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

523.15 VV. 9 & 11

Here, too, belong all the petitions of the saints for divine instruction, illumination, and sanctification. By these petitions they indicate that what they ask of God they cannot obtain by their ^(tr-887) own natural powers. In Ps. 119, for example, David asks God more than ten times to give him understanding so that he might rightly comprehend and learn the divine doctrine.¹ We find similar prayers in St. Paul's letters (Eph. 1:17, 18; Col. 1:9, 11; Phil. 1:9, 10). Of course, such prayers and passages about our ignorance and impotence were not written so that we might become remiss and lazy in reading, hearing, and meditating on the Word of God, but were written in order that above all things we should thank God from our hearts for having liberated us from the darkness of ignorance and the bondage of sin and death through his Son, and for having reborne and illuminated us through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.¹

163.366

We also concede, and have often declared, that though justification and eternal life belong to faith, still good works merit other rewards, both bodily and spiritual, in various degrees, according to 1 Cor. 3:8, "Each shall receive his ^(tr-221) wages according to his labor." The righteousness of the Gospel, which deals with the promise of grace, receives justification and new life gratis. The keeping of the law that follows faith deals with the law, in which a reward is offered and owed, not gratis but for our works. Those who merit this are justified before they keep the law. First they have been "transferred into the kingdom of God's Son," as Paul says (Col. 1:13), and made fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).²

Our Confession approves giving honor to the saints. This honor is threefold. The first is thanksgiving: we should thank God for showing examples of his mercy, revealing his will to save men, and giving teachers and other gifts to the church. Since these are his greatest gifts, we should extol them very highly; we should also praise the saints themselves for using these gifts, just as Christ praises ^(tr-345) faithful businessmen (Matt. 25:21, 23).⁵ The second honor is the strengthening of our faith: when we see Peter forgiven after his denial, we are encouraged to believe that grace does indeed abound more than sin (Rom. 5:20).⁶ The third honor is the imitation, first of their faith and then of their other virtues, which each should imitate in accordance with his calling.⁷ Our

¹ Ps. 119:18, 19, 26, 27, 33, 34, 66, 124, 125, 135, 144, 169.

¹Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

²Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

opponents do not require these real honors; they only argue about invocation, which, even if it were not dangerous, is certainly unnecessary.³

³Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia