

IN NOMINE JESU

GOD, IN HIMSELF, HAS CHOSEN HIS PEOPLE

Hear again the Word of God for this eighteenth Sunday after the Feast of the Holy Trinity.

Only in your fathers (did) YHWH set His heart to love (them); and He chose their descendants after them, all of you, from all the peoples for this day.¹

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

The Old Testament reading for today gives the more full explanation of the texts that Jesus names as the two great commandments in God's Law. It does not give the texts which Jesus quotes directly when those who wanted to silence Him, to discredit Him, and to cause the people to leave Him. Yet, this day's reading from the second repetition of the Torah – the Old Covenant Law and Gospel – serves as the basis for Jesus' response to His critics. As such, it may also serve as a wonderful passage for us, the people of God in our day, to use against those who belittle, ridicule, and despise the Faith we have in Christ Jesus. To that end, we shall hear more about this day's words of conviction and acquittal now. It is right and appropriate, because you who are the children of God in Christ are the ones in our age whom God, in Himself, has chosen to be His people. That is the reason why the centering verse for today was chosen:

Only in your fathers (did) YHWH set His heart to love (them); and He chose their descendants after them, all of you, from all the peoples for this day.²

That statement means, in good part, that you are part of the family of God today because He has chosen you to be His sons and daughters. In Himself, He did this before He cast down the foundations of this earth. In God, in His own counsel, Father,

¹ Deuteronomy 10:15.

Son and Holy Spirit determined that your fathers of the faith – the faithful believers in the Christ who died to bring forgiveness of sins to you – God willed that you would hear that Good News. Most of you learned to express that revealed mystery with words similar to these:

I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith....³

Your presence in this place today - to hear the Word of God; to receive the proclamation of the convicting, killing and condemning Law; to rejoice in the acquitting, vivifying, and freeing Gospel - is on account of the Faith given by God to your fathers in the Faith to hand on to you. And what is this Faith?

It is none other than the Faith of Jesus. In Him alone does anyone have power to believe and do the words of the two greatest commandments. They are marked in the hearts of those whom God, in Himself, has chosen to be His people. Hear them again from our Old Testament narrative:

And now, Israel, what does YHWH your Elohe require from you – but to fear the YHWH your Elohe, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the YHWH your Elohe in all your heart and in all your soul, to keep the commandments of YHWH and His statutes which I command you today for your good?⁴

And,

Thus all of you love the sojourner, for you all were sojourners in (the) land of Egypt.⁵

² Deuteronomy 10:15.

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

⁴ Deuteronomy 10:12-13.

⁵ Deuteronomy 10:19.

There is a word or two in that translation that people in our era do not use in regular conversation. There are also concepts proclaimed that are not clear at first, or second, or even third, hearing to our generations of believers. An uncommon word for us is the “sojourner.” What does this mean?

A sojourner is a person who is a foreigner who has entered a country other than his or her own. Our society uses the term “alien” or “immigrant” to describe this type of person. A sojourner may also be considered to a term for a neighbor who is not of one’s family bloodlines. A sojourner is someone who is on a journey, a traveler. Here we are speaking of loving the neighbor whom God has brought into the circle of our lives – to give him or her what she or he needs most – the gift of the Good News of God. Hear this clearly – the Second Greatest Commandment as Jesus names it before His critics is not merely a social gospel text! Hear again the texts that are behind Jesus’ summary of the second greatest commandment with that in mind:

Thus all of you love the sojourner, for you all were sojourners in (the) land of Egypt.⁶

And,

All of you sacrificially love your neighbor as yourself.⁷

What that means is that you, all of you who are the people of God, are to care for the alien, stranger, neighbor, immigrant, traveler with God’s care in mind. Namely, the highest sacrificial love of one’s neighbor is to share the Good News of Christ-

⁶ Deuteronomy 10:19.

⁷ Matthew 22:39b; cf. Leviticus 19:18, 34.

crucified with him or her. If you merely help him with housing, clothing, medical care, food and the like, you are NOT fulfilling the Lord's Word in His summary of the Second Table of the Law! Any care for the immigrants among us, the strangers whom God has brought into our neighborhoods, any care that does not include the Gospel of Jesus Christ falls short of the will of God as He has again revealed it.

What this means is that the Second Greatest commandment is a MISSION TEXT! God brings, through various human means, decisions, and by way of so-called natural events, people into the circle of His called and chosen people, so that they may hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. Think about this, God's everyday plan to carry out His mission work among people is to lead people into the presence of those who are already called His people!

The greatest example of this is found in God placing His Old Testament people on the major land trade route of the ancient world. He put Israel where those who were not of Abraham and Isaac's bloodline would have to come into contact with them. God gave them an unusual food and dress code for their era. God gave them holiness laws and a covenantal surgery requirement so that they would look different, act different, and be the instruments to draw people to Him and His grace.

God has done the same in this New Testament era. He has called out to people from all the peoples of the world. God has given them, you, a special marking - Holy Baptism, that sets you apart, and to which you may return each day, so that others might see Him in you - that is, you are different. God has provided a special food for

His people in our era – one that He has restricted to bring benefits only to those who know their sins, who will turn from them, who recognize that Jesus is bodily and spiritually sacramentally present in the bread and wine, and who discern that He has called for unity of confession for those who recline together at His Table. This mystery He does right in front of strangers, aliens, foreigners, unbelievers, so that they may grasp the reality that something different, something holy is going on in the meal in which they are not to take part – until they fully confess the fullness of the Faith!

Throughout all times, it has pleased God to set apart, with special gifts from Him in the face of unbelievers, His chosen people to declare His Word in their lives – that others who were once as you were before Him – aliens, strangers, foreigners, sojourners – would hear His Word and believe in Him. What this means for you today is that you are God’s missionaries as you go about your lives in Christ. (That is why the Lord’s Great Commission should be translated as it is in our Narthex – as you go). How then will you have power to fulfill the Second greatest commandment summed up in making disciples, baptizing and teaching them all the Lord Jesus has commanded?

God has given you His power. It comes from His Word for you. Today, it is summed up for you in the words of Moses, when he says:

He does justice for fatherless and the widow, and loves (the) sojourner to give to him bread and clothing.⁸

Simply put, you may give true godly care for the sojourners who come into your life because you know that God has already declared justice for them. That is He

has already willed to name them right with Him in the resurrection of Jesus. It is God who gives food and clothing to the immigrants through the means He established – jobs, governments and peoples. The pressure of the Law is taken off the people of God as they, you, truly care for the aliens among us in sharing your lives in the Gospel. For you know this word of God to be true and already applied to you:

Only in your fathers (did) YHWH set His heart to love (them); and He chose their descendants after them, all of you, from all the peoples for this day.⁹

Dear Christians, you are free to love God and the sojourner because God has first loved you. He moved your fathers in the faith to transmit His saving Word to you, without error, through thousands of years. God called your faithful fathers to baptize you with Water and His Word. He sustains you through the faithful transmission of His mysteries –Holy Absolution, and the Sacrament of the Altar– handed on, as the Apostle summarizes, *for I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you...¹⁰*

God's pure, unconditional, sacrificial love is that which you share when you truly care for the sojourners in your life. In caring for those whom God has called into your lives as "fathers-in-the-faith" you are honoring God and fulfilling the Greatest Commandment, which is declared in our Old Covenant text for the week with these words:

And now, Israel, what does YHWH your Elohe require from you – but to fear the YHWH your Elohe, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the YHWH your

⁸ Deuteronomy 10:18.

⁹ Deuteronomy 10:15.

¹⁰ I Corinthians 11:23a.

Elohe in all your heart and in all your soul, to keep the commandments of YHWH and His statutes which I command you today for your good?¹¹

In those words, you dear Christians, behold that which many of the ancient who part of the people of God in name only. That is, you know that you can truly fear God by putting down your Old Adam each day, drowning sin and its effects with the terrors of God's Holy Law. You also believe that you are able to truly fear, love and trust in God by hearing His Holy Gospel that raises up your New Adam each day, to live before God, being made pure before Him in the atoning sacrifice of the Christ, and having been declared right with Him in the resurrection of Jesus.

Hear this clearly also again today: a person has power to hold to God's commandments, decrees, statutes and laws only as he or she clings to Jesus Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of all of one's sins. Jesus alone, of all the sons of woman, was able to keep pure the Word of God unto death. Jesus alone, the Son of God, is able to impute His keeping of the Law to those who cannot by their own power, reason or strength do so. Jesus alone has power to declare those born as sons of Adam to be sons of the living God. As He is one with the Father, and they send the Spirit through the proclaimed Word, Jesus gives you children of God the power to do these words for today:

The YHWH your Elohe all of you shall fear; Him all of you shall serve; and to Him all of you shall cleave; and by His Name all of you shall swear.¹²

God, Himself, has chosen His people - and you are they.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 10:12-13.

¹² Deuteronomy 10:20.

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

Trinity XVIII (LSB One-year series)

Proverbs 25:6-14; Ephesians 4:1-6; Luke 14:1-11

October 11, 2009

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT

And now, Israel, what does YHWH your Elohe require from you – but to fear the YHWH your Elohe, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the YHWH your Elohe in all your heart and in all your soul,¹³

to keep the commandments of YHWH and His statutes which I command you today for your good?¹⁴

Behold to YHWH your Elohe belong the heavens and (the) heaven of the heavens, the earth and all which is in it.¹⁵

Only in your fathers set YHWH His heart to love (them); and He chose their descendants after them, all of you, from all the peoples for this day.¹⁶

Therefore, circumcise the foreskin of your heart and do not harden your necks any more.¹⁷

For YHWH your Elohim is Elohe of the elohim, and the Adonai of the adonae, the great El, the mighty and the terrible, which does not lift up faces and does not take bribes.¹⁸

He does justice for fatherless and the widow, and loves (the) sojourner to give to him bread and clothing.¹⁹

¹³ Deuteronomy 10:12.

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 10:13.

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 10:14.

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 10:15.

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 10:16.

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 10:17.

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 10:18.

Thus all of you love the sojourner, for sojourners you all were in (the) land of Egypt.²⁰

The YHWH your Elohe all of you shall fear; Him all of you shall serve; and to Him all of you shall cleave; and by His Name all of you shall swear.²¹

He (is) your praise, and He (is) your Elohe, which has done for you these great and terrible things which your eyes have seen.²²

²⁰ Deuteronomy 10:19.

²¹ Deuteronomy 10:20.

²² Deuteronomy 10:21.