

IN NOMINE JESU

PREPARED FOR AN APOLOGY

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

Sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts; be prepared always to make an apology to all the ones asking you words concerning the hope in all of you.¹

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

This week's primary readings were put together for this Sunday many years ago.

The Sunday emphasis traditionally was placed upon the treasures contained in the Gospel reading. The Psalm, Old Testament and Epistle readings were used as supporting texts.

However, to keep the annual cycle of sermons from becoming repetitious, and tempting the preacher to use old material, some of us proclaim the Word of Lord in the sermon from one or more of the supporting texts. That, hopefully, keeps the hearers from saying to themselves, and perhaps one another, "hasn't he preached that before?" Lest you think that the preacher who does not stick to illuminating the Gospel text on Sunday is innovative and deviating from the pattern of Scripture, this week's Letter of Peter confirms the freedom to preach and teach on any book of Scripture, on any day.

In the section of the Epistle entitled I Peter 3 for this week, there are direct quotes, paraphrases and allusions to a Psalm, two chapters in Isaiah, several letters written by St. Paul, and the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In addition, this section of First Peter is referenced in the last book in the New Testament we have today. What is missing, however, is any mention of the narrative from the Gospel, Old Testament or Psalm for

¹ I Peter 3:15.

this week! Why, one might ask, is this writing from I Peter included with the miracle of the catch of fish? Why is it attached to the revelation of the Lord in a whisper to the prophet Elijah, and the call of Elisha? Why were the encouraging words of St. Peter connected to the Psalm of David that calls for preservation?

To start, we begin with the introduction of the Gospel for the week. In it we heard that Jesus had been pressed upon by great crowds who desired to hear His teaching. St. Luke does not record what was taught that day. In fact, the occasion of the crowds and teaching were only used by the divinely inspired writer to set up the circumstances of the divine call of fishermen Peter, James and John to become “fishers of men.” That call brings the words of Peter to mind, as the Church remembers how they conducted their lives as preachers of the Word after Christ died, rose and ascended. There is one tie to the words of the Epistle:

Sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts; be prepared always to make an apology to all the ones asking you words concerning the hope in all of you.²

That leads the Church to reflect back on the other divine call proclaimed today. That call was for Elisha to take Elijah’s place as prophet in Israel. In a narrative that foreshadows the calling of the later-called Apostles to become followers of Christ Jesus, so Elisha is called to forsake his earthly work and become a follower of the prophet proclaiming the coming of the Christ. The similarities are striking as the Old prepares the hearer for the New (and, they can be treated more in depth when this text comes around next year)! Still, the preacher replacing the preacher, the called calling the called

² I Peter 3:15.

and his forsaking all to follow the Word, is also reflected in St. Peter's encouragement to the Church:

*Sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts; be prepared always to make an apology to all the ones asking you words concerning the hope in all of you.*³

That moves us back to the words of David in today's Psalm. There, from the very beginning verse, we heard and repeated, God's Word of encouragement to all who have been called by Him to give an account for the sure and certain hope He has given us.

Having heard the call of God to preserve you in the faith, you responded with declarations of the truth – that there is no good apart from God; that God holds your lot; that you have a beautiful inheritance (a direct tie to the Epistle); that the Lord instructs you; that He upholds you; that you dwell secure in Him; that the resurrection is yours; that you have joy in His presence. Those realities, your words spoken here today, form the basis for God fulfilling His Word in you, as the Apostle says,

*Sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts; be prepared always to make an apology to all the ones asking you words concerning the hope in all of you.*⁴

By now, having heard that translation four times in the past six minutes, some of you might be asking, “why on earth, should I have to *be prepared always to make an apology to all?*” The word *apology* likely leads contemporary minds to think of making a repentant answer for something one has done wrong. It holds the connotation expressed in the words, “I'm sorry.”

But, in the context of this week's epistle, the word literally rendered *apology* means

³ *I Peter* 3:15.

⁴ *I Peter* 3:15.

“to make a defense.” You, the Church assembled by Christ Jesus through His Word and Sacraments, are not being called to say “I apologize for the faith I have been given,” but “I believe the faith I have been given because I have sure and certain hope in – “the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”⁵ Are you able to hear that now in these words?

*Sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts; be prepared always to make an apology to all the ones asking you words concerning the hope in all of you.*⁶

Without the promises of the Gospel of Jesus Christ held in faith, the words of the Epistle ring out with the Law. To the one without faith in Christ, Christ’s faith, all the words of the teaching from Peter sound out with do this, don’t do that, and that is all. And, to your old natures, the Old Adam that still clings to you in mortal life, the words of the Epistle also ring out as Law. When your Old Man hears, *all of you have like-mindedness, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion, humble-mindedness*⁷, *not handing over evil for evil, nor reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing*, he says, “No way.” That Old Nature, which you are called to drown in the remembrance of Holy Baptism every day, would lead you to the way of the world, the way of sin, death and hell.

Old Adam says, “I will be self-minded, for God takes care of those who take care of themselves.” He says, “I have little room for true sympathy - that is the together-suffering of the community, I have enough troubles of my own.” The Old Man says, “I will love my brother if he loves me, and only if I benefit from it at that!” The flesh wills to

⁵ *Apostle’s Creed*, the Third Article.

⁶ *I Peter* 3:15.

⁷ *I Peter* 3:8.

show compassion when it brings good to itself. It wishes to exalt self over others, to humble their minds before the powerful learning, experience and wisdom of its years.

Oh, the Old Nature that clings to every Christian clings to fairness, giving evil for evil and reviling for reviling. After all, he reasons in you, why not pay back others, and get justice, for does not the Scripture say, “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth?”⁸

To that your New Nature recalls the Word of Christ as He speaks to that Law, “*But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*”⁹ The Gospel becomes the centrality to the ones with Christ’s faith. To them, to you, the words of the cutting from Peter for this week ring out with possibilities. They serve as indicators of the good works Christians, and Christians alone may perform (for, as the Psalmist says, *the sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply...*)¹⁰ You who by faith put Christ-crucified as the One Who has done all perfectly for you and now in you, may hear these words as your new nature’s response to God’s gifts. Hear again, with commentary, how Peter sums up his teaching on Christian life in this fallen world:

For the end of all: all of you have like-mindedness, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion, humble-mindedness¹¹, not handing over evil for evil, nor reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, because for this you were called, that blessing you might inherit.¹²

Five words begin this summary of the freedom we have in Christ. First, we are called to like-mindedness. That means have the mind of Christ - that which suffers all things, bears all things, sacrificially loves all to the salvation of the soul. Second, we are

⁸ Exodus 21:24a.

⁹ Matthew 5:39, NKJV.

¹⁰ Psalm 16:4a..

¹¹ I Peter 3:8.

¹² I Peter 3:9.

called to have *sympathy*, literally together-suffering. This is a call to community in Christ. That is simply to bear one another's burdens by prayer, with concern and sharing whenever and however it may be possible. For, in the Church, when one of us suffers, all suffers. Third, we are called to live in a city in Pennsylvania... you know, Philadelphia! Actually, that is to give to one another respect and familial love as children of the same Father – as brothers in the household of God. Fourth, Christians are truly free to have compassion, an emotional caring that is felt in the gut (the literal location of the word used in the Greek), for the cares, concerns, problems, joys and happiness of our brothers in Christ. Fifth, comes the call to humble-mindedness. This is putting our Christian brothers or sisters before ourselves, considering their needs before our own. How have you been doing in those five areas?

If you are honest, you are not perfect in any, or all, of them. That is why you need, and receive the One who has done them all perfectly for you. Christ Jesus, alone of all in the world, and in the Church, without error, kept the beginning five words of this passage. The Good News is that, in Baptism, in Absolution, and in the Supper of Christ, you receive His perfect keeping of the five. That enables you to own the ability, Christ's ability to keep the Psalm recited in the Letter:

*For the one wishing to sacrificially love life
and to behold good days:
keep the tongue from evil
and his lips from deceitful speech,
But turn away from evil and do good,
seek peace and pursue her...¹³*

¹³ *I Peter* 3:10-11.

The quote begins with a statement of fact – with the response to the desire that seems common to all mankind - *to sacrificially love life and to behold good days...* Who in our world but someone who is mentally ill does not desire to love life and have good days? And the path to them is so simple, as the reference indicates, no evil speaking, no lies, turn from all evil and do good, seek peace and follow after it.

You in Christ know what that means. But, as faith comes by hearing, the meaning will be recited now. These are the commandments to not bear false witness, and to keep the Law perfectly. This cannot be done by any human, but it has been done for all humans, especially for those who have not rejected the Gospel of the One who kept them to the end. For, it is in hearing Him, tasting Him and believing Him, that one, anyone, can turn from evil – of self, of world, or of devil – and do good, true good that comes from God.

He works and wills that in us and for us, through simple means Word and Sacraments. You have heard that before, for it bears repeating on account of the temptations that come to draw Christians away from all that God has done and is doing in us. This is not repetition of an old sermon, it is the proclamation of the Good News, which continues with this reminder:

*Because (the) eyes of the Lord (are) upon the righteous
and His ears to their petitions...*¹⁴

As you remain in Christ, God Whose eyes are always upon Him are seeing Him in you. That means, connected to the community, the Body of Christ, God sees you as

¹⁴ *I Peter 3:10-12a&b.*

remaining right with Him on account of His Son. Therefore, your petitions, those requests you make of God, especially from the community of Christ, are heard by the Father on account of Jesus. He, and He alone, takes the petitions of His people, spoken in faith as they are gathered by Him around His Word, and passes them to the Father. His ears, always open to the Son, are then hearing those prayers offered to Him by the Son. There is only one intercessor between God and man, and that is Jesus. As we pray through the Son, we can be sure that the Father hears and will answer.

Against that Gospel reality stands the truth of the Law:

*But the face of (the) Lord (is) against those who do evil.*¹⁵

About which the believer may not fear, as the text continues:

*Who is the one committing evil upon you if you have become zealous of the good?*¹⁶

In other words, as you remain in good, that is in Christ, no evil may come upon you to eternal woe. For the evil one has been conquered by the Christ, bound and chained to the Last Day. That does not mean that you will never suffer in this life. Yet, the Apostle, recognizing that woe comes to all, says,

*But if you suffer on account of righteousness, blessed (are you). "And do not fear them, nor their threats, nor be troubled;"*¹⁷

*but, sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts, be prepared always to make an apology to all the ones asking you words concerning the hope in all of you.*¹⁸

That is, you are free to name Christ as your defense, and His victory over sin, the devil and the grave for you. In Him, you are prepared for an apology for the faith.

¹⁵ *I Peter* 3:10-12c.

¹⁶ *I Peter* 3:13.

¹⁷ *I Peter* 3:14.

¹⁸ *I Peter* 3:15.

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

Trinity V (LSB One-year series)

I Kings 19:11-21; I Peter 3:8-15; Luke 5: 1-11

June 22, 2008

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Additional Notes:

[I Peter 3:15]. This is something no one can do unless he is practiced in this arena and has defended himself against these monsters from his youth. Therefore, if the strength of my body should prove adequate, I, too, would debate on all the principal articles of our doctrine in order every week, and make you more alert in opposing the adversaries and arm you against future heresies, of which there will be many after our death.¹⁹

those who inflict the greatest harm on the believers are their greatest benefactors, as long as they bear their sufferings in the right spirit. That is why St. Peter says in I Peter 3 [:13], “And who is there who might harm you if you are followers of that which is good?” And in Psalm 89 [:22] we read, “The enemy shall accomplish nothing in him, nor shall the son of iniquity do harm to him.” But how is it that he shall not harm us, seeing that he often even kills us? Simply because in harming us, he is working us the greatest gain. Thus, if we are wise, we find ourselves dwelling in the midst of blessings, and yet, at the same time, in the midst of evils. All things are so wondrously tempered under the providence of God’s goodness!²⁰

One thing the devil can do for us. He can shorten the time for us mortals so that we die that much sooner, decay in the grave, and be prepared for the resurrection. More he cannot do for us as Jesus himself comforts us in Matthew 10 [:28], “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul . . .” (See, if you will, my *Annotations* on the subject.)²⁶ Or I Peter 3 [:13–15], “And who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right? But even if you do suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your heart revere Christ as Lord.” We are not fighting to win land and people, wealth and glory. Nor are we aiming to establish idolatry or extend it. Bather are we fighting to establish God’s word and his church. Especially do we fight for our children, for the coming generations. We are fighting that the Turk may not put his devilish filth and the blasphemous Muhammad in the place of our dear Lord, Jesus Christ. That is the real reason and serious purpose for which we now fight, die, or live. This is certainly true. Therefore we are fighting a just war against the Turk and are Christ’s holy saints and will die a blessed death.²¹

On the other hand, there are some who have heretofore not yet heard the gospel, and who would be willing to learn if someone would tell it to them, or who are so weak that they cannot readily grasp it. These you should not bully or beat up, but instruct in a kindly and gentle manner, giving them a defense and explanation. If they are unable to grasp it at once, bear with them for a time. St. Paul says of them in Romans 15,⁴⁰ “Welcome him who is weak in faith”; and Peter says in I Peter 3[:15], “Always be prepared to give an answer to any one who desires a

¹⁹Luther, M. 1999, c1971. *Vol. 38: Luther's works, vol. 38 : Word and Sacrament IV* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

²⁰Luther, M. 1999, c1969. *Vol. 42: Luther's works, vol. 42 : Devotional Writings I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

²⁶The reference is to *Sermon Notes on Some Chapters of Matthew*, 1538 (*Annotationes in aliquot Capita Matthaei*, 1538). *WA* 38, 505.

²¹Luther, M. 1999, c1968. *Vol. 43: Luther's works, vol. 43 : Devotional Writings II* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

⁴⁰Rom. 14:1; cf. 15:1.

defense and explanation of the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and fear.” Here you see that we are to give instruction in our faith gently and in the fear of God to any man who desires or needs it.²²

²²Luther, M. 1999, c1962. *Vol. 45: Luther's works, vol. 45 : The Christian in Society II* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia