

IN NOMINE IESU

Beloved family of Christ, the King

Jesus bringing a sword and not peace? Jeremiah prophesying destruction and then the hope of the One Prophet who could actually bring peace, well, to ask the Lutheran question: **What does this mean?** The answer is found right here, upon this Altar, upon the Altar of the Lord. The answer is found right here, in this precious Font where living water is given. The answer is found right here, in the Scriptures before us. It is the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Jesus! Forgiveness through Jesus and His righteousness is the key here. Forgiveness which is not some trifle.

Forgiveness breaks the yoke of sin, smashing it, destroying its death! My wife and I, now in our retirement, watch more TV than we had when working. The Crime shows seem to fascinate us. Invariably there is some conflict between two parties and someone gets murdered. The murderer works diligently to hide his tracks, to throw off the scent of what he has done. Yet, and this is fascinating, the stench of death follows him and leads the investigators to him. Oh yes, sometimes it takes years, even decades, but in these cases on these shows, the murder is exposed.

What I find most fascinating is how the weight of unrepented sin is like a mill-stone around the neck of the murderer. So often we see the self-medication of alcohol or drugs, of illicit relations, of extravagant and therefore unsustainable living. The wages of sin is, as St. Paul reminds us: death. Jesus is come to pay that wage!

Speaking with my confirmands about sin and its crushing load I ask them to imagine they have have a back-pack, like the one you carry to school. Yes and that every time they sin that sin is like a grain of rice and that grain gets added to your back-pack. Not too bad, at least at first, right! But over time, and that time is not too long, the back-pack gets full and overflowing, and the weight becomes unbearable. You can't remove any of the grains of rice, and you cannot remove those now digging straps from your shoulder blades.

Discomfort gives way to pain, and pain to agony, and finally, you are crushed beneath its heavy load. The problem is that the harder we try to remove the load, the heavier it becomes. There is only one answer to sin and that is the Blood of the Lamb, the gift of Jesus' blood and righteousness. All other avenues of escape are false and lead to greater agony.

Now that is not pleasant to hear. I would like to think that somehow, in some way, I can alleviate my pain, that I can do something to save myself. *After all, I'm really a pretty good guy, a nice person! Well, at least I'm not as bad as my neighbor, that guy down the street, don't you know! (LOL!)*

The exclusivity of our salvation, the fact that true peace comes only through the death of God upon a criminal's cross, the fact that the only innocent man had to die for everyone else, this truth and this gift now means that all other avenues of relief are lies.

Jesus has just called all 12 of the Apostles in Matthew 10, and He sends them out to the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel. We saw this last week. As He sends them out The Master's words sound contradictory: Not peace but a sword!? Huh? What?

The True Prince of Peace, the true Prophet who prophesies peace: Jesus, He brings peace, **through the grave!** Jesus' words to the disciples are startling. In the Greek we have the opening verse actually reading: ***Do not think that I have come to cast, to throw down peace upon the earth! I have not come to hurl down peace, but most emphatically, a sword!*** We do not have the verb for "bring" or "to carry" as you would have with, I come to bring you a water-

bottle, or a bag of groceries. The verb used here is to cast, to throw own, to hurl. It has a more violent nature to it.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, comes with a violent sword. **He will break sin.** *He will restore Eden by taking on not just the devil, but more importantly, your sin.* His blood and righteousness do not white-wash your sins. There is no painting over those sins, there is no perfume or deodorant to mask the smells of death. No, the Father will bring the sword of payment for sin and thrust it through His Son's side and heart upon that Cross.

Did you hear what was just said? The Sword, the punishment for sin, is used on the God/Man Christ Jesus! We have this pre-figured in Genesis 9 and the giving of the Bow after the flood. Now the rainbow that we as Christians have held, since the time of Noah, as the Promise of God to never again destroy the earth by flood is actually a bow, in the bow and arrow sense of the word, the archer's tool of the trade.

The Hebrew word is **kesheth** (כֶּשֶׁת). It a word with a prefix that personalizes it, God is speaking and it is His Bow. Now this Holy Bow is not pointed downward, toward man, the bend in the bow, the rainbow points the "business end" of the arrow toward heaven, and more precisely, against Jesus! Yes, the Arrow of the Bow and the spear or sword of God is directed against His Only-Begotten Son. This is the only payment that can and does actually forgive not only sin, sin in the generic sense, but your sin. This is the only coin that covers your debt!

What is gifted to us in the Liturgy each Lord's Day as He welcomes us into His House is that we begin by confessing that we are by our very nature sinful and unclean, sinning against the Holy God by our thoughts, our words, and our actions, the things we have done and left undone, not loving God fully. Heck, not even loving the person next to us as we love ourselves. We confess that what we deserve is for God to eternally condemn us.

Then we confess that we know Christ's great love for us and for all people is given to us through the Cross and we ask for the forgiveness, renewal and leading of this beautiful Savior God so that we might delight in His will and walk in His ways, reflecting the glory of His Holy Name.

This brings division, especially in families. No wonder a man's enemies are those in his own house! Now we are commanded, in the Fourth Commandment to love and honor our mother and father! That is absolute. And, in no way do the words of our Gospel today contradict that amazing commandment. To love anything or anyone apart from the Triune God and His love is what is prohibited – no other gods! To love mother or father more than Jesus breaks the First Commandment. Ah, to keep the First Commandment means you will also desire to love your parents... in Christ and never apart from Him. You will love them with His love!

That brings us to the next part of this instructions to the 12 and to the Church by our Savior, the one who will not take up his cross and follow Jesus is not worthy of Him. Jesus will go to the Cross that should rightly have been yours. ***He has exchanged crosses with you.*** Your cross now is the burden for souls, to care for others with His love. To follow Jesus means to walk as His disciple. It means to wear the robe of His righteousness and in that to love others by bearing their burdens, but not on your own shoulders, but bearing them to the foot of the Cross!

To do otherwise is to remove Jesus from the Cross and put yourself as your own savior. Jesus wants for no one, and that includes you, for no one to die apart from the beauty of the Resurrection promised in Christ. So, what sounds rather harsh is actually very, and I do mean VERY loving.

As God's child you reflect your Father. So, as His Child, those who receives you receives Jesus. The incarnation and in that the joining of God to man, the Baptismal adoption into the

Family, the bridal reception by her Groom, His giving all that He is and all that He has for her, this enables His blood and righteousness to flow in your veins. Therefore, whoever receives you, receives Jesus.

Yes, and the disciple, the one who is under the loving direction and protection of his or her Master and Savior, this is the stuff of the Church. It is the Family of God where nothing ordinary ever happens, but the extraordinary gift, the Gift of Heaven, the forgiveness of sins through Jesus, this is the identity, the strength, the joy, the life you now live.

As Jesus sent out the 12, armed with the reality that they belonged to Him as His beloved, as His cherished possession (segoulah), they were used to change the world through the preaching of the Gospel. Today, we who have received their witness in this precious Word, we have the same strength, the strength of the Cross of Christ, the strength of the Law and the Gospel, to speak life to a dying world. What a privilege to ***be His own, to live under Him in His kingdom and to serve Him in everlasting innocence, righteousness and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity.*** Now, for those of you who know this phrase, say it with me... THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE!