

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – 2023
Zechariah 9:9-12
Romans 7:14-25a
Matthew 11:25-30

Does God hide the truth? Does a mean and unjust God hide the truth? Gravity is hard to hide. Gravity is out in the wide open. The law of gravity is certainly an element of our physical world, the world God created. Very few people deny gravity. A lot of people deny that Jesus is the Son of God. Why is that? You certainly believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. True God and true man, this Messianic King died on a Roman cross to save the world from its sins. Christ bore the sin of all humanity in His very human flesh, in the very fabric of His being. God the Father punished sin, once-for-all, by pouring out His wrath on His Son, the innocent substitute who offered all that He is as a sacrifice... to save us. Is that truth hidden or is it out in the wide open? You believe it but there seems to be even more people on the planet who do not. There are close to 8 billion people on the planet. Best guess is that there are 2.6 billion Christians. Why isn't a crucified Savior self-evident like gravity, or the sun rising in the east, or the difference between male and female? Wait.

Jesus praises God for hiding the truth, glorifies God for hiding the truth, consents completely and thanks God profusely for hiding the truth from the wise and learned. Ah! The wise and learned... who are they? It's a biblical euphemism, a colloquialism of the time, a reference to those who are *worldly* wise, those who are wise according to *human* tradition, wise in their *own* estimation, wise in that they embrace vain philosophy, the super sophisticated folks who scoff at the notion of a Creator in whose image we are made (evolution is the creation myth held by the wise and learned). Jesus describes the Father hiding the truth from such minds as His gracious will. God is *gracious* when He hides the truth about the Kingdom, the truth about how that Kingdom comes, the truth about His power being made perfect in weakness. "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will" (Matthew 11:25-26). That is a remarkable statement.

Is it an act of judgment? Is God hiding the truth from the wise and learned an act of judgment? Does God judge unbelief... now? Let's rehearse some first principles. "God wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). "If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2). "...even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:5). What do those passages tell you? They tell you that God loves this world, all people, sinners, the whole tribe of humanity. The Scriptures are unambiguous: Christ is our life-line. His cross is our hope, our redemption, the source of forgiveness and life and there is no other. And none of us are worthy. Grace is our salvation, a gloriously free gift of love which God gladly gives to anyone and everyone. And a great many folks reject it.

I am about to speak some of the most somber words in all of Scripture. On Palm Sunday, Jesus gazed over the city that would crucify Him and these words came tumbling out of His mouth: "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they

are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:42-44). Jerusalem was sacked by Rome in 70AD. God’s judgment for failing to receive His Messiah fell on Jerusalem. Jesus wept for the city because He saw its coming destruction. Truth is sometimes hidden from the wise and learned. God does and will judge unbelief. Those who malign and distort Christianity – the truth is hidden from them. Those who make God’s word their personal play thing, twisting it this way and that – the truth is hidden from them. Those who call evil good and good evil – the truth is hidden from them. God has hidden it from them; that is His gracious will.

But He has revealed it to little children, infants, to you. What do you see? What has been revealed to you? That God’s love is eternal and present in the person of His Son. You see that a crucified Messiah is power made perfect in weakness. You see that the risen King brings a new creation, a life that is not defined by sin or death or guilt or shame or the poverty of this broken world. This has been revealed to you by God’s Spirit, seared into your heart and mind. You know that God’s Word is truth. You know that Christ’s church is holy. You know that you are forgiven by the same Lord who gave you life in your mother’s womb, who washed you in Christ’s blood in Holy Baptism, who feeds you with heavenly manna at our altar. About you, Jesus said this: “I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have revealed these things to the saints of Christ the King; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.” Faith; what a gift you possess! The free gift of God has opened the eyes of your heart and you see the love and grace and the power and mercy and providence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And you are learning. Jesus is the most extraordinary teacher and He delights to teach you. You are a learner, a Christian, a follower of the Teacher, the One who teaches you of Himself. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). A yoke is a farm implement that binds two working animals together. The old, more mature animal is yoked to a green trainee. You and He, you and the Lord Christ, yoked together. What have you learned? In the depth of your being, what have you learned from the Lord of the cross? Have you learned to consider others more important than yourself? (Philippians 2:3). Have you learned to forgive others as the Lord has forgiven you? (Colossians 3:13). Has He taught you how to deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Him? (Luke 9:23). Have you learned humility, mercy, compassion and grace? Have you learned fortitude, trust, sacrifice, and how to encourage others with the Gospel?

He is teaching us; all of us. One in particular, one whom I know that Jesus is teaching right now is Lorrie Hinkleman. John, Lorrie’s husband, beloved John, has gone from mild cognitive impairment to full blown Alzheimer’s disease seemingly overnight. Jesus is teaching Lorrie. The depth of His love, the depth of His compassion – Lorrie is learning as she tends the needs of her beloved husband. There was a wedding here yesterday – it was glorious. A Marine in his dress blues and a bride as radiant as they come. For better or worse, they said. For richer, for poorer, they said. In sickness and in health, they said. Christ was there, binding two into one flesh. The church is Christ’s bride. He joyfully yoked Himself to us. The eternal Son of God

was made man and took up the form of a servant. He shed His blood to cleanse His bride, making her holy, making her fit to be of one flesh with Him. Lorrie is learning as she serves her husband in his hour of need. Though she is weak and heavy laden, Jesus gives Lorrie rest – rest for her soul, rest from fear and despondency and from a broken heart.

This Divine Service is rest for all of us. We take His yoke upon us and we learn – resurrection, heaven, life. We come to Him in this Divine Service because He has called us in love and faith compels us to respond. Learn a bit of Christ, this week, by praying for John, praying for Lorrie. Learn of Christ right now by eating His body and drinking His blood. Learn of Christ by turning the other cheek, by obeying God rather than men, and by thanking God for your cross. O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good... (and His mercy endures forever).