

IN NOMINE IESU

Beloved Saints of Christ, the King,

Don't you just love, and yes, I mean LOVE, the unity of the Scriptures! It is Christ and Him at the Center of those Scriptures, Christ Jesus, who literally fills all in all, as St Paul reminds us (Ephesians 1:22)! Today the Old Testament Lesson and the Gospel are like book-ends, or maybe better like the two lens pieces in a telescope, bringing Christ and His heart, Christ and His action of your salvation and of your preservation, yea, of the salvation and preservation of the whole Church, both on earth and in heaven!

In the Old Testament Lesson, we have these opening words, ⁶ "***For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.***" The Father, speaking through the pen of Moses here in Deuteronomy reminds these folks, folks who have been delivered from death, not only in Egypt, and not only as they were delivered through the Red Sea as on dry ground, with Pharaoh and his elite troops being drowned as they pursued, yes, not only that, but He delivered them from a dying thirst with the Spiritual Rock and its gushing fresh waters in the parched land, and He provided life through the quail and manna – He reminds them they are a holy people to Him, that they are to be a people for His treasured possession! Hear that – a treasured possession.

As you know I was your neighbor in Rialto, at Grace, for 18 years before my retirement. Through the LWML some of you ladies may remember one of my dear parishioners, June Beach! Oh, how she loved the fact that her Lord loved her! Anyway, she grew up in South Dakota and had lots of family back there. Her brother would come out regularly to Rialto from South Dakota to visit June. On occasion June and her family would make the trek to her childhood hometown.

She bragged to me about her family's pastor out there, and when there, she would brag on her Grace family and talk of me to that pastor. Through the years that pastor and I talked on the phone and began a relationship through e-mail. Nabil Nour was born in Bethlehem, and not the one in Pennsylvania, but the one in the Holy Land. Hebrew is his native tongue.

This dear pastor addresses his congregation as his ***Segoulah!*** It is the word we translate into "treasured possession." It means the very heart. These dear folks, who also cast the golden calf and regularly complained both to Moses and against him and against God Himself, these people were God's treasured possession, God's *Segoulah*, not because of their hearts, or their deeds, but because of God's heart and God's deeds.

In our first parable in the Gospel reading this morning of the treasure hidden in the field, we have God calling for His *Segoulah*, that is His heart and treasure which is you! **Why are you so highly treasured?** *There is only one answer, and His name is*

Jesus. His great love makes you lovable. You are His beloved. You are His *Segoulah*!

If that reminds you of your wedding vow, good! Holy Matrimony, that which comes from the heart of God is not like the human contract of civil marriage. That we enjoy the beauty of Holy Matrimony means that we are blessed to understand, even if only “through a glass darkly” that the Holy God honors each of us as His Holy Bride, as His *Segoulah*. Behold, on this very Table that our Groom has set before us, in this very meal we eat the true and very Body of Christ. In the Cup is Wine, Holy Wine that truly is His very blood. That is all that He is and all that He has.

Yes, and in our Old Testament lesson, in its opening 6th verse this word, *Segoulah*, most cherished possession is used to describe His Israel, and now, in Christ, the Church, His Bride. Looking at the Wounds of Christ you see the great value He places on you. As with these first two parables, of the Treasure in the Field, for which the Lord didn’t pay a princely sum, it was not “up to half my kingdom.” He gave all that He is and all that He has for you, His Beloved, His Bride, His *Segoulah*!

All of heaven rejoices as you come and kneel and eat and drink Jesus for your forgiveness, for your life! You are His Treasure. You are the Pearl of great Price!

As we consider the Net which is cast in the Sea, we see that no one is beyond the reach of this God of Grace. It speaks of the end of the ages and the final judgement, but thanks to the outstretched arms of our Savior on that Cross, He is casting a dragnet even today, calling all to repentance. This is not the final hour. This is not the day of Judgement. It is a day of Grace wherein this Gospel that feeds you is given in His Word and in His Sacraments, not only to you and for you, but now, here, right now, though you.

When that day of Judgement does come those who received His mercy and grace, who saw their own unworthiness and that Salvation comes through the blood of the Lamb, these, you, will be gathered into His kingdom. Ah, but those who want to save themselves, who look to other gods, always that is, god with a lower-case “g” – they will have to stand in the supposed strength of that god and whatever righteousness it may possess, which is no strength and no righteousness at all!

Salvation is found in no one else, even as St Luke reminds us in Acts 4:12:

^{NKJ} **Acts 4:12** "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Indeed, as saddened as our hearts may be or become when some tragedy befalls someone we love, it is impossible to imagine how deeply it hurts our Savior God when one for whom He has died rejects the free gift of salvation. On Judgement Day as the tares are thrown into the fiery furnace, it will be because they rejected the Gift and the Gift Giver. The Righteous Judge will only carry out the sentence that they have deserved. Like the bank robber who gets caught and stands before the righteous

judge in a human court of law – the judge did not cause the robber to rob. He only gives the just sentence for what the robber has done. He condemns himself. So also with those who are the rotting fish, the tares, yes, those who reject Christ!

That having been said, the Lord joyously shines the Light of Salvation, His Law and His Gospel as we live out this Love in this broken and sinful world. Think about it: You keep the Law as you serve your neighbor and you are blessed by the Gospel when you receive the Gifts of God. These Gifts, this Gospel thus empowers you to love and serve your neighbor – to see him or her as one for whom Christ died. What a high privilege, indeed!

Ah, and as I began with the story of my pastor friend in South Dakota who calls his parishioners his and the Lord's *Segoulah*, so we end with the reality and gift that your pastor is one who faithfully brings out treasures, both new and old as he mines the Scriptures for you each week, as he greets you in your homes, at the bedside of your loved ones, as he Baptizes, Catechizes, Marries, and stands at graveside with you.

Thanks to the goodness of the Lord in His Word, and here in this lovely house, with the faithful "Scribe", if you will, your dear Pastor, your Deacon, your Elders and Sunday School Teachers, and your neighbor in the pew, the Holy Spirit brings out these treasures, new and old. He does this because He holds you, beloved, as His *Segoulah*, and all because of Jesus.

Amen and SOLI DEO GLORIA