

The Second Sunday of Advent (2017-18)

Mark 1:1–8 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In the Name of Jesus.

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

Now, THAT is ‘Comfort, comfort, my people!’ The Lord is being patient toward Y’ALL—meaning, toward US’N, dear saints of the Lord!

And the greater Baptism that Christ the Lord has bestowed on us—the powerful, dynamic Holy Spirit—now moves us ON! On from confessing our sins, to something the Baptizer calls ‘greater.’ And that is the confession of Who HE is, no matter what WE are!

THAT is the Power of the Holy Spirit! NOT what mean dream: to have some juice inside of ME that makes ME stand out for ME to be noticed: by heaven; or yet, more pathetically, by other men.

Nope! THAT would be the OPPOSITE of the comfort of which Isaiah sang! The Power of the Holy Spirit appears in the gentle form of the dove, where WE would conclude He has NO BUSINESS landing, inspiring, working: on the ONE MAN AMONG US Who ain’t all wrong head to toe! But not only did God the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus of Nazareth without measure; the Father’s voice spoke heaven’s good pleasure on the MAN willing to do no wrong and yet willing to attach Himself to those who are all, all wrong.

And the Lord is INDEED bearing with me, and y’all, and all His saints! Despite OUR best efforts, my fellow-redeemed, HE has no desire that we perish! THINK...OF...THAT! DESPITE YOUR yesterday, and MY previous track record of a week! The Lord STILL has no desire to treat us as we deserve!

UN-belief-able! Yet this is God, our Holy Spirit's power, and good pleasure, and Baptismal pledge toward us; and toward all of us!

So much so, that this joyful comfort explains to us, REVEALS to God's saints E...V...E...R...Y...T...H...I...N...G that happens: to us, in the world, with others for whom Christ suffered and rose. Everything!

The apostle Peter writes to correct a notion of unbelief that haunts the Christian Church. It is the fault for which you and I fall daily and much. The UN-GODLY conclusion that The End of all is on the way because the Law of God is being to terribly broken by everyone. Nope! The Word of the Lord that lasts forever states that the SIGN of The End is NOT the Law, but the Gospel!

Aren'tcha glad y'all came out in the cold this morning? You must be as desperate as your poor pastor is, to get my head on straight about repentance and faith and all of that!

I think that my family members are buying each other, for Christmas, large chains and locks to tie down the

televisions at my home. I think they're starting to fear that I will carry out my threat, one of these days, to toss them all in the pond out back!

Every week or so, I figure I need to raise the periscope from where I'm hiding and see what's going on 'out there.' Last week, I was certain that The End was imminent because, in our land, we are hurrying to burn down or run to the landfill every crèche featuring 'Mary and Joseph.' But, happily, we are told we CAN set up scenes of Jesus' birth, as long as the couple over the Babe of Bethlehem is 'MURRAY and Joseph!'

But, as I told y'all last week: the sign of The End is the Gospel, NOT the foolishness of men.

So, this week! Where did I go off the rails?!

Y'all are aware that our dear brother back there, Art, is as beautiful looking person as you'll ever find in our land. However, I was surprised to find out that complimenting a beauty, like Art, can land you in great trouble! To say to Art, or to any woman, 'My, you are beautiful!', is now some sort of violence.

AND YET—I was just about to run outside to see

Christ appear with all His holy angels, when I saw the interview! A man—who insists he’s a woman! (Yes, I know! That’s so ‘last week!’ Come up with something novel!)

Well, he, or she, came up with something novel! Not only is this MAN, as white as yours truly, INSISTING that we all call her a woman; we MUST also call her a FILIPINO woman! Though, as far as anyone knows, there’s not a drop of Filipino blood in his, her, ancestry.

Now, my dear ones: I am not trying to pollute your soul during the Divine Service with such stories. I have a quite serious point to make here.

Why does the apostle Peter writes—to our surprise!—that the Lord is being patient WITH HIS OWN PEOPLE?!

Why was the Baptizer in Israel, calling all men to repentance and warning them of the wrath to come? Would not Rome have been a better place to start to drain the swamp of this world’s filth? Or Athens? Norway! Which ancestry I CAN boast! My people NEEDED help!

And why did the Lord of Israel PUNISH His people of old—at the hand of the some of the most violent and vile

people the world has ever seen?

The answer, my friends, does NOT lie in the Law. No, the answer is the Gospel!

For heaven is NOT going to be well pleased with ANY NATION, any man, because of his performance of God's demands! Just the very fact that God has to DEMAND that His people perform means that their hearts, our hearts, are not up to the task.

So if evil rains down on this world, the people of God know what's going on. And it is NOT: 'Oh, Heaven is FINALLY going to get those who deserve it so much!'

The baptized know that when evil—or GOOD!—rains down from heaven, it is all a sign that God is being patient with us. Giving us gifts, as signs of His mercy; disciplining us, as signs of His tender, fatherly, divine mercy and goodness. As long as He is disciplining us, He has not given up on us!

I like to keep a mirror handy when teaching the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther. To keep showing the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and myself, that when the LAW accuses, the accusation is directed home!

So, dear saints of the Lord: the Lord will indeed bear with us, when we **BOAST** that we are something that we are not! The Gospel even states that He will bear with us thinking that when the next man sins, we have now ferreted out the **WORST THING ANY PERSON HAS EVER DONE ANYWHERE!**

‘Oh,’ says that Spirit, ‘that’s just them pretending to be something they are not!’

But what the Spirit of Jesus will **NOT** bear with, is to make of the Son of God anything other, anything **LESS** than what **HE** is!

HE is your standing with heaven!

HE is the certainty that your prayers are heard, and accepted, and will be answered in a fashion more kindly than you can imagine.

The Risen Son of God, the Christ, our King, Heaven’s Regent, is the double comfort, the **REMOVAL** of every burden we place on ourselves: to pretend to be what we are not; to judge and assign wrong to others, even if they **ARE** wrong!

So, when you pray today, my dear ones: you have no need to pretend you are something you are not!

YOU...ARE...OLD...ADAM!

And your Baptism into Christ says that HE will worry about making you a NEW MAN!

YOU, my friend, can pray to God this way:

‘I’m only looking out for myself; and I love to pretend that the OBVIOUS craziness and sin of this world, of those around me, somehow distinguishes ME in your eyes! But it is NOT MY BUSINESS to free myself from this prison, these chains, which I keep forging for myself! It is the business of your Son, well pleasing in your sight. Bear with me; be patient with me still. For YOUR WORD, which endures forever, pledges that YOU have no desire that I perish as I deserve!’

The God Who gives us this morning Jesus’ Body to eat and His Blood to drink has no desire that you perish, or even me in the Name of Jesus! Amen.