

Advent 3 2018

Luke 7: The Lord our Righteousness

Luke 7:18–28 The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” And when the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’” In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

When John’s messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, “‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’”

I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

In the Name of Jesus.

Of course, He’s talking about Himself, Jesus is! The Spirit of Jesus speaks of HIM—through His chosen apostles! Jesus Christ: LEAST in the kingdom of God—OR, so it seemed when He was MOCKED as ‘King of the Jews.’ Actually, condemned—by...the...law, of those who spoke for men and those who spoke for God; so THEY said—condemned and beaten and crucified and buried under that title which was, that day—by...the...law—an indictment, an accusation, a judgment.

That word, that apostolic Word—it shines clearly through Luke’s Gospel that Luke learned the Gospel through Saint Paul!—Paul’s Gospel now frees you, frees me, frees each son and

daughter of Adam and Eve from indictment, from accusation, from judgment. Mary, the mother of Our Lord, prayed happily when the spoken Word entered her ears and thus the Christ-Child was born of the Virgin: ‘I am the Lord’s handmaiden; let it be to me according to your spoken Word.’

Your poor preacher cannot improve upon Mary’s prayer. But I can point to it! And then we can all hear again with Advent Joy—the Joy of the Arrival of Mary’s Boy—how Mary’s Boy turns over and jumbles up and turns into a TRIFLE!!!!!!—ALL the words MEN speak to position and outmaneuver and beat out the next man, the world, in the eyes of the next man, or even some pretend god.

“I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

That is what MARY was banking on! ‘The handmaiden of the Lord—let your Word be what it is FOR ME!’

The happy refrain that will fill heaven and earth the night when the shepherds heard from the angel who heralded the birth of this Strangest King: ‘I bring glad tidings FOR YOU. FOR YOU is born this day in the city of David... And this will be a sign FOR YOU...’

FOR THIS you were baptized, my dear ones! Me too! That we may, with all boldness and confidence, rise from the indictment and accusation and judgment of law and sin and death—WITH Mary in her chamber, WITH John in prison...

And ENTREAT the One Who rules heaven and earth, in peace, without one bit of power. Not POWER that His killers would pause to examine; not power they would go out of their way to see.

The Baptizer? ‘A reed shaken by the wind? Is that what you went out of your town, out of your way, out of your well-worn rut and track and religion and comfort-zone, to SEE?! What Y’ALL thought to find there is no in prison and doomed—sez Y’ALL! But I say to the prisoner: FREEDOM!’

Saint Luke tells us that John got out of his prison, dead. ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’

And so, that was His way too: Jesus’ way. And ours!

The Spirit of Jesus teaches us, raises us with His spoken Word and His SPOKEN Baptism and His SPOKEN promise of Christ’s Body and Blood for us to eat and to drink—He raises us up from all things that kill the JOY Christ came to bring: the joy of those ruled by the One Who has no power; the joy of those forgiven by the One Who holds nothing against us; the joy of the One Who died and yet was raised and is Advent-ing, Arriving today with His Spirit’s Word and Gifts; and yet, more to come!

It flashed by my screen this week, dearly beloved: ‘Highest day of heart-attack risk: December 24th!’ That’s Santa-day, is it not?! No mystery there about the infarction!

On the very Eve set aside to celebrate the God Who now and forever and for good has OUR four-chambered pump and everything else that makes us up that WE cannot even know!

There’s the cross, my friends, for you, for me, E...V...E...R...Y eve-ning, every morning. The reason the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther trumpets and extols the JOY of our Baptism—at JESUS’ authority, NOT John’!; the Gospel, NOT the LAW!—E...V...E...R...Y burial into our blanket and pillows; and every rising from there too.

For here, now, in THIS—it’s all indictment, accusation, judgment—AHHHHH!—by PEOPLE, who do not know their left hand from their right hand! By men who are just puppets on the

strings played masterfully by our masters of sin, the devil and his sick powers.

Our weapon against unseen powers and puny man's boasts? The Joy! Christ! His Spirit! His PLEDGE in Holy Baptism that we may count ourselves LEAST in the Kingdom of God—even BEAR that indictment, accusation, judgment: from other confused men; from clear-thinking demons; or from our own weak flesh! And yet, joy springs to life...

YES...at the happy and good and heavenly gifts our Father still showers upon us: family and friends, the body of Christ—the Church, the wonders of Creation, the times of pressures decreased...

But Jesus, on his way—beckons to us: 'Follow Me!' The way John prepared and then John's King walked. The WAY now laid out for us.

When the next man is easy target for OUR indictment, accusation, judgment—the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Joy has a WORD to speak there other kingdom knows. You do! It is the joy of pardon; of intercession; of suffering for other and with others, despite how wrong they are and how right you are!

Let us ever walk with Jesus, my dear ones! HERE'S a great project for this month!

Let's save everyone in our orbit from having a heart-attack on Christmas Eve! We're well equipped to save them. For we have been baptized in the Name of Jesus. Amen!