

The Third Sunday of Easter (2018)

Luke 24:36–49 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” **Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”**

In the Name of Jesus.

Glorious day of the Gospel!

These happy readings on this happy day happily tell us everyone’s PLACE! Not only Christ ruling heaven and earth as one of us, His witnesses and their word filling the world—

But most of all, everyone’s PLACE in Scriptures: Moses, the prophets and the Psalms; and now, the witness of those who ate fish with the fisherman.

As clean as I can lay it out:

When STARTLED, when ANGRY, when too afraid to BELIEVE:

Guide number ONE: ONE MAN has suffered for all men.

Guide number TWO: The REST of us men are NORMAL when we are agitated by heaven, earth, God, devils, the world, or ourselves.

In the words of our Risen Sufferer: ‘Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed at MY authority, in MY Name to all nations!’

The cause of ALL agitation, fear, scurrying around, despair, is quite simple! OUR ground-floor sin, root sin, foundation-sin, is that we leave One essential character out of our plans, our deeds, and our evaluations. That Character is a Big One! God, our Maker! NOT a minor omission, my dear ones!

And so, to startle His people into plugging God back into their view of things, Moses brought the people to Mount Horeb, Mount Sinai, and scared holy Israel nearly to death!

AND...Soooo...my dear ones:

You...are...NORMAL—when the Ten Commandments scare you; when your conscience upends you, or your fellow frightened family and other folk instill fear!

Because the demands of our Maker—against Whom we all rebel!—they are so frightening, that our Lord Himself sweat as of great drops of blood in the Garden, when He faced the final due-date on the demand laid on us all to attach ourselves to God with all that we are, and to attach ourselves to our neighbors as much as we are devoted to ourselves. Love!

Saint Luke's record of that praying is the shortest of all the Gospels. But on His way IN to pray, and when He came OUT from prayer to His Father's will, His words to His disciples—to us all!—were the same: 'If you pray NOTHING ELSE, pray THIS: that Y'ALL don't get anywhere NEAR...TEMPTATION!'

Praise the Lord! The Lord has NO CONFIDENCE in OUR ability to resist our leader in this world, the one who rides us like little ponies: the devil!

No, the Lord says! THAT fierce struggle—over what’s going to happen to us on Eviction Day!—Our Lord says, ‘THAT blood-soaked terror does not belong to you, my disciples. It belongs to Me! And now, I have conquered!’

So...that...we...now...know...OUR...happy place!

NO...NEED...to deny what we are! Plenty of turning from sins to do every day, minute by minute! But NOT to make God notice how hard we’re working at it all! NO! The Father took final notice of Man’s effort when That One Man suffered.

OUR repenting, changing our ways, running FROM evil habits, starting on NEW, decent habits—is GIVEN to us, to the NATIONS, by the One Who arrived and declared, ‘Peace be with y’all!’ And Who showed them the pierced hands and side WE will see, soon! And Who guaranteed AGAIN, the Guarantee of the Father, the Promise of the Father: God the Holy Spirit, as our outward clothing!

So that we can repent with CONFIDENCE! NOT wondering whether or not we're sincere enough, mean it all deep down enough—for our own satisfaction OR for God, OR for any other man!

It is part of the religion y'all must suffer that your poor pastor chases down words in the Scriptures—sometimes with a little too much mania.

‘Be angry, but do not sin!’

From the Psalm appointed for us today, Four! But also quoted by Saint Paul in Ephesians Four, with the addition of not letting the sun go down upon our anger.

Maybe it's just the work of my 'feelings' Doctor coming out: but I got stuck on just what that anger is, according to the Bible!

Praise the Risen Lord Jesus!

What the BOOK calls ‘anger’ has NOTHING to do with whipped up fury and heat, loading bullets into whatever weapon we have in our spirit or flesh, and then seeing whether or not we’re going to start blasting! THAT is ALREADY ‘anger’ turned to SIN! FAITH does not suffer THAT anger.

Biblical ‘anger’ is the trembling, the unease, the bothered-ness of our lives. KNOWING that God has made us and blesses us and has even sent His Son to suffer for us all—and even, born from above by the Spirit and our Baptism into Christ!—when we WANT to show our love and thanksgiving to our God, how poor are our efforts? How few are our results?

And other men?! Do the nations look to you, to me, to find a gracious God? THAT, by the way, is the ONLY REASON for the existence of a Lutheran, my dear friends! Men need a gracious God. And when men see the LUTHERANS confident in prayer, repentance and good deeds, then ALL nations are to be certain that God will not treat THEM as they deserve!

And we’re not there, are we, my friends?

Those rotten little arguments in our families—oh,

when we meditate on our Savior's love to us, joy at His rising again, we can get all fired up to forgive and let live! THAT motion, that peace and calm lasts—how long? Until we get in sight of one another?

And when the big crises hit—that even those who are perishing take note of: health, money, life and death, money, betrayal, money—

What is our FIRST resource? The BOOK, Old Covenant AND New Testament wave us on with threats AND good cheer to seek our life and all good from the One Who MUST mean us life and good....

‘Yeah.... I’ll get to that praying and faith and confident living—AFTER I settle all my agitation! And that will be by MY plans, MY smarts, MY worrying, MY polluting the lives of those around me with the evils of the world, the failings of men...’

‘Be angry! Be agitated!’ My feelings doctor says ‘Make ROOM for anger in you, Paul!’ I’m trying to, even though I’m not sure what that means!

But the Word says so too! KNOW why you are worked up and worried, threatened and threatening! It’s

because SOMEONE has left GOD out of their calculations:
YOU, or someone around YOU!

‘But do not sin!’ So DEMANDS Moses! Angry,
agitated GOD!

But, so says the sweet, calming assurance of the Spirit,
Who is now wrapped around us. He baptized us to be
God’s children—behind all fright is the smiling
countenance of our Father. He wraps us STILL with the
Good News of Christ, AND His Body and His Blood, AND
His forgiveness, in our hands, to hand out to each other.

You are ONLY agitated because you ARE what you
ARE! But you ARE...NOT...the God of your salvation!
Jesus is! And He lives! And He reigns! And He has given
you His Spirit! And He is coming again!

In fact, that’s the ONE PROOF the Spirit of Peace
now gives to the world that there is a God and That God is
Love. That one witness is the witness, the Church and the
Word from which the Church lives!

Two things to wrap up:

Central story of the Gospel according to Saint Luke! Two men went up to the temple to pray. One, a religious type, prayed ABOUT himself to God, about how he was not as bad as others, and did more good than others. Why did he pray like that? Because of his anger, his fear, his uncertainty about himself and his God. He left the temple that day deluded, or despairing—but NOT justified in the sight of God.

The other man would not look up, but beat his breast and prayed, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ That man left the temple angry, agitated, disappointed with himself and with every reason—IN HIMSELF!—to worry about his standing with his God. But, the Lord Jesus promised, that man left the temple justified in the sight of God!

There’s a happy little line the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther. After the day of deeds and mis-steps, Luther teaches the Church to delight in our Baptism, confess the God Who is Love all around us now, the Holy Trinity, and to prayer the prayer our Lord gave us: prayer surely heard!

And then he offers another prayer that has stood the test of time.

But then, one last, little line: ‘Then, go to sleep AT

ONCE...AND IN GOOD CHEER!’

Son Nicholas used to giggle himself to sleep every night, after we prayed the catechism together at night, back when he did not tower over his dad! ‘Does the book really say that, dad? At once! And in good cheer?!’

THERE is ‘not letting the sun go down upon’—our anger? Our fear? Our inability to believe? Our ball and chain called our Old Adam?

Be of good cheer! The Lord has NO CONFIDENCE in OUR ability to withstand temptation! That was BEFORE He suffered and rose for us!

Now, risen from that suffering and breathing out nothing but His Spirit and Peace, the Lord is simply NOT going to determine how He, His Father and His Spirit will LOVE us, ATTACH to us, based on how well WE manage our tremors.

The Spirit who covers us, however, has EVERY confidence that the Christ has risen from the dead!

Go to sleep, go to heaven, right after your prayers... in good CHEER in the Name of Jesus! Amen!