

The Third Sunday in Lent

Year of the Lord 2019  
Luke 13

“Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine;  
Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day!”  
“Let me see my Savior’s face; let me all HIS beauties trace!  
Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee!”

**Luke 13:1–9** There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

In the Name of Jesus---

Hear that line from Psalm 85 we recited in its beautiful language:

הַרְאֵנוּ יְהוָה חֶסֶדְךָ יִשְׁעֶךָ תַּתֵּן-לָנוּ: <sup>1</sup> <sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,  
and grant us your salvation. <sup>2</sup> Psalm 85.

The ‘US’ is the first thing in the line and the last thing! Aha, beloved! ‘You have said, dear Heaven, that you are now brimming with predictable pardon and undeserved favor, brimming with Christ! Well, there’s no better place to begin and end your heavenly shower upon today, Our Holy Spirit, than...with...US!’

<sup>1</sup> [Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: SESB Version](#). (2003). (electronic ed., Ps 85:8). Stuttgart: German Bible Society.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ps 85:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Fig tree ain’t asked its opinion, is it? In matters of our standing with our Maker, our Father, our Savior, the Lord and Giver of Life, my dear ones, listen to Doctor Luther, I beg you. There is NO...FREE...WILL in the matters that matter.

Instead, there is the Christian Life! That is PLENTY for US TO busy ourselves with! As Doctor Luther preached and taught without ever tiring, it seems:

**For this is the essence of a genuinely Christian life, to acknowledge that we are sinners and to pray for grace.<sup>3</sup>**

ALLLLL.....that the fig tree has to offer is that it is taking up ground that ANOTHER judges more deserving!

Y’know, friends of Jesus, Jesus is talking about people like you and me! Well, first of all He is talking about His people, the Jews. How long will the Living God give them to call upon Mary’s Boy as the Blessed One Who comes in the Name of the Lord? Israel has no more say over that patience, that love, that timing, than does the barren fig tree. No more than you and I have over the time God gives US to repent.

If ‘fig tree’ doesn’t put you and me in our place—our helpless place!—then the REMEDY should do it!

**‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure.**

Noww.....there’s CHURCH! You want to show your devotion to God, your sincerity about your repentance over wretched sins... MANURE is a good start!

<sup>3</sup> Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). [\*The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.\*](#) (p. 458). Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press.

Oh, but to save us even from making a show about what **ORDURE** **WE** are willing to **ENDURE** to line up with heaven—‘Watch how I **DEBASE** myself, fast, pray, sacrifice, roll in it all...’

The Lord insults the Old Adam in us more than any truckload of fertilizer ever could.

Again, Doctor Luther, the Small Catechism; not **MORE...MUCK**, but a washing that our Old Man cannot accept does **ANYTHING!** **MORE** disgusting than any dirt...

<sup>13</sup> But mad reason rushes forth<sup>8</sup> and, because Baptism is not dazzling like the works which we do, regards it as worthless.<sup>4</sup>

### **Holy Baptism - Fourth**

*What does such baptizing with water indicate?*

**It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.**

*Where is this written?*

**St. Paul writes in Romans, chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:4)**

Luther, Large Catechism:

<sup>41</sup> In Baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and to practice all his life. He always has enough to do to believe firmly what Baptism promises and brings—victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God’s grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts.

<sup>8</sup> Later version: But mad reason will not listen to this.

<sup>4</sup> Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). [\*The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church\*](#). (p. 438). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

<sup>42</sup> In short, the blessings of Baptism are so boundless that if timid nature considers them, it may well doubt whether they could all be true.

<sup>43</sup> Suppose there were a physician who had such skill that people would not die, or even though they died<sup>6</sup> would afterward live forever. Just think how the world would snow and rain money upon him! Because of the pressing crowd of rich men no one else could get near him. Now, here in Baptism there is brought free to every man's door just such a priceless medicine which swallows up death<sup>7</sup> and saves the lives of all men.

<sup>44</sup> To appreciate and use Baptism aright, we must draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and we must retort, "But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved...."

You poor pastor thanks God that I am baptized. Here's why:

'Be angry, yet do not sin,' Ecclesiastes teaches, and Saint Paul. But lately, my dear ones, I've been getting angry and sinning; despairing, running to thinking and worrying and questioning, rather than my Baptism into Christ.

It hit me multiple times the last couple months: how do people just turn their back on the faith into which they were baptized, which they were taught? It makes sense if one is just shifting from one form of saving yourself to another, one form of boasting to another, one form of fun and curiosities to another. But how does one leave the happy teaching of Doctor Martin Luther, our Baptism, Christ's Body and Blood—Absolution pledged for certain among His people, BY His people? For what?

My sin erupted when I found out 'for what.' It is for 'A...N...Y...T...H...I...N...G!' As long as it is not the eternal, happy teaching of our adoption by grace, the certain delivered heaven in the water alive with Christ's Word, sinners admitting what they are and THAT the full dimension of THEIR religion is praying for grace: "Lord, have mercy! Pity sinners! And there's no better place to start, than with us!"

As always, what saves a Lutheran, even a pastor, is as Doctor

<sup>6</sup> Later version adds: would be restored to life and.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. 25:8.

Luther taught the Church: the external Word!

What saved the fig tree from the ax? Urging the branches to be more fruitful? Nope! Digging and dung!

Nowhere does the text tell us the fig tree complains, ‘Why don’t the other trees need this treatment?! Am I the only one this bad off, so under the axe?!’

Praise the Lord, my dear ones. If the world if filled with people, church-going and church-avoiding, who are not as sinful as we, not as in need of pardon, nor the free grace of Holy Baptism. What shape would the world be in, if it were filled with people as desperate as the Lutherans?

At the same time: there may be some as desperate, as unbearable, as in need of saving, as you and I. Part of our Baptism into Christ is to share in the happy work of rejuvenating them too!

What makes a Lutheran and keeps a Lutheran and delivers to just anyone the accepting love of God in Christ Jesus? As far more insulting than droppings, as heaven is far from earth:

‘Nevertheless, I am baptized! That is HIS word, HIS work, and HIS remedy to the undeniable evidence that I am just taking up space that even I WOULD JUDGE deserves something better!’

Hear this beautiful Hebrew from Psalm 85:

הֲרַאֲנוּ יְהוָה חֶסֶדְךָ יִישַׁעְךָ תִּתֶּן-לָנוּ: <sup>5</sup> <sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,  
and grant us your salvation. <sup>6</sup>

Show US...grant US...have mercy on US...

<sup>5</sup> [Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: SESB Version](#). (2003). (electronic ed., Ps 85:8). Stuttgart: German Bible Society.

<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ps 85:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

We could not be in a better condition, in a better spot! We are  
BAPTIZED...IN the Name of Jesus.