

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 22)
 Year of the Lord 2019
 Luke 17

**“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 17:1–10 And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

“Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? *Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’*”

In the Name of Jesus:

Again, again, again, my dear ones! Again: Mary’s Boy, Jesus, SAVES, as Christ, as Lord.

As...one...of...US...He says TO us—OH!, But He says WITH US! Not from a scary mountain! NOT from heaven! But as heaven come to earth! Holy to unholy! From below; with US!

‘Let’s US let God be God, the Creator be the Creator, the Holy Will be the Holy Will...and let’s US just be HIS! Sons and

servants—whatever! It’s all good!’

In other words, dear disciples of Jesus Christ: Christ says FROM...OUR...SIDE, under God, under heaven, as one born under the law to redeem those born under the Law, ‘God can handle the role of God; He does not need OUR HELP! WE have more IMPORTANT matters to attend!’

My sweetheart lives this out daily and much among the greatest in the kingdom of God. One majestic three-year-old will leap DOWN off his throne of majesty, down into the role of slave and servant—in a word, ‘teacher’—and take it upon himself not only to TATTLE on the other great one being bad; but will also make some sort of movement to DISCIPLINE! ‘In the corner! No snack for you! We’re telling your parents!’

Of course Y’ALL see what has taken your poor preacher decades to learn. The child is NOT trying to PROMOTE himself! He is DE-MOTING himself, from the SERVED ONE, to the servant. What are we doing to our children? We need to keep a stack of those millstones Jesus talks about at the entrance to the preschool. ‘Y’all are gonna WISH that this stone was tied to your neck and you were tossed into the depths of the ocean! THAT would be a day in the park, compared to the punishment y’all are GONNA GET—for perverting children: from learners to scolds; from disciples of the forgiveness to prosecutors; from the fearlessness of the Gospel, to the fear and trembling of the Law!’

When whatever WE do, dear children of The Heavenly Father, is any sort of SERVICE—it is done without fear—
M...E...A...N...I...N...G.....it is service done WITHOUT REGARD TO BEING REGARDED! Be ordinary in your extraordinariness! Be unremarkable in whatever you do that is remarkable!

In a word: repent and believe the Gospel!

‘Unworthy servants!’ That CANNOT be an INSULT, dearly beloved! NOT from THIS MAN, Luke 3 and verse 24: ‘Now, when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized, and was praying, etc.’ An UN-remarkable event, quite ordinary, like all those, confessing their sins and having them washed away in anticipation of His coming. But what did HEAVEN think of such an attitude, such a deed? ‘The heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”’

Now, children: WHY do we strive, daily and much, to DEMOTE ourselves from THAT BLESSING, that place, that heaven, that Spirit?! The Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther pleads with us to rise as from the dead each sunrise, each hour, each ordinary, unremarkable event of the day as baptized TOO; in baptismal line with that other Man, Mary’s Boy; and just as filled with the Spirit of the Father—as He guaranteed!—and AT LEAST as well pleasing to the God we have never seen, as the Man Who has seen Him from forever!

NO...DEMOTIONS...NEEDED...HERE!

I have this strange memory from youth, that my beloved catechism pastor was going to read from the prophet we heard from today. ‘A reading from Habakkuk!’ I wonder if any of y’all had that funny reaction I had way back when: ‘Oh! Good! My favorite! Habakkuk!’

You want a one-word summary of Habakkuk’s anxiety that the Lord removed? ‘VIOLENCE!’ The prophet’s one-word prayer!

‘O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?’

I know that's more than one word; but it IS the summary of poor Habakkuk's daily routine. Someone had knocked poor Habakkuk off his throne as a chosen one, a son of Israel, a redeemed of the Lord.

And poor Habakkuk had turned 'SCOLD!'

REPENT, dear ones! M...E...A...N...I...N...G: try on Habakkuk's sandals, and admit how well they fit!

'The people on the road were AWFUL today!'

'You ALWAYS do that!'

'Oh, those people in government. Ooooh! There they go AGAIN!'

Need I go on? Shopping? News? Family reunion? Holidays?

The word 'violence' can only mean, for the prophet, the violence done to the will of God. Habakkuk saw his fellow children of God going after strange gods, from named Baals and such to money, power, influence, popularity, und so weiter.

And the prophet saw people USING their fellow people; heaven-born children, abused and wrung out for what USE they could be for another C...R...E...A...T...U...R...E's perverse will.

And let's give Habakkuk the best of intentions! He was sick and tired—use that phrase, dontcha?!—sik-n-tarred of hearing people use God's name in vain, despise preaching and His Word, dishonoring parents, and destroying God-joined marriages, possessions, good name; polluting hearts made to glorify God.

The Lord replied to Habakkuk. It's a short read; worth your time, if I may make the suggestions, your majesties!

The Lord said to Habakkuk: "Don't worry. I'm gonna wipe out yer whole COUNTRY! And everyone IN IT!"

Then, poor Habakkuk replied: 'Could you, instead, send a few snipers; to take out, surgically, the bad from among the good? There MUST be some daylight between those being really bad, and YOU, O Lord; PLUS those who want to further your will! People like....' Did Habakkuk catch himself before he told the Holy God, 'You and I, God, have been done VIOLENCE!'

Lord, have mercy!

Jesus tells His own—to save them from the day in which a millstone drowning would be their happiest wish in eternity—'If your brother sins, rebuke and pardon at repentance.' But then, the Lord does what He does so well. He gets to the violence that TRULY bothers those who think they are on God's side. 'If your brother sins seven times in a day—against Majestic THEE!....'

No wonder they prayed for an increase of trust in God.

My dear ones: Jesus is NOT Moses! Christ did NOT come to build a kingdom of those who have power IN THEMSELVES, to do the work only fitting for God! If FAITH were a THING, STUFF, nuclear fuel could not compare! Instead, He came to put us all in our places: as the redeemed. The highest height: our violence pardoned, by the King on that ridiculous cross! And our redemption is guaranteed! For not a bit of it lies inside of US!

So that whenever WE deal with violence in any godly way—private rebuke; prayer for the poor child of God; patience, patience, patience—the MAN Jesus rescues us from the last trick of the devil: 'Well, ME-n-God are working overtime today!' Ugh!

Even IF and WHEN we all learn to school heaven on forgiveness, and learn to pray ‘Forgive us, Father, AS WE have ALREADY written OFF the debts that others OWE US!’—

He puts one more prayer in our mouths. ‘What else would we do? No credits are building up here, in me, in us! Which of us NEED such recognition from heaven?! We’re already there. Servants add nothing to the master’s will. The Master born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger, for there was no other room in the house.’

Glory to God in the highest! Peace to men! The world has His kindly will now and forever, in the Name of Jesus! Amen!